

monica bonvicini
Pleasant

PRESS RELEASE

march 30 – july 30, 2022
opening all day march 30, 10am – 8pm

Galleria Raffaella Cortese is proud to announce Monica Bonvicini's third solo show, *Pleasant*, in all three of its exhibition spaces. The works on view continue the artist's investigation into language, literature, and the construction of identity through spaces and intellectual labor.

A new series of mirrors depicts quotes and edited texts by writers, all centered around the discomfort stemming from relationships and living within domestic walls. Is *A Room of One's Own*—Virginia Woolf's statement of women's need for a physical and mental space for self-expression—still relevant?

The six mirrors shown in via Stradella 1 feature sentences painted directly on the surface. Mirroring each other, they create a cacophony of overlapping voices capable of transforming the space into a labyrinth of references and situations. These works materialize the trilingual poetry of stateless writer Amelia Rosselli as well as the pitiless, poignant words of contemporary short story novelist Diane Williams and Sylvia Plath's classical observation.

In via Stradella 4, five elaborate prints on mirrors reproduce quotations about living within four walls. The coated mirrors feature subtle tonalities, from calm copper to milky white, colors taken from a portrait of Virginia Woolf by Gisèle Freund. Once Woolf finally agreed to receive Freund in her house to sit for portraits, the writer wanted her clothes to match the interior design. One of these photographs hangs in London's National Portrait Gallery, showing Woolf sitting next to a desk with a pile of books on it, holding one on her lap, in the other hand a cigarette. In the background, a mural by Bell & Grant. It is from this photograph that Monica Bonvicini picked the mirrors' colors.

The quotations are mean, harsh, and in total contrast to the slick perfection of the works, in which the words seem to emerge beneath a liquid surface. These sentences come from contemporary writers, well known for their unmediated and uneasy storytelling: from the native American poet Natalie Diaz, to the merciless Lydia Davis and, once again, the refined and scornful words of Diane Williams.

Feelings of restlessness, genius, loneliness, longing, and humor coexist in these mirror works of which anything can be said, except that they are *Pleasant*.

The theme of interiors and their resulting discomfort also emerges from the series of sculptures shown in via Stradella 7. The exhibition space is dark; the translucent light works *StripLight* (2021), hanging from the ceiling, are the only source of illumination. The invisible terrain of home comforts and the immaterial space of the unconscious precisely merge within this scenario that hosts an installation that is as quiet yet as uncanny as it can be. Two tables are covered with heavy cloths woven out of black men's leather belts, *Belt Cloth #1* and *Belt Cloth #2* (both 2022).

On the wall, four leather towels hang from hooks that pierce through the weaving of this series, *Don't Throw in* (2022). All of these 'textile' sculptures are held together by heavy duty black bolts or decorated with silver and black lacquered bookbinding screws.

The installation evokes the heaviness of the comforts imposed by the domestic environment in which creativity emerges— while working from home —as many writers do and as many more people suddenly experienced in the past couple of years. Like the now fashionable weighted blankets, that help with sleep disorders and anxiety, the woven leather pieces recall the burden of a male culture reduced to a surreal tablecloth, weighing down on the desks, shaping a sense of constant agitation and impatient apprehension.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Venice in 1965, Monica Bonvicini studied art in Berlin and at Cal Arts, Valencia, CA. From 2003 to 2017 she was teaching Performative Arts and Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. In October 2017 she assumes the professorship for sculpture at the Universität der Künste, Berlin. She lives and works in Berlin.

Monica Bonvicini emerged as visual artist and started exhibiting internationally in the mid-1990s. Her multifaceted practice—which investigates the relationship between architecture, power and gender—is translated into works that question the meaning of making art, the ambiguity of language, the limits and possibilities attached to the ideal of freedom. Dry-humored, direct, and imbued with historical, political and social references, Bonvicini's art never refrains from establishing a critical connection with the sites where it is exhibited, the materials that comprise it, and the roles of spectator and creator. This approach, which has been at the core of her production since her first solo exhibition at the California Institute of the Arts in 1991, has formally evolved over the years without betraying its analytical force and inclination to challenge the viewer's perspective while taking hefty sideswipes at socio-cultural conventions.

Bonvicini has earned several awards, including the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennial (1999); the Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst, from the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (2005); the Rolandpreis für public Art Bremen, Germany (2013), the Hans Platschek Prize for Art and Writing, Germany (2019); the 2019 Premio ACACIA alla Carriera, Milan; and the prestigious Oskar Kokoschka Prize, Vienna (2020). Her work has been featured in many prominent biennials, including Berlin (1998, 2004, 2014), La Triennale Paris (2012), Istanbul (2003, 2017), Gwangju (2006), New Orleans (2008), Venice (1999, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2015) and Busan (2020). She has had solo exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2002); Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, UK (2003); Secession, Vienna (2003); Staetisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany (2005, 2012); SculptureCenter, New York, NY, USA (2007); Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA (2009); Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2009); Frac des Pays de la Loire, France (2009); Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany (2011); Centro de Arte Contemporaneo de Málaga, Málaga (2011); Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany (2012); Kunsthalle Mainz, Germany (2013); BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2016); Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2017); Belvedere 21, Vienna (2019); OGR Officine Grandi Riparazioni, Turin, Italy (2019); Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld (2021). Upcoming solo shows in 2022 include: *I don't like you very much*, Kunsthaus Graz, Austria, traveling to Kunst Museum Winterthur, Switzerland; *Structural Psychodrama #5*, Bauhaus Dessau, Germany; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin.