

GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

MONICA BONVICINI

& Liberation

April 5 – May 18, 2024

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce the solo exhibition **& Liberation** by Monica Bonvicini. The exhibition gathers some of Bonvicini's works, from 2009 until now, each one loaded with her unique energy and wit.

Known for her daring exploration of space, power, and identity, Monica Bonvicini stands as an important figure in the contemporary art landscape. With a career spanning over three decades, Bonvicini's work embodies a profound dialogue between architecture, gender, and social constructs. Her installations, sculptures, and conceptual pieces serve as powerful reflections on the intersections of politics, sexuality, and human experience. Bonvicini's oeuvre is characterized by its fearless engagement with materials, often incorporating industrial elements to craft environments that provoke both visceral and intellectual responses. She navigates the boundaries between the public and private spheres, revealing the latent tensions that lie beneath the surface of our built environments.

The main focus of **& Liberation** is a curated selection of works on paper displaying Bonvicini's interest and conceptual approach towards language and her exploration of conventions and counter-acts.

The main space of the gallery features two large tempera drawings displayed under plexiglass from her **OFF THE GRID** series, 2011, and provide a striking introduction into her chosen subject matter. Each of these works follow a hypothetical grid, that creates a sort of falling order or a constructed disorder. Rather than a clean geometric arrangement, the artist offers a system that defies modernism, favouring dynamism and disruption that is often evident in her work. Against the backdrop of Bonvicini's constant use and depiction of architecture, there is an underlying coldness and rigidity to be found in her works, which evoke feelings of alienation or oppression. This notion and subtlety is however juxtaposed through her adamant use of captivating lettering which conveys the strong emotional weight of the themes she addresses and can be experienced in almost all of the works on view. The **OFF THE GRID** works bear the word 'rage' and its mirrored version, further dissolve the already loosened structure behind it and adding to the 'uneasy' atmosphere of her works. Looking at the drawn grid structure, these lines are reminiscent of chains, which have been an evident factor in Bonvicini's oeuvre to express ideas of control and restriction, or the exercise of power or liberation from it.

A recent body of work began in the wake of insurgent movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter. Bold, orange sprayed letterings such as 'HOT LIKE HELL' or 'Picked Up and Thrown' float against the backdrop of a lush rose grid suggesting a fictional speaker behind the works, who relentlessly blasts a staccato of pleas, commands, demands, claims and findings at the beholder. Some of these writings originate from *A Lover's Discourse: fragments* by Roland Barthes, as well as re-imagined quotes and fragments from Margaret Atwood and Adrienne Maree Brown.

While the nature of many of the works lies in their perceived provocation, they often have a softer tonality, embracing sensuality and (dark) humour. A group of smaller drawings on paper in which individual words such as 'You', 'Me' and 'Pity' are rendered almost three dimensional and seem to flow on a mostly black ground. With stark contrast and ethereal lettering, Bonvicini encourages contemplation on the intricate of power

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structures, relationships, and the pursuit of happiness. With the addition of a drawing that reads 'Prozac' - one of the most prescribed medications in the US - this intimate dialogue is turned on its head and reminds of the pluralism of Bonvicini's work.

This is paired with the sculpture *Fleurs du Mal (un couple)*, 2024, which quotes Marcel Duchamps' famous *Bottle Rack* from 1914. Bonvicini takes the readymade and creates a witty counter-vision - cast in bronze and paired with hand-made glass objects - to Duchamps' Freudian interpreted imagery of male potency and masculinity, challenging the conventional notions of desire, pleasure, and control.

HUG ME NOT, 2022 is a LED hanging sculpture, a neat carpet of lights woven together by hand and creating an embroidery of delicate links. The ambivalent title and appealing character directly speaks to the visitor, picking up and continuing the theme of physical and emotional destabilization.

Monica Bonvicini has held major solo exhibitions at institutions including Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2022); Kunst Museum Winterthur (2022); Kunsthaus Graz (2022); Bauhaus Dessau (2022); Kunsthalle Bielefeld (2020); Belvedere 21, Vienna (2019); Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2017); Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2016); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2012); Art Institute of Chicago (2009); Centro de Arte Contemporaneo de Málaga (2010); Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (2012); Kunstmuseum Basel (2009); Frac des Pays de la Loire, Carquefou (2009); Sculpture Center, New York (2007); Modern Art Oxford (2003); Secession, Vienna (2003); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2002). Her work has been featured in biennials, including Istanbul (2017, 2003); Venice (2015, 2011, 2005, 2001, 1999); Sao Paulo (2006), Gwangju (2006), among others.