

MONA HATOUM

A Body of Work

Opening: Saturday 18 May 2013, via del Castello 11, 6pm–12 midnight
Until 31 August 2013, Tuesday–Saturday, 2–7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Mona Hatoum, entitled *A Body of Work*, in its San Gimignano gallery space.

Over a career spanning three decades, Mona Hatoum has become a leading artist on the contemporary art scene. She initially attracted public attention with performances and video works in which the body gave expression to a divided reality, besieged by manifestations of political and social control. In the course of the 1990s Hatoum gradually moved away from this form of narrative and started to focus on sculptures and large-scale installations. Everyday objects feature prominently in these works, items such as chairs, beds and domestic utensils, which, when modified or blown up in size, re-present a familiar reality that reflect a suspicious, insidious and hostile world. These works appear vulnerable and disorientating, and leave no room for fixed meanings of any kind. The body remains central to Hatoum's work, an intensely fragile measure for perceiving the individual and his or her relation to the world. What is familiar ceases to be so, and the expected is replaced by new visual and conceptual associations. The artist proceeds by delineating a supple language of her own, in which various levels – formal, conceptual and political – consistently interact.

In this exhibition Hatoum revisits some themes that are emblematic of her artistic practice. Alongside a series of works produced between 1996 and 2010, the artist presents some recent and new pieces: mappings of the world informed by signs and memories, domestic objects transformed into singular and disturbing sculptures, but also fragile compositions made from unusual materials like toilet paper, pasta or human nails and hair, the faint residue of our daily existence.

Hatoum's work is distinguished by her ability to convey the experience of conflict. The installation that opens the show, a series of generic building structures composed of modular steel blocks that have been cut and burnt, seems to suggest the landscape of war and is reminiscent of Hatoum's native city of Beirut. The work presents a schematic city in scale form that, ironically, incorporates its own future destruction. In another work entitled *KAPANCIK*, a steel cage imprisons an amorphously shaped red glass form, suggesting themes of control, constriction, immobility and isolation.

The artist targets the sphere of domesticity and the concept of the home in a new installation that incorporates an array of domestic objects – larger kitchen paraphernalia and even chairs – into a deadly chain. Connected with meat hooks and hung from the ceiling, the objects are traversed by a dangerous electric current.

In other works, such as *Shift* or *Mapping (2)* and *Des/astres*, Hatoum explores ideas of 'mapping' to create works with complex associations. In *Shift*, a carpet depicting a world map overlaid with yellow seismic rings, has been sliced up and misaligned, so that its topographical integrity is destroyed suggesting that the whole world is a potential danger zone. In *Mapping (2)* and *Des/astres* the random grease stains left by the food on paper take-away trays have been delicately outlined to create beautiful, automatic drawings that suggest cloud formations or celestial mappings that are altogether removed from the material's original, utilitarian function.

Cappello per due exhibits a kind of metaphoric or visual acrobatics, suggesting themes of intimacy but also of ambiguity and forced coexistence. Two hats, the brims of which are woven together to form a single piece, become a metaphor of our existential condition that is at once reassuring and suffocating.

A Body of Work highlights how Hatoum's work is bound up with the wonder and intimacy of everyday life, but also rooted in an awareness of the conflict and violence that is a consistent threat to notions of self and our own individual identity.

Mona Hatoum was born into a Palestinian family in Beirut in 1952. She was on a short visit to London in 1975, when the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon prevented her from returning home. She now lives and works in London and Berlin. Hatoum's work has been exhibited in some of the most prestigious museums in Europe, the US, Canada and Australia, and *The Entire World as a Foreign Land* was the inaugural show at Tate Britain in London in 2000. In 2004 the most wide-ranging and complete survey of her work was presented at the Hamburger Kunsthalle in Berlin, subsequently travelling to the Kunstmuseum Bonn, to Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall and the Sydney Museum of Contemporary Art (2005). The artist has also taken part in major international exhibitions: the 46th Venice Biennale and the 4th Istanbul Biennial in 1995; Documenta XI in 2002; the Venice Biennale again in 2005; the 15th Biennale of Sydney in 2006; the 3rd Auckland Triennial and the 8th Sharjah Biennial in 2007; the Quadrennial for Contemporary Art in Copenhagen and the 3rd Bucharest Biennale in 2008. In 2009 she showed at the British Museum and the Centre Pompidou, in 2010 at the Whitechapel, MoMA New York, Hangar Biccocca and the Hayward Gallery, in 2011 at the Guggenheim Bilbao and the 12th Istanbul Biennial. Recent solo exhibitions include *Darat al Funun* in Amman (2008); *Measures of Entanglement*, UCCA, Beijing and *Interior Landscape*, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (2009); *Le Grand Monde*, Fundaciòn Marcelino Botìn, Santander, Spain, *Suspendu*, MAC/VAL, Vitry-sur Seine, France and *Witness*, Beirut Art Center (2010); a personal show at the Sammlung Goetz and *Silver Lining*, a permanent installation at the Bern University of Arts (BUA), Bern (2011); *You Are Still Here*, Arter Space for Art, Istanbul and *Projection*, Joan Mirò Foundation, Barcelona (2012).

For further information about the show and photographs:

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