

MONICA BONVICINI***bind me! torture me!***

June 8 - July 26, 2019

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to present its second solo exhibition by Monica Bonvicini with a wide new series of sculptures, large-format paintings and medium-sized works on paper. Bonvicini's broad body of work deals with complex issues of power, control and gender, but also the relationship of her own works to their social and architectural surroundings making her exhibitions carefully choreographed scores. Often starting from a literary or socio-historic source, her investigations on violence and manipulation are juxtaposed with beauty, desire and intimacy.

Under the title *bind me! torture me!* the exhibition puts into question certain narratives found in art history as well as in broader fields of culture - debris of an antique reflection of what society is nowadays.

The first space opens with an architectural installation on two walls that plays with ideas of multiplicity and distortion: silkscreen images of the sound performance *A Choir of Five*, directed by the artist in 2016. Further drawings and sculptural objects complement the installation. In the center of the room, three new sculptures made of bronze and crystal-clear glass (produced in Murano and Berlin) turn Marcel Duchamp's well-known *Bottle Rack* into an almost domestic object by adding anthropomorphic forms to the rack's empty spikes. With allusive titles like *Les Fleurs du Mal* or *On the Rack* (an expression that means "suffering from great stress or anxiety"), Bonvicini emphasizes an ironic reading of what has been considered Duchamp's purest readymade, bestowing on the original a Freudian and erotic interpretation. Unable to complete their primary function - to dry wet bottles - the spikes evoke the notion of frustrated male flesh.

In opposition to the broken masculinity of the bottle racks, the silkscreen print *Marlboro Man* reflects on the iconic and stereotyped romantic male figure of the strong, uncommitted cowboy. Is this just an icon of the past or has the Trump era brought back this idea of masculinity, so well humorized by Bonvicini in the silkscreen print of rifle stocks that, at a certain distance, resemble aligned phalli?

In the second space Bonvicini presents her extensive research around *Turandot*, the last opera of composer Giacomo Puccini, that she prepared for the theatre La Fenice on occasion of the 2019 Venice Biennale. Inspired by the opera's libretto, the artist created a series of sculptures and works on paper showing for the first time her approach to the Opera.

Two large-scale sculptures in the form of round cages of different heights occupy the central area of the space. Their metal grid is backed with LED bars illuminating their inner. One cage is occupied by a performer, who sings the lyrics of the slave Liù, one of the main characters of *Turandot*: "bind me! torture me! give me torments and pains... ah! as the supreme suffering of my love!". In this case, words of submission, dependency and desperation for love are represented by the artist as a confession of sadomasochistic tendencies and sexual freedom. Usually such symbols of captivity and restriction, isolation and submission, become in Bonvicini's hands a statement of female empowerment.

The cages mark the perimeter of an inner space in the exhibition that, instead of reclusion and negation, highlights a strong and independent female identity in opposition to the heterocentric environment all around. As if it were an armor, the cage allows the female performer to freely act and sing in an environment that has been conceived and delineated exclusively by male desire and patriarchal bigotry.

These concepts are further explored in the series *bind me! torture me!* (2019) which are hand-painted text excerpts on the exact printed music score of *Turandot* that Bonvicini received directly from the theater La Fenice. Bonvicini borrows here – and slightly modifies – sentences from the critical essay *Turandot's Victory*, highlighting the feminist and post-colonial readings of the libretto. The artist hints at the composer's misogyny, the stereotyped gender role of its fictional characters, as well as a certain idea of romance and power that are still widely accepted in contemporary society. In *bind me! torture me!*, dogmatic gender roles and structural discrimination are under observation, well-coupled with the wit, irony and dry humor that characterizes Bonvicini's artistic practice.

Parallel to the exhibition, the monumental kinetic installation *Breathing* (2017) will be on view at Art Basel Unlimited. The work is composed of an object made of leather belts and acrylic material, attached to a pneumatic system and suspended from the ceiling. Referring to a giant broom and a metaphorical cleaning, the sculpture moves in a loop, wiping and hitting the floor and its surroundings in a mixture of meditative dance and violent act of rage... After the First World War Tristan Tzara wrote in the 1918 *Dada Manifesto*: "We must sweep and clean. Affirm the cleanliness of the individual after the state of madness...". What about now? Could this automated kinetic broom sweep away populist opinions, discriminatory policies, the leftovers of the neoliberal state?

Since the beginning of the 1990s Bonvicini's works are presented in exhibitions throughout the world. The Belvedere 21 in Vienna will show an extensive solo show from June 28 until October 28, 2019. In November 2019 an additional solo exhibition will be held at OGR space, Turin. Further solo exhibitions and participations at Biennials include: Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2017); BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2016); the Biennale di Venezia (2015, 2011, 2005 and 1999); Berlin Biennial (2014, 2003, 1998); Kunsthalle, Mainz with Sterling Ruby (2013); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2012); CAC, Malaga (2011); Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2010); Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (2009); New Orleans Biennial (2008); Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm; Sculpture Center, New York (both 2007), São Paulo Biennial (2006) and Liverpool Biennial (2006). Her works are encountered in the collections of international institutions, such as the Castello di Rivoli, Turin; FRAC Lorraine, Metz; Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul; MAXXI, Rome; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; MUSEION, Bolzano; MoMA Museum of Modern Art, New York; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, just to mention a few.

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