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BRESCIA, ITALY

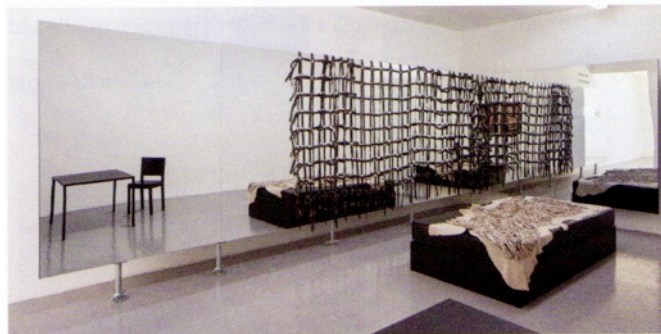
Monica Bonvicini

GALLERIA MASSIMO MININI

Monica Bonvicini's exhibition "Then to see the days again and night never never be too high" brought together a group of works that reasserted the basic assumptions of the artist's creative path thus far. Addressing many of her recurrent themes as well as formal strategies, the show felt almost like a retrospective. Two rooms contained three sculptures from the series "7:30 hrs," 1999–, which skillfully uses a spare and anti-rhetorical approach to confront the challenging issue of labor. These three-dimensional groupings were constructed by professional bricklayers following the instructions set forth in the standard examination for German apprentice masons. The basic materials used—bricks of sand and lime, combined with mortar—and the austere volumes that define their shapes place the sculptures somewhere between artisanal handicrafts and Minimalism, depending on how you want to look at them. Similarly drawing its expressive richness from a certain semantic ambiguity, *NeedleKnows*, 2012, consists of two hundred embroideries in red thread on white paper, each depicting a needle-nose pliers. The size of each framed piece is about nine by twelve inches; in the gallery the works were shown in four rows some fifty feet in length, creating a refined environmental composition based on formal variations. At the same time, the work has a strong social resonance; the embroidery is presented as an emblem of ancient manual knowledge and a demonstration of an increasingly rare type of professional skill.

Also on view were *Black You*, 2010, composed of various furnishing elements (a mattress, table, chair, and blanket, all in leather); *Straps & Mirror*, 2010, consisting of a black grid of studded straps made from the same material, placed against a wall consisting of six mirror modules supported by a structure of metal pipes; and *Luminous Blind Protection*, 2013, a group of neon tubes supported by a metal chain

View of "Monica Bonvicini," 2013.
Against wall: *Straps & Mirror*, 2010.
On floor: *Black You*, 2010.



hanging from the ceiling. These works, for all their heterogeneity, share a capacity to interpret the surrounding space as a territory of the imagination, in which the boundary between public and private, collective and intimate is quite subtle and the most ordinary things reveal their implicit emotional connotations. Thus, for example, the chains constitute a metaphor of an individual bond (sentimental or erotic) and, at the same time, of a civil condition (the state of servitude) or of a structural force. Similarly, the leather becomes a symbol of nature (the raw material), labor (the execution of the objects), or sexuality (fetishism).

The exhibition also included several works on paper, among them five "Untitled (Love Songs)," 1995. These focus on lyrics—from one line of which the exhibition took its title—transcribed in real time, that is, while the artist listened to the song. Executed in white ink on transparent paper, the words are nearly illegible and yet seduce the eye through their ability to both conceal and reveal the signs and traces on the surface. Likewise, the new collages in the "Legscutout" series, 2013, are almost painterly in sensibility, with subtle tonal shifts in color created by juxtaposed magazine clippings.

—Pier Paolo Pancotto

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.