



# Artist's Choice: Mona Hatoum

# HERE IS ELSEWHERE



## INTRODUCTION

Taking us into territory related in body and spirit to her own work, Mona Hatoum has organized *Here Is Elsewhere*, the sixth exhibition in the Artist's Choice series. Hatoum's selection of works drawn from The Museum of Modern Art's collection reflects her own artistic practice, which ranges from video to sculpture, installations, photography, performance, and prints. Yet beyond the mediums (and more importantly), her choices gravitate toward beauty that masks political pungency and familiar appearance that conceals a divergence from the "norm"—be it gender, sexuality, culture, or race.

An acute awareness of faceted realities, of disjunctions or ruptures, defines the perspective of a transplanted individual like Hatoum, who was born in Lebanon to exiled Christian Palestinian parents, and who has resided in London since 1975. Always in a foreign land, where the impulse to blend in comes checked by a firm insistence on difference or distance, and where conformity is strategy, the uprooted artist has developed an understanding of ambivalence, a faith in ambiguity. Much of Hatoum's work implies an absence of the safety net that protects those deeply anchored in one culture. Without divulging the artist's ethnicity or dwelling on exile, her sculpture *Silence* (in the Museum's collection) seems to pertain to this category of objects that are never whole, never safe. A crib made entirely of glass test tubes and lacking a support, the work speaks of the uncertainties greeting the newborn, and, in a more universal sense, of the fragility of life experienced from its inception. Hatoum addresses everyone but draws the complicity of those who share her dislocations.

The Artist's Choice series was initiated in 1989, when the late Kirk Varnedoe, former Chief Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, invited Scott Burton to organize an exhibition drawn from the Museum's collection. The guiding principle would be, in Varnedoe's words, "to see the collection in a fresh way, outside the normal patterns of chronological installation, departmental divisions, and curatorial thinking; and, in parallel, to gain insight into the way contemporary artists draw inspiration from the work of their predecessors." Burton, who made hybrid sculpture-furniture, chose Constantin Brancusi, and focused on his bases. He called them "pedestal-tables." Ellsworth Kelly scanned the collection in search of the fragmented form. Chuck Close stacked up the display shelves with over one hundred and fifty portraits. John Baldessari constructed a new piece from photographic details of works culled cross-departmentally. And Elizabeth Murray based her selection on gender, creating an all-women show.

Kynaston McShine, Chief Curator at Large, invited Hatoum to continue the series. We are grateful to him as well as to others who have made the exhibition possible: Barbara London's and Sally Berger's invaluable input regarding the videos and David Hollely's solutions to innumerable design issues need special acknowledgment. We also thank John Elderfield, Chief Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, and the following additional staff members of The Museum of Modern Art: Anny Aviram, Mary Lea Bandy, Laura Beiles, Randolph Black, Holly Boerner, Sydney Briggs, Mikki Carpenter, Claire Corey, Kathy Curry, Lee Ann Daffner, Peter Galassi, Sarah Ganz (in particular), Gary Garrels, Roger Griffith, Cassandra Heliczer, Sarah Hermanson Meister, Kate Johnson, Charlie Kalinowski, Laurence Kardish, Susan Kismaric, Raimond Livasgani, Harper Montgomery, Peter Perez, Jennifer Roberts, Jennifer Russell, Deborah Schwartz, Anne Umland, Jeff White, Deborah Wye, Lynda Zycherman, and interns Ruth Chavez-Perez and Carolyn Gamanos. The artist would like especially to thank Carolyn Alexander, Ted Bonin, Alexandra Bradley, and Catherine De-Zegher. Our deepest gratitude goes to the Gund family: Iara Lee and George Gund III, Lulie and Gordon Gund, Ann and Graham Gund, and Sarah and Geoffrey Gund, whose generosity has revived the Artist's Choice series in honor of Agnes Gund, President Emerita.

-Fereshteh Daftari



FRONT COVER: Ellen Gallagher. Untitled. 2000. Oil, pencil, and plasticine on magazine page, 13 1/4 x 10" (33.7 x 25.4 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James Hedges, IV. © 2003 Fllen Gallagher

OPPOSITE LEFT: Mona Hatoum. Silence. 1994. Glass, 491/e x 361/e x 231/e" (126.7 x 93.7 x 58.7 cm). Robert B. and Emilie W. Betts Foundation Fund. © 2003 Mona Hatoum

**ABOVE:** Jane and Louise Wilson. *Stasi City.* 1997. 1 of 2 artist's proofs. Four-channel video/sound installation: four DVD projectors, four DVD players, four DVD's, one amplifier, and four speakers, 5 min. loop. Fractional and promised gift of David Teiger. Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York. © 2003 Jane and Louise Wilson

## INTERVIEW WITH MONA HATOUM

**Fereshteh Daftari:** Unhampered by constraints regulating Museum curators and crossing MoMA's departmental boundaries, you have chosen some sixty works dating mostly from the 1990s. Can you explain how you approached this task and elaborate on any theme that emerges from your selection?

**Mona Hatoum:** I chose to look at work in the collection from the seventies to the present, not only because since 1975 I found myself living in London, and contemporary Western art became my context, but also because I think it was a very interesting period. Feminism has had a tremendous impact on the art world since the beginning of the seventies. I feel that examining power relationships along the gender divide also paved the way to questioning other power structures along the lines of race, class, and cultural difference. Having said that, the only female artist well-represented in the collection from that period is Cindy Sherman. Her early series of staged self-portraits, Untitled Film Stills, exposed feminine identity as an "internalized fiction," or a construction based on images culled from fashion and Hollywood cinema.

For me this articulated so well the notion that identity and gender are not unified and static but multiple and constantly changing. Another work from that period is the video by Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the* 





*Kitchen*, 1975. She appears in the video as the aproned housewife in the kitchen naming all the kitchen utensils from A to Z and giving a demonstration that seems to turn these utensils into weapons. Also from the seventies is the work of Ana Mendieta. I discovered a series of self-portraits made by her in 1972 that bear an uncanny resemblance to the later work of Sherman.

Otherwise, you're right, the rest of the work is from the nineties. I think the eighties generated a great deal of theoretical discussion: deconstructive theories, psychoanalysis and feminism, discourse around identity and the "Other." But I feel that these preoccupations were carried through in a more refined and subtle manner in the art that was produced in the nineties.

I think it is also important to remember that although I've been given a free hand in selecting the work across all of the Museum departments, my selection is of course made within a preselection. My choices are predetermined by the nature of MoMA's collection, which is shaped by the Museum's policies and the bias, for instance, toward American art.

In terms of a general theme, there isn't one as such. I chose to look at art that is not neutral and self-referential. Instead, I was interested in art that engages with various issues without being didactic



in its delivery. My criteria, and, generally, my preference, is for work where these issues are articulated through the visual and formal aspects. I am interested in work that deals with real and poignant material through the disguise of art, so that the content almost surprises you as you approach an art object that looks innocently formal and aesthetic. I really was looking at presenting the work of individual artists without an overarching theme and without trying to change the meaning to illustrate a specific idea.

Having said that, certain commonalities started emerging when I began looking at placing the work in the various spaces. So the work in the main space is mostly dealing with the body—the body politic, if you like: sexuality, AIDS, gender, and identity representation.

Apart from the artists I already mentioned (Sherman, Mendieta, Rosler), there is the work of Robert Gober, with a couple of examples of his ambiguous furniture pieces that make reference to childhood and cause you to question the safety of the domestic environment. A

couple of other works of his deal with homoeroticism and sexual ambivalence, for example, his untitled self-portrait, in which the artist is wearing a wedding dress. *Prison Window*, an installation from 1992, offers you a view of a sunlit sky—a fake one, of course. Does this mean that we are on the inside of the prison looking out?

In this space there is also a large work by Kiki Smith, which is a row of twelve large, glass water bottles that have been silvered, therefore preventing visual access to the contents. Each bottle is inscribed with a word referring to one of the body fluids: blood, saliva, semen, urine, etcetera.... It looks guite beautiful and

ominous at the same time. It was made between 1987 and 1990, so I am not sure whether she was thinking about how these bodily substances have acquired dangerous connotations, but it certainly has that aspect for me. Here there are also some of the deceptively simple yet multilayered works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, like his "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers), 1991, a poetic depiction of a couple represented as two perfectly synchronized clocks hanging side by side, with, at the same time, a reminder that time is running out—as in "so many men, so little time." There is also an example of one of his dispersal works that literally gets consumed by the public and disappears. "Untitled" (USA Today), 1990, is made of thousands of



 $\textbf{TOP:} \ \text{Cindy Sherman.} \ \textit{Untitled Film Still \# 58.} \ 1980. \ \text{Gelatin silver print, } 6^{5}\text{/16} \times 9^{7}\text{/16}" \ (16 \times 24 \ \text{cm}). \ \text{Purchase.} \ @ \ 2003 \ \text{Cindy Sherman.} \ \text{Cindy Sherm$ 

BOTTOM: Martha Rosler. Semiotics of the Kitchen. 1975. Single channel video, 6 min. Purchase. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

TOP: Jeanne Dunning. *Untitled with Food.* 1999. Silver dye bleach print (Cibachrome) and frame, 421/4 x 281/4" (107.3 x 71.8 cm). Gift of Barbara Lee. © 2003 Jeanne Dunning

BOTTOM: Cheryl Donegan. Head. 1993. Single channel video, 3 min. Purchased with funds given by Susan Jacoby. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI). New York

candies, heaped in a corner of the room, wrapped in the colors of the American flag. And you can help yourself to those candies. This is a work that brilliantly defies the "Do not touch" museum orthodoxy and goes totally against the preciousness and uniqueness of the art object. I have also included one of Gonzalez-Torres's all-text pieces, "Untitled," 1989, which lists key events in gay history. These concerns are also echoed in David Wojnarowicz's untitled work of 1990–91, which narrates the hypothetical (or his own) difficulties of growing up in an environment hostile to homosexuality.

The work of these artists is, of course, well-known, but with some suggestions from curators from the Museum's various departments, I made some interesting discoveries—for instance, the photographic work of Jeanne Dunning. *Untitled with Food*, 1999, shows the naked torso of a woman. It looks quite ordinary until you discover that some kind of gelatinous or gooey food substance fills the space where the crossed arms meet the chest and the crossed legs meet each other. An intriguing image: is this a comment on the objectification of women—woman as consumable object—or simply a celebration of the sensuous, where visual and oral pleasures are collapsed into one. I have also discovered the work of some young video artists: Cheryl Donegan's sexually evocative and witty performance-video *Head*, 1993; short videos by Ximena Cuevas from 1997 that explore the "internalized racism" in her Mexican culture as well as critique the sanctity of home and family; and Tom Kalin's *Third Known Nest*, 1991–98, a kind of poetic video journal with literary quotes, dealing—again—with identity as a construction, and equating the body with a map or a political battlefield, especially in relation to AIDS.

The next room is one I am referring to as the "subversive grid room," with mainly the work of two artists: Ellen Gallagher and Yayoi Kusama. Gallagher's very large grid painting titled *They Could Still Serve*, 2001, uses the modernist device of the grid but introduces tiny, cartoonlike symbols depicting African American



Robert Gober. Open Playpen. 1987. Enamel paint on wood,  $25\frac{1}{2} \times 35\frac{3}{4} \times 35\frac{3}{4}$ " (64.8 x 90.8 x 90.8 cm). Gift of Werner and Elaine Dannheisser. © 2003 Robert Gober





stereotypes, as a disruption in the abstract field: "minstrel" lips, bulging eyes, etcetera. Kusama's grids use obsessively repetitive motifs in photo-collages/drawings and prints.

Since I didn't want this room to end up being formally divorced from the other parts of the exhibition, I added some three-dimensional works: Gonzalez-Torres's "Untitled" (Death by Gun), 1990, one of his "stacks" of paper, each with a grid of mug shots of people shot dead in the United States in one week. (Again, the public is allowed to help themselves to a sheet of paper if they wish to.) The other work in this room is a chess piece by Gabriel Orozco titled Horses Running Endlessly, 1995, a small but quite representative piece, as his work has featured many references to games.

The next room is devoted to a large and haunting video installation by Jane and Louise Wilson, *Stasi City*, 1997. This four-screen video projection explores the eerie abandoned headquarters of the former East German secret police office buildings, where political prisoners were interrogated and detained. It is a very charged location yet shot in a detached manner, as if the artists wanted to expose the residual trace of power embedded in the architecture of the place.

And the final part of the exhibition—or the first part, depending on which way you chose to enter—groups works that use the street as a source of inspiration or as the creative arena. David Hammons's work is almost entirely made of objects found in the street, such as a basketball hoop used in the work *High Falutin'*, 1990. I have included a series of photos by Orozco, some of which were taken in the street, and, finally, Francis Alÿs's work.... He made a procession to celebrate the move from MoMA in Manhattan to its present location in Queens, emulating Mexican religious processions, and a series of paintings in the style of (and collaborating with) commercial street sign-painters in his neighborhood in Mexico City.

**FD:** In the trajectory you have created, can you stop at (pick) specific works (or groupings), explain why they resonate with you, and elaborate on any affinity you find with your own work?

MH: I find affinities with a lot of the work in the show because of similar concerns or simply ways of working that I have employed in the past or continue to use in the present. As a student in the late seventies, I made work using my own bodily fluids and hair and nail pairings, etcetera, which makes me feel a connection

**TOP LEFT:** Felix Gonzalez-Torres. "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers). 1991. Clocks, paint on wall, overall: 14 x 28 x 23/4" (35.6 x 71.2 x 7 cm). Gift of the Dannheisser Foundation. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York. © 2003 The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

**TOP RIGHT:** David Wojnarowicz. Untitled. 1990–91. Photostat, composition (irreg.): 27<sup>15</sup>/<sub>6</sub> x 37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>6</sub>" (70.9 x 94.4 cm); sheet: 32<sup>15</sup>/<sub>6</sub> x 39<sup>15</sup>/<sub>6</sub> x 39



with Smith's work with body fluids. I came across Rosler's video when she visited the University of London, where I was in my final year as a post-graduate student. At the time, I was making installations connecting kitchen utensils together and sending 240 volts of electricity through them. So that work resonated with me.... Alÿs's work makes me feel nostalgic for the time in the eighties when I worked mostly in performance and video and made a series of street performances and walks. The work of Gober resonates with me because of the way he turns everyday familiar objects into uncanny or disquieting things that make you doubt the safety of the domestic environment. I also feel a lot of affinity with the ideas of Gonzalez-Torres, especially his use of Minimalist aesthetics and formal constructs, which he "contaminates" with social meaning and subversive content.

**FD:** In keeping with your inclination toward ambiguity, your title, *Here Is Elsewhere*, allows a number of interpretations. What are the spaces that you are evoking?

MH: The title is contradictory and implies that elsewhere is right here—or the elsewhere within. It also has echoes of the famous declaration by Rimbaud: "Je est un autre" (I is another). Most of the artists in the exhibition inhabit an elsewhere or speak from a critical position outside the status quo. I suppose it is another way to make an oblique reference to the "Other"





without using that very old-fashioned word. I am using this very loosely. Luce Irigaray talks about women's permanent state of exile, as they essentially exist in a culture and a language that they have not played a role in shaping. Others, because of their sexual orientation, color, or cultural background, can, if you like, be seen as literally or metaphorically in a similar state of exile.

I suppose Bruce Nauman is the odd one out in this collection of artists. I included Nauman not only because I think he is a significant artist but also because this video work with a head repeating the word "Think! Think! Think!" almost as a command resonates with me in this context. There is more and more a tendency on the part of museums, and especially so in American museums, to want to overexplain and oversimplify the work. I think this takes away the possibility for the viewers to come up with their own interpretations, and limits the number of meanings that an artwork can have. Looking at art does not have to be as passive as sitting back and watching television. The best art is that which complicates things for you by exposing impossible contradictions, which makes you question your assumptions about the world so that you walk away with more questions than answers.

With the Nauman video, I hear, "Think for yourself!"

**OPPOSITE TOP:** David Hammons. *High Falutin!* 1990. Metal (some parts painted with oil), oil on wood, glass, rubber, velvet, plastic, and electric lightbulbs, dimensions variable, museum installation: 13' 2" x 48" x 301/2" (396 x 122 x 77.5 cm). Robert and Meryl Meltzer Fund and purchase. © 2003 David Hammons

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Francis Alÿs. Detail from Untitled (series for *The Modern Procession*, June 23, 2002, New York City). 2002. Mixed mediums and drawings on paper, color photographs, Plexiglas, pine tables, aluminum architectural lamps, and DVD's, 40 x 32 x 84" (101.6 x 81.3 x 213.4 cm). Purchased with funds provided by The Silverweed Foundation. © 2003 Francis Alÿs

TOP: Yayoi Kusama. *Endless.* 1953–84. Etching, printed in black, composition: 10½ x 17½ (27.6 x 44.6 cm); plate: 10½ x 17½ (27.6 x 45.2 cm); sheet: 17½ x 24¾ (45 x 62.8 cm). Publisher and printer: unknown. Edition: 30. Gift of Jeff Rothstein and Reiko Tomii in memory of Bhuoendra Karia. © 2003 Yayoi Kusama

RIGHT: Bruce Nauman. *Think*. 1993. Video installation: two 26-inch color monitors, two laser disc players, two laser discs (color, sound), and metal table, overall: 80 x 30 x 20" (203.3 x 76.2 x 50.8 cm). Gift of Werner and Elaine Dannheisser. © 2003 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



#### BIOGRAPHY

Mona Hatoum. Born 1952, Beirut, Lebanon. Attended Beirut University College, (1970-72), Byam Shaw School of Art, London (1975–79), and Slade School of Art, London (1979–81). Lives and works in London

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### PUBLIC PROGRAMS FALL 2003

November 7, 2003, 6:00 P.M.

MoMAQNS 33 Street at Queens Boulevard

On the occasion of the opening of Here Is Elsewhere, a selection of contemporary art from The Museum of Modern Art's collection, Mona Hatoum, Conceptual artist and curator of the exhibition, takes an informal walk through the galleries with Fereshteh Daftari, Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture. Hatoum discusses her choices, works in various mediums dating predominantly from the past twenty-five years.

Space is limited. Tickets are \$10, \$8 for members, \$5 for students with current ID, and are available on a first-come. first-served basis, beginning at 5:00 P.M. on the day of the program at the MoMA QNS Lobby Ticketing Desk. Please meet at the entrance to the exhibition at 6:00 P.M.

For more information about Public Programs, please call (212) 708-9781 or (212) 247-1230 (TTY), or visit www.moma.org/momalearning.



BACK COVER: Detail of CCCP

#### CHECKLIST

#### Francis Alÿs (Belgian, born 1959)

Emilio Rivera: 36 x 28 1/8" (91.4 x

71.4 cm); large panel by Juan Garcia: 47 1/4 x 36" (120 x 91.4 cm).

and drawings on paper, color pho-DVD's, 40 x 32 x 84" (101.6 x

201/16 x 181/2" (51 x 47 cm); sheet: 35<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 35<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (91 x 91.4 cm). Purchased with funds given by

#### Ximena Cuevas (Mexican, born 1963)

#### **Cheryl Donegan** (American, born 1962)

#### **Jeanne Dunning** (American, born 1960)

print (Cibachrome), 231/2 x 163/4"

#### Ellen Gallagher (American, born 1965)

in color, composition: 337/8 x 181/8"

131/4 x 10" (33.7 x 25.4 cm), Gift of

13<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (34.7 x 23.8 cm). Publisher and printer: LeRoy Neiman

57/8 x 415/16" (15 x 12.6 cm); sheet: 22<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 18" (57.3 x 45.7 cm).

Ssblak!! (Image #VI, ii; from the collé, plate: 515/16 x 415/16" (15.1 x 12.6 cm); sheet: 1515/16 x 1911/16"

Michael Lynne

and Jerry Spiegel and Anna Maria

#### **Robert Gober** (American, born 1954)

36½" x 43" x 6' 43/8" (92.7 x

on wood, 251/2 x 353/4 x 353/4"

human hair, and wood, 131/4 x 16½ x 46½" (33.6 x 41.9 x

Newspaper. 1992. Multiple of a in black, overall: 6 x 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (15 x 42.5 x 33.6 cm). Publisher: the artist, New York. Printer: Derrière 10. Gift of The Associates in honor of Deborah Wye

#### **Felix Gonzalez-Torres** (American, born Cuba. 1957-1996)

ed in black, composition: 16 1/16 x 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (41.8 x 55.3 cm); sheet: 16<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>

(113 x 82.5 cm); sheet: 44<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 32<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (114.1 x 83.6 cm). Printer:

Candies, individually wrapped in red, weight: 300 lbs (136 kg). Gift of the

28 x 23/4" (35.6 x 71.2 x 7 cm), Gift

#### **David Hammons** (American, born 1943)

High Falutin'. 1990. Metal (some

531/4 x 411/2 x 111/2" (131.2 x 105.4 x Contemporary Drawing, The

16½ x 183/8" (42 x 48 cm); comp: 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (41 x 27.6 cm).

#### **Tom Kalin** (American, born 1962)

#### Yayoi Kusama (Japanese, born 1929)

pen on paper, 14 1/8 x 11 1/2" (37.9 x

in black, composition: 101/8 x 179/16" (27.1 x 44.6 cm); plate: 107/8 x 1713/16" (27.6 x 45.2 cm); sheet: 177/8 x 243/4"

915/16 x 81/4" (25.3 x 21 cm). Publisher:

#### Ana Mendieta (American, 1948-1985)

#### **Bruce Nauman**

(American, born 1941)

#### **Gabriel Orozco** (Mexican, born 1962)

33/8 x 343/8 x 343/8" (8.7 x 87.5 x

# Richard Prince

(American, born 1949) and **Cindy Sherman** (American, born 1954)

#### **Martha Rosler** (American, born 1943)

#### **Cindy Sherman** (American, born 1954)

Untitled Film Still # 3.1977. Gelatin silver print, 71/16 x 97/16" (18 x 24 cm).

Untitled Film Still # 7, 1977, Gelatin silver print, 91/2 x 79/16" (24.1 x

Untitled Film Still # 23, 1978.

Untitled Film Still # 34, 1979. Gelatin silver print, 97/16 x 79/16"

Untitled Film Still # 35.1979. Gelatin silver print, 91/16 x 69/16"

Untitled Film Still # 56. 1980. Gelatin silver print, 63/8 x 97/16"

Untitled Film Still # 58.1980. Gelatin silver print, 65/16 x 97/16"

Untitled Film Still # 84, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 71/2 x 97/16"

# **Kiki Smith**

(American, born 1954)

print (Ektacolor), 1415/16 x 221/2"

#### **Jane and Louise Wilson** (British, born 1967)

of David Teiger

#### **David Wojnarowicz** (American, 1954-1992)

position (irreg.): 27<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (70.9 x 94.4 cm); sheet; 3215/16 x 39<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (83.7 x 101.4 cm). Publisher:

Gelatin silver print, 143/4 x 1711/16"

Gelatin silver print, 147/8 x 173/16"

#### MoMAQNS

The Museum of Modern Art, Queens

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