

The Museum of Modern Art

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SENSE AND SENSIBILITY: WOMEN ARTISTS AND MINIMALISM IN THE NINETIES

June 16 - September 11, 1994

A major exhibition featuring new or recent work by seven artists -- Polly Apfelbaum, Mona Hatoum, Rachel Lachowicz, Jac Leirner, Claudia Matzko, Rachel Whiteread, and Andrea Zittel -- is on view at The Museum of Modern Art from June 16 to September 11, 1994. Organized by Lynn Zelevansky, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, **SENSE AND SENSIBILITY: WOMEN ARTISTS AND MINIMALISM IN THE NINETIES** presents approximately twenty installations and sculptures that expand the boundaries and meanings of Minimalism and Post-Minimalism. The artists represented in the exhibition, with their very distinct approaches, recast Minimalist forms and strategies -- repetition, the grid, geometry -- in such unorthodox materials as cosmetics and velvet. Their art achieves a synthesis of disparate goals: to be politically cogent and to attain pure beauty.

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In the late 1960s and early 1970s, concurrent with the rise of both the Women's Movement and Post-Minimalism, increasing numbers of women artists emerged. Artistic qualities previously disdained as "feminine" and anti-Minimalist -- delicate line, decorative motifs, and craft-related techniques -- gained currency. "Each of the seven artists chosen for the exhibition represents a different take on the Post-Minimalist legacy," states Ms. Zelevansky. "They are probably the first generation of women with the freedom to take for granted the breakthroughs made by the women artists who came before them. Elements associated with those developments enter their work organically or not at all. This can happen because that period is now part of our cultural history. These women demonstrate the real progress that has been made."

In her most recent works, Polly Apfelbaum (b. 1955, United States) arranges small, rectangular patches of crushed stretch velvet in flexible formations. These works embody the positive concept of change, while also provoking uncomfortable associations with impermanence and instability. In *Splendor in the Grass, Glory in the Flower* (1993), she lays out her modules in the form of a changeable color chart, in which hues cross-fertilize, flowing into one another.

Light Sentence (1992), a room-sized installation by Mona Hatoum (b. 1952, Lebanon), features the theatrical play of light in and through a large, openwork metal structure, creating an environment that is at once beautiful and disturbing, threatening and seductive. Hatoum's work simultaneously refers to current political and social issues and private emotional states.

Rachel Lachowicz (b. 1964, United States) creates sculptures out of cosmetics. Her work, which confronts pervasive ideals of femininity, also questions the rejection of glamour associated with 1970s' feminism. In *Face Powder* (1991), she achieves a parody of Minimalist icons by casting face powder in a circular form reminiscent of breasts, as well as architectural moldings. *Color Chart Flat #1* (1993), made from eyeshadow, invokes multiple references, from Duchamp's *Tu M'* (1918), which contains paint samples, to Ellsworth Kelly's paintings of the 1950s, composed of square grids, and Gerhard Richter's color charts.

Jac Leirner (b. 1961, Brazil) strings or sews together prosaic materials, such as the commercial plastic bags in *Names (Art)* (1993), into gridded wall hangings and floor pieces. Intended as projections of personal experience, these works also evoke broader social and aesthetic issues, involving consumerism and the commodification of art.

Claudia Matzko (b. 1956, United States) creates ethereally beautiful works that simultaneously address ideas of history and spirit. In *River of Tears* (1994), identical small copper forms, affixed to the wall in a regular formation, receive daily doses of saline solution. Over time, the appearance of the copper is transformed by salt crystals, which also impart a turquoise patina -- residue of the "tears."

Rachel Whiteread (b. 1963, Great Britain) makes plaster, wax, and rubber castings of the fixtures of middle- and working-class life in England. Her subjects have ranged in scale from hot-water bottles to an entire house. *Ghost* (1990), which is on view for the first time in the United States, and measures approximately 9'x 12'x 10', is taken from a room in an abandoned

house in north London. Whiteread won the Tate Gallery's Turner prize in 1993 for *Room* (1993).

Andrea Zittel (b. 1965, United States) investigates the human need for comfort and how it intersects with the modernist desire for aesthetic purity. Creating such domestic objects as furniture and housewares, she challenges cultural habits and customs. Every year she constructs a new *Living Unit*, which she actually inhabits for the following twelve months. On view for the first time is the 1994 version, a large, portable structure that contains such necessities for living as a kitchen, office, closet, and cot.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY inaugurates an informal series of thematic exhibitions devoted to contemporary art. The next in the series is **MAPPING**, organized by Robert Storr which opens on October 6, 1994.

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