

frieze

Trisha Donnelly

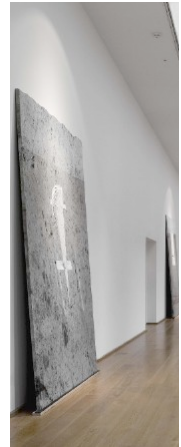
MAMbo, Bologna, Italy

The guiding principle behind Trisha Donnelly's new project for MAMbo is the desire to render both the museum and the visitor's experience of art captivating. The spatial and temporal elements of the exhibition are enlivened by evocative dilations and juxtapositions of architectural, visual and audio elements designed to create a narrative that operates on several semantic levels. The first work in the show is a small, black and white photograph (all works untitled; all 2009) of a female face partly obscured on one side by a soap bubble: the delicacy of this unfocused photo looks like a Donnelly's invitation to the viewer to approach the exhibition with an inquisitive mind.

A sense of unpredictability runs throughout the show, and can also be perceived in the next work, for which the artist has modified the architecture of the first, long gallery of the museum – a former bakery constructed next to the site of some now-subterranean streams. Donnelly has produced the sensation of energy flowing through the empty room, like the water in the underground channels, by her subtle modification of light in the space. She has reduced the long line of windows that flank one wall to narrow slots, so that only slivers of light penetrate the space, creating a stroboscopic effect that is intensified by the gloom within. Moulded by these fluctuations in light, the space seems elongated and merges with the next gallery, in which it is possible to discern only a long strip of red carpet on the floor, one edge of which has been roughly cut by the artist.

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The carpet wasn't initially intended to be part of the project; it was only placed there during the installation of the show as a means of protecting the floor. However, as often happens in Donnelly's work, unanticipated effects led the artist to modify her creative process. In the same room, a row of four large slabs of grey marble lean against a long wall opposite the obscured windows. Each slab is engraved with enigmatic designs that evoke abstract shapes or natural forms. Like screens, the slabs reflect both the light streaming in from outside and the shadows cast by the viewers that superimpose themselves onto the patterns in a game of chance invention.

The exhibition presents a 'reloading' of details, both real and imagined, which stems in part from a preliminary work by Donnelly that involved mapping some of the places she had visited in Bologna. These include historical locations – such as the Anatomical Theatre of the Archiginnasio Library, the network of underground streams and the former bakery of MAMbo itself – as well as indirect conceptual influences, such as the metaphysical paintings of Giorgio Morandi (who is also showing at the museum), about whom the artist writes

in the press release for the show, and the radio waves that penetrate the atmosphere (the inventor of the radio, Guglielmo Marconi, was born in the city). All these references are alluded to throughout the exhibition in small-scale, black and white photographs as well as in one particular working process that Donnelly refers to as a 'scanning' of found images, translated into video projections, drawings and marble or fabric objects.

Donnelly's aim is to reduce the information we receive from accepted codes and linguistic superstructures in an attempt to rekindle intuition, memory and free association. The works on display, for example, don't have titles. Even at the level of institutional communication, Donnelly's focus is on developing a diverse narrative for the exhibition, personally producing the press release, the invitations and the visitors' guide to promote a *sui generis* approach that combines the historical and the personal in an open dialogue.

Translated by Ros Furness

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