

ARTFORUM

Mona Hatoum

MATHAF: ARAB MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Al-Luqta Street

February 7–May 18

More than seventy pieces, including videos of politicized performances and sculptural installations, make up “Turbulence,” Mona Hatoum’s largest solo exhibition in the Arab world. Hatoum’s work is organized nonchronologically within a trail of rooms, placing the familiar and the unfamiliar, the static and the mobile paradoxes that have prevailed in the British Palestinian artist’s thirty-year career into new dialogues.

The first video that confronts the visitor is *Roadworks*, 1985, documenting a performance in which the artist walks barefoot through the streets of Brixton, a pair of Doc Martens tied to her ankles. The lumbering boots, tailing Hatoum’s every step, as would a policeman or a skinhead stalker, foreshadow the uneasiness that will dog the visitors who snake their own path through the rest of the show. Another video, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, depicts the artist motionless wrapped in a body bag; entrails are smeared over her body, which lies atop a wooden table. Nearby loom the more recent sculptures *Daybed* and *Paravent*, both 2008, threatening, over-dimensioned cheese graters refashioned as injury-inducing furniture. The intensity of *The Negotiating Table* seems to infect this sculptural duo: The bloodied, static body in the video prefigures the potential for bodily harm that the visitor might encounter by grazing the enlarged implements.

The notion of latency is central to *Turbulence*, 2012, the centerpiece of the show. The installation comprises thousands of glass marbles. This fragile balance lurking in a carpet of tiny spheres (and the potential for havoc should it unravel) conjures up Hatoum’s greater oeuvre and what Edward Said called “object(s) without a conclusion”—works that foreground the irreconcilable, full of unease and irresolution.



Mona Hatoum, *Turbulence* (detail), 2012, clear glass marbles, dimensions variable.

— Kevin Jones

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