

# Mona Hatoum: Terra Infirmia

Audio transcript

00:05:39

Terra Infirmia is a very good title for the exhibition, because it seems like, often in my work, there's a sense, a sense of instability or restlessness or a feeling of a destabilised environment where you, it makes you almost question the ground you walk on.

And this is kind of articulated in many different ways in my work sometimes through using lights that move around the space, like for instance in this exhibition Misbah gives you this feeling that the space is moving around you and gives you a feeling of vertigo, and other cases, it's the materials that I use, like in the work, tablets, black, this is part of a series of works where I have used glass marbles that created a very liquid ground if you like. And the nice thing about it is that these balls of glass that feel very kind of insecure are struggling to be contained within a very formal geometric shape, which is a circle and in this case it's, for me, it creates like a hole in the ground, or a portal.

The work, natural mortar grenade is made up of these hand sized, big, solid objects and they're very colourful, very seductive and when you get close to them, and you start looking at the shapes you realise that actually some of them are shaped exactly like hand-grenades. So it just takes you somewhere else, it becomes something about detriment to four and destruction. And I often like to introduce these contradictions on a material level, there is this kind of tension between what you're looking at very seductive very attractive, and the implications, *Impenetrable* is another work where there's this strong material contradiction. In this case it's a very large queue, quite imposing, yet at the same time, it's

very light and airy, yet the material is made of is very heavy and connotations, it's barbed wire, so that takes you to like zones of restriction of movement, borders, barricades. This work is particularly interactive in the sense that you have to walk around it, you get this amazing Moray pattern sometimes, it opens up passages through it.

Now the title impenetrable kind of refers to the work of his sous Rafael Soto, a Venezuelan artist who's created a number of installations with rubber tubing that hangs from the ceiling or from some kind of structure, and these structures you actually can walk through them, and they're called penetrable s, so I inverted that title and call it a patchwork because of course, in my case, you wouldn't want to walk through it. One of the things that I'm really interested in is this concept of the uncanny which is a fraudulent concept. It's called unheimlich, which means un-homely and basically it's about everyday objects that suddenly becomes unfamiliar or even threatening, because it has been affected by some kind of trauma, something that creates a fear in the environment or these objects that are around you. And one way of making the familiar unfamiliar, was to play with scale. So the word called background Breyers mahlerian by 17 is actually based on a kitchen utensil that I find in my mother's kitchen, and looking at it as an other, somehow it's made me think of an animal like a scorpion with the tail up in the air. I actually enlarge it, 17 times its original size. And I was calculating it to be big enough so that the central drum is large enough to accommodate a human body in a fetal position, so I'm always thinking about these works in relation to the body. For me it's very important to place the works in very specific ways in relation to the architecture. And it's always very good to work with a curator who's sensitive to that, who appreciates the fact that.

Certain works will work very well in that space, and others won't. A lot of people don't realise how important, working with the space working with the properties of the space to bring out the best in the work that's so important and I think we got the balance very well, something magic about this building. It has a very beautiful feeling of openness, the spaces are so inviting, and there's no heaviness, about the space, and that's been really wonderful to work with. Erica's very special thing in this collection is the surrealist collection, which I relate to a lot in my work. And having this wonderful opportunity to show some of my work next to some of my favorite artists like Magritte, to show, Marie Oppenheim is such a privilege that I never ever thought I would experience in my life.