A youthful ambition to become a successful artist may border on naivety, even for those white Western males whose numbers continue to swell the ranks of publicly visible artists. But for a Third World female born in 1952, such an ambition was all but preposterous. Hatoum’s practical father therefore vetoed his youngest daughter’s plan to study studio art, their compromise being that she completed instead a vocational course in commercial art.1

Once stranded in London by the outbreak of civil war back in Beirut, however, Hatoum managed to work her way through successive studio art programs at the Byam Shaw School followed by the Slade School of Fine Art. That training served further—in the albeit scattered ways of art school curricula—to acquaint her with the dominant narratives of twentieth-century Western art. Forthright in her acknowledgement of other artists, Hatoum says her initial “point of entry into the art world was through Surrealism,”2 but that once she discovered the paradigm-shifting Marcel Duchamp, “I never looked back.”3 That occurred about two years into her art school training and, around the same time, she was “completely taken in by Minimal and Conceptual Art.”4 (The Minimalists and 1960s Conceptualists owed the Dadaist Duchamp some debts of their own that they tended not to admit, it bears adding.)5 As a student in 1977, Hatoum recalls having exhibited, for instance, some mirrored cubes inspired in part by the example of California Minimalist Larry Bell, but with one smoky glass box said to contain Night Air 6000 c.c. in a salute to Duchamp’s 1919 ampoule of Paris air.6

As artists come of age, they tend to be captivated not only by the example of prior artists but also by particular texts. Hatoum names as her own early “bible” Lucy Lippard’s 1973 illustrated timeline of Conceptual art, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object. She prized also a monograph on Eva Hesse, whose hands-on 1960s sculpture evinced a defiantly eccentric approach to the Minimalists’ distinctive phrasing, that she was “taken in” by Minimalism, “I was taken in” by Minimalism, leading her to produce—by her own hands or those of commissioned artisans or fabricators, in materials ranging from human hair to marble to mild steel—an exceptionally diverse, lively, and compelling body of work, ranging from intimate to monumental and the West.” “Interview with Janine Antoni, 1998,” 136.

11. While at the Slade, Hatoum says that she “got involved with feminist groups and this opened my mind to all sorts of situations of power and control on a global level.” “Interview with Chiara Bertola, 2014,” 137. She has recalled also how, “I became involved in analyzing power structures, in trying to relate to feminism, and then in wider terms as to the relationship between the Third World and the West.” “Interview with Janine Antonis, 1998,” 136.

12. In an era when the full-time teaching staffs of European and United States’ art schools remained almost exclusively male, Kelly made occasional instructional appearances at the Byam Shaw and the Slade schools, and Hatoum counted herself fortunate for those contacts. Interview with author, July 25, 2016. The importance of feminists in altering a masculinist art-educational milieu in Britain is underscored in Elena Crippa, “Positions [had] rarely surfaced as content”; feminists effectively politicize Conceptual art practices in Britain, where “political positions [had] just surfaced as content”; tensions effectively remained a critique of conceptual art from within and using its own terms,” noting Wilson in his Introduction, 10-11.

13. In her introduction to her early survey of Conceptual art, Hatoum noted that the “question of sources” was “one point. Marcel Duchamp was the obvious art-historical source, but in fact most of the artists did not find his work all that interesting.” Lucy R. Lippard, Escape Artists, in Lippard, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 (London: Tate Britain, 1997), 51.

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Mona Hatoum

The Light at the End, 1989
Metal frame and six electric heating elements, 65 1/4 × 56 × 2 inches (166 × 142 × 5 cm). Installed at The Showroom, London, 1989.

14. That is, of course “the light at the end of the tunnel.” Hatoum explains: “Instead of my delivering a message to the audience through my actions as a performer, I decided to set up situations where viewers could experience for themselves feelings of danger, threat, instability, and uncertainty through the physical interaction with the work.” H.G. Masters, “Domestic Insecurities,” ArtAsiaPacific 59 (July /August 2008): 114. With The Light at the End, more specifically, Hatoum notes that “when you experience the intense heat projected by the electric heating elements forming the bars of a gate, you can almost feel the physical pain that someone in a situation of imprisonment and torture could feel…. I am…creating a situation which would hopefully trigger those associations in the spectator’s mind.” “Interview with Claudia Spinelli, 1996,” Archer et al., Mona Hatoum, 128. When it was initially shown—in a small venue with a small audience—there were no warning signs or barriers; subsequently Hatoum has had to put a fence up to keep visitors at bay. Interview with author, July 25, 2016.


16. The Panopticon was the conceit of philosopher Jeremy Bentham. The terrorist activity in question was perpetrated mainly by the IRA (Irish Republican Army). Regarding Hatoum’s awareness of aesthetic home ground. But to be taken in can also mean to be seduced, deluded, or deceived, as may have happened initially to viewers impelled toward The Light at the End, which belies the hopeful platitude (strategically) half iterated by its title.14

What was arguably deceptive about Minimalism in general were the artists’ claims to a purely nonreferential or autotelic practice when all the while they were using (commonsense) materials, (geometric) forms, and modes of organization (grids, series, and modular repetition) that were deeply embedded in the infrastructure of the industrialized world. In an influential 1984 tract, “The Crisis in Geometry,” artist Peter Halley summarized some of the key insights from a 1977 text by Michel Foucault that proved for a time influential studio reading, including for Halley:

In Discipline and Punish we find deconstructed the great geometric orderings of industrial society. The omnipresent unfolding of geometric structures in cities, factories, and schools, in housing, transportation, and hospitals, is revealed as a novel mechanism by which action and movement (and all behavior) could be channeled, measured, and normalized, and a means by which the unprecedented population of the emerging industrial era could be controlled and its productivity maximized.15

Key to Foucault’s text are design principles epitomized by the Panopticon, an eighteenth-century model prison plan featuring a central viewing point intended to optimize surveillance efficiency.16 For her part, Hatoum’s status as a displaced person from an unstable region helped amplify her alertness to the prevalence of surveillance apparatuses in an adopted city (London) made reflexively leery by protracted experience with terrorism.17

Dan Flavin

untitled (to Barry, Mike, Chuck and Leonard), 1972–75
Yellow and pink fluorescent light, 6 × 6 × 6 feet (183 × 183 × 183 cm). Installed in a corridor 8 × 16 feet.
In a version of her 1996 Quarters, Hatoum effectively staged a panopticon by organizing four steel bunk-bed-like structures—each representing a quarter of the quarters—as spokes radiating symmetrically from a central hub. By its use of fabricated steel grids and of modularity and repetition, Quarters conspicuously deploys Minimalist visual syntax and tactics. But in using that syntax to compose not would-be abstract sculpture, but offbeat furnishings instead, Hatoum summons less the argot of canonical Minimalism than of some of its offshoots. One might think, for instance, of Robert Morris’s sinister 1972 Hearing, with its electrically connected, Minimalism-looking lead bed and zinc table, and its copper chair containing water heated almost to boiling. One might remember also Dan Graham, an outlying figure in the Minimalist ambit, whose blunt 1966–67 Homes for America spelled out some real-life implications of the grid by invoking, in a deadpan illustrated essay, the banality of mass-market housing.19 For that matter, in the United Kingdom a comparable exercise, Stephen Willats’s 1978 Living with Practical Realities, illuminated the dysfunction, for an actual elderly resident, of a putatively practical public housing complex rigidly organized on a grid.20

Hatoum was herself in time affected by the spectacle of desolate low-income housing complexes found on the margins of some major European cities, often sheltering—or isolating—immigrant populations.21 And she has underlined the relation of works such as Quarters or the closely comparable 1992 Light Sentence—an enclosure of sorts made up of stacked wire-mesh lockers lit by one bare, disturbingly mobile light bulb—to “institutional structures” and “institutional violence…in Western urban environments.”21 But with its readily surveyed cluster of twenty stacked bed frames, Quarters evokes not individually housed families or citizens (as in Graham’s or Willats’s projects), but clustered or massed detainees. And if institutional accommodations reflexively conjure barracks-like or baldly functional, space-efficient complexes of surveillance devices, see, for example, Hibah Arfeen, “Mesures the Distance: A Conversation with Mona Hatoum,” Sculpture 25, no. 9 (November 2006): 32; and “Interview with Chiara Bertola, 2014,” 157.

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Among its winning qualities, the art of Mona Hatoum tends to evoke a finely tuned sensibility to the properties of materials. And the artist recalls that she responded particularly to “the emphasis on the material reality of the work” of the Minimalists, as well as to its “economy of form.”

What she seems, moreover, to have been especially taken by, if not entirely by, in Minimalism was its claims for the transformative possibilities implicit in the viewer’s would-be immediate experience of the stark Minimalist object. Building in a way towards the bodily locus of her performance practice, Hatoum says that she aspired in works such as Quarters “to implicite the viewer in a phenomenological situation in which the experience is more physical and direct,” such that viewers could end up “psychologically entrapped”—or, in other words, taken in.

Ordinarily, furniture gives ease and rest to, or otherwise accommodates, the human body. When presented in ways that render them “strange,” however, furnishings may reveal urgent public concern in the 1980s United Kingdom of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and so too were they in Lebanon, where Hatoum was born and raised in a displaced Palestinian family. (Though her father had been comparatively fortunate in obtaining British employment and British citizenship papers, the grim reality for most uprooted Palestinians was instead perennial statelessness and refugee camps.)

According to one source, the “component parts” of Quarters are made to scale, based on a photograph taken by the artist of a dilapidated cell in a Philadelphia prison. “Ursula Panhans-Büchler, ‘Being Insulted,’” in Mona Hatoum (2004), 10.

Hatoum, in Masters, “Domestic Insecurities,” 144.

Hatoum, in “Interview with Joanna Anton, 1994,” 141–143.
instance, burnt and then dynamited cubes—an archetypal Minimalist form—it works of 1978 and of 1980–82, respectively. In Gnaw of 1992 Janine Antoni chewed for over a month on two 600-pound cubes—one made of chocolate, the other of lard—and then made artifacts such as Spittles out of the foodstuff she spat out. And, in Mass (Clothier Darker Matter) of 1997, Cornelia Parker approximated the shape of a cube with a fragile grid of threads dangling charred remnants of a church struck by lightning. How the threat of any given artwork resonates is bound to hinge not only on its material specifics but also on what is known of the artist’s subject position—whether from an empowered or a disempowered demographic: a demographic historically versed in making and making good on threats, or one more apt to be on the receiving end. There is as well the X factor of the ways or degrees to which threat may inheres in spectators’ lives. Whereas a threat from an oppressor? Or both? I want the work to complicate these positions and offer an ambiguity and ambivalence rather than concrete and sure answers.30

Besides harsh furnishings, another favored theme of Hatoum’s has been kitchen devices, especially implements for cutting or draining—functions in themselves metaphorically loaded. In the case of the 2008 Dormiente (Italian for “dormant” or “sleeping”), we find both themes at play at once: a cot-like bed consisting of a kitchen grater remade to outsize proportions—manipulation of scale being another of Hatoum’s preferred devices for engaging, by disrupting, the viewer’s bodily compass. Inasmuch as Dormiente proffers as an artwork something closely resembling a commonplace object, it may be counted a loosely Duchampian exercise. But Hatoum’s initial aesthetic foray into the kitchen involved instead actual commonplace objects—such as Duchamp conceived for the very first readymades—objects that she would alter and so rendered (in Duchamp’s vocabulary) “assisted” readymades. More specifically, to produce her compelling No Way sculptures of 1996, Hatoum laboriously blocked with nuts and bolts all the many holes of a kitchen skimmer and a colander. The results tacitly acknowledge a debt to such mischievous Dada and Surrealist icons as Man Ray’s household iron botched by a row of metal tacks (the 1921 Gift) or Mené Oppenheimer’s 1936 fur-covered teaspoon. The impulse to revisit the readymade paradigm is one that Hatoum has long shared with a veritable generation of (what might be termed) neo-Duchampians.31 For that matter, she felt some artistic kinship with Felix Gonzalez-Torres, for one, who made some subtly poignant works out of commonplace lightbulbs strung together during the 1990s; and she was impressed, too, by the early work of Jeff Koons, such as his mid-1980s basketballs suspended aflame in aquariums.32 The No Way sculptures by Hatoum may conjure equally, however, certain feminist art initiatives included especially Martha Rosler’s pioneering 1975 Semiotics of the Kitchen. In that performance cum video—shown around 1980–81 to a London audience that included an impressed Hatoum33—Rosler tersely identifies and crossly demonstrates an array of kitchen devices. As unsettling as those devices tend to look in her hands, they are not nearly so disconcerting as the thwarted skimmer and colander of No Way, which are widely described as evoking a medieval mace and a land mine respectively.34 To many feminists of bourgeois backgrounds from Rosler’s and Hatoum’s era, the home kitchen threatened to waylay women and keep them from any prospect of a fulfilling professional life by trapping them as housewives. If only in the case of 1980–81 to a London audience that included an impressed Hatoum33—Rosler tersely identifies and crossly demonstrates an array of kitchen devices. As unsettling as those devices tend to look in her hands, they are not nearly so disconcerting as the thwarted skimmer and colander of No Way, which are widely described as evoking a medieval mace and a land mine respectively.34 To many feminists of bourgeois backgrounds from Rosler’s and Hatoum’s era, the home kitchen threatened to waylay women and keep them from any prospect of a fulfilling professional life by trapping them as housewives. If only in the case of...
fantasy, the kitchen tools’ hazardous, even lethal potential might help quell insistent female desperation; and “No way” might be a reflexive response to the abiding pressure to do an apron. The range of cultural constraints on the one hand, and of professional possibilities on the other, that faced First World women such as Rosler, however, were generally of quite another order than those confronting, say, Arab women. For her own part, Hatoum recalls having refused blandishments to “learn the art of cooking as part of the process of being primed for marriage,” and, for that matter, “spending any time in the kitchen is something I resisted.”

Hatoum’s preferred way of undertaking exhibitions is generally to do some type of artist’s residency at a given location before mounting a show there (including in Houston in advance of the Menil exhibition). Given that she shows far more internationally than most of her peers—in Europe and the Middle East and, to a lesser extent, the Americas—that preference tends to have afforded her quite an itinerant life. The first iteration of No Way resulted in fact from Hatoum’s inaugural trip to Palestinian territory, which occurred as she was preparing a show for an East Jerusalem gallery in 1996.36 In those surroundings she was reportedly struck by the prevalence of roadblocks which occurred as she was preparing a show for an East Jerusalem gallery in 1996.36 In those surroundings she was reportedly struck by the prevalence of roadblocks superintended by military police, who ensured there was “no way” through many areas, especially for Arabs.36 Plainly, the specter of a kitchen tool as a weapon or explosive device acquires more complex valences in this light, as the work of an artist from a war-torn region—indeed, one whose parents had been forced to abandon their former home (in Haifa) and all its contents during The Nakba, or Catastrophe, as Palestinians call the devastating 1948 conflict that Israelis term their War of Liberation or Independence. One colorless iteration of No Way got made, however; in a deeply pacific place, during an artist’s residency in Maine at the Shaker sect’s last surviving active community. Hatoum has recalled experiencing there “a wonderful feeling of being settled,” which reminded her just how “nostalgic and undomesticated my own existence is,”37 and thereby “activated all sorts of forgotten needs.”38

Even more for the displaced, home can present an elusive ideal, while it may equally spell a sort of trap. Confusing matters, too, the home kitchen typically conjures vital familial nourishment and pleasures even as it remains an endemically risky site, harboring (for instance) graters, slicers, and grinders—the cutting devices that have particularly engaged Hatoum. Given that female identity has historically been more bound up with the home and its kitchen, such paradoxes may prove more charged for women. That an outside kitchen device produced by, for instance, Claes Oldenburg tends to get framed in far more playful terms than such a device by Hatoum—notwithstanding that her work can also have its playful aspects—may not be attributed only to their disparate visual vocabularies; the fact that a life consigned to the home and its kitchen could never have been in the offing for Oldenburg remains mate-

rial, too. In her 1999 La grande encyclopédiase (Mikaël Jullian, x 17), Hatoum would scale up an object fetched from her own childhood kitchen—a countertop food grinder shaped incongruously like a familial creature—into a monu-

ment and so “turn the domestic into something menacing and all engulfing,” as she once described it.39 In the mise-en-scène of her 2000 Homelands, however, the artist instead subjected actual kitchen equipment, caged behind wires and eerily lit from within, to something visibly and audibly resembling electrocution: a literally charged home environment gets aggressively kept away from the viewer—or are we viewers being kept instead from it? Hatoum’s 1996 residency in Jerusalem proved generative not only for her initial artistic use of kitchen implements but also of a map—a different sort of device that she would likewise go on to explore successfully for decades to come.

Claes Oldenburg
Soft Dormeyer Mixer, 1965
Nylon, stainless steel tubing, shark skin, and rubber, 31 1/4 x 20 1/4 x 10 inches (79.7 x 51.1 x 30.5 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Purchase, with funds from the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc.

Mona Hatoum
Dormiente, 2016
Mild steel, 10 1/4 x 80 1/2 x 89 1/4 inches (26 x 203 x 227 cm).
Courtesy of the artist and Alexander and Bonin, New York.

**Mona Hatoum: Terra Infirma Jerusalem gallery in 1996.**

Laura Steward Heon, “Grist for the Mill,” in Heon, ed., Mona Hatoum: Domestic Disturbance (North Adams, MA: MASS MoCA, 2001), 17. Recalls Hatoum’s 1996 residency in Jerusalem proved generative not only for her initial artistic use of kitchen implements but also of a map—a different sort of device that she would likewise go on to explore successfully for decades to come.

34. Hatoum, in “Interview with Jo Glencross, 1999,” 147. (Eventually, Hatoum would take the nine female tasks of marrying a man who likes to cook. Interview with author, July 15, 2016.)

35. Self-identified as Palestinian though born in Beirut, she was never granted Lebanese citizenship, Hatoum has been back twice to Palestinian territory, including in 2000 to do some teaching at the Art Academy in Ramallah. Email to author, April 15, 2015.


37. Hatoum, in “Interview with Jo Glencross, 1999,” 147. Also the “family-like atmosphere” among the Shakers “was something I was missing in my own family…. Because I have been traveling and am hardly rooted anywhere, that feeling of settledness that they have and that I had while living with them was a very strong emotional experience. I was torn between two desires—I want to have roots,” Janet A. Kaplan, et al., “The Quiet in the Land: Everyday Life, Contemporary Art, and the Shakers: A Conversation with Janet A. Kaplan,” Art Journal 57, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 15.

Her first sculptural map was of the dispersed or scattered territories that Palestinians were pushed to accept through the Oslo Accords, signed as a would-be interim measure by Yasser Arafat in 1993. To make Present Tense, Hatoum used tiny red glass beads to delineate that bizarre map onto the surface of thousands of bars of Nablus soap (a Palestinian product fabricated from olive oil and familiar to the artist from her childhood) laid out on the gallery floor. By the time Hatoum began deploying them, maps had already factored in myriad ways in Conceptual art practice. Thus, for instance, British artist Richard Long had variously enacted and explored the trope of the journey, incorporating maps in some of his ensuing installations; his 1969 A Sculpture, for one, featured a map of an area of Wiltshire with concentric squares drawn on it and a typed inset stating the amount of time it had taken him to walk each square. Where maps are concerned, the matter of who, historically, has been empowered to draw and redraw global borders and who has had to suffer the consequences, as well as who gets to travel most freely over borders and whose movements get restricted, becomes all the more charged when the artist crafting the map is one whose parents’ home got sacrificed to imperialist exercises in the redrawing of borderlines—masterminded, for that matter, largely by the British. By making many of her maps from intrinsically transitory or unstable materials, such as soap or—in her Map works of 1998–99 and 2015 Map (clear)—marbles likewise spread over a floor, Hatoum deftly, poetically evinces the historical mutability of mapping. And in Projection of 2006 and Projection (velvet) of 2013 she has deployed a particular world map format (the so-called Gall-Peters Projection) calculated to be more scrupulous in rendering the continents’ relative sizes than the maps more commonly circulated, and on which the (historically wealthier) northern continents no longer appear so outsized in comparison to southern ones.

40. In Hatoum’s description: “It was the map showing the territorial divisions arrived at under the Oslo Agreement, and it represented the first phase of returning land to the Palestinian authorities. But really it was a map about dividing and controlling the area.” “Michael Archer in Conversation with Mona Hatoum,” 15.
41. Reproduced in Lippard, Six Years, 118.
42. Regarding this map, first issued in 1973, and Projection, see Christine Van Assche and Clarrie Wallis, eds., Mona Hatoum (London: Tate Publishing, 2016), 106. “It was not a foregone conclusion that a pro-Third World map, as it was then described, would be adopted, or a time when global mapping was considered by many...as a prerogative of the West.” Bid. Hatoum says that she initially chose the map “for formal reasons but then I understood the significance of it being more egalitarian.” “Unstable Ground: Mona Hatoum Interviewed by Virginia Whitley,” 8.
In view of her family’s history, Hatoum’s penchant for mapping in subtly loaded ways has at times been used by critics to help frame her as a sort of signifier for the ever more conspicuous cause of the world’s forcibly displaced. To be, or to have been, a Middle Eastern immigrant is, after all, to occupy a charged cultural space. For her part, Hatoum has mostly discouraged approaches to her work that would pivot narrowly around her life story or that would tend to exotize her despite her long residence in Europe. For that matter, female artists have long been more subject than their male peers to biographically framed accounts, which may tend to restrict unduly the dimensions of their contributions. Even as she has steered art writers away from her biography, however, Hatoum has intermittently proceeded to inscribe it in compelling ways in her art. Her 2008 Interior Landscape (an installation made for Darat al Funun in Amman, Jordan, that addresses the Palestinian diaspora), as an example, includes (among other charged elements) a fragile map of Palestine’s historical outlines delineated with her own hair on a pillow. And in a collaborative work of 2012–13, Twelve Windows, she incorporated a dozen traditional textiles skillfully embroidered by displaced Palestinian women. Even as the implications of Hatoum’s oeuvre continue and reliably exceed the reach of her life story, then, that story has remained inextricable from her practice. And, in describing here some of the complex poetic resonances attaching to Hatoum’s devices, I have been in part narrating how she has all along managed to recast as a resounding benefit the glaring deficit initially (seemingly) attaching to her subject position.

Furnishings, kitchen equipment, maps: all may be counted as devices of a sort. Behind the repertoire of objects that Mona Hatoum invokes or deploys in her work, however, lie her strategic devices. She has continually revisited a range of avant-garde strategies in ways that have made her utterly recognizable as a figure of her postmodern or neo-avant-garde generation (as it tends to be labelled). Yet Hatoum has also consistently remained something of a figure apart. As a female artist raised far beyond the pale of the Euro-American art scene, she was seemingly doomed at the outset to become at best a marginal figure. That she became instead among the most respected artists of her time is surely due in part to her command of some dominant idioms of contemporary Euro-American art practice. For that matter, such mastery is generally demanded of outsiders within a realm that has, since the late twentieth century, however belatedly, been expanding its geographic purview. Hatoum has all along uttered avant-garde idioms with a sort of foreign accent, however—as variously emerges in all the instances described here—in which she affectively adapted, complicated, and amplified neo-avant-garde strategies with the benefit of insights accrued through her complexly global or transnational subject position.

For all the refugee’s struggles and misery, it turns out that there may also be advantages to and even “pleasures of exile,” as Edward Said once affirmed; “Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience,” he added. Hatoum has likewise acknowledged that, “working within different cultures…makes you realize how relative everything is. Other realities and other systems of belief force you to remain open and fluid and it makes me feel expansive rather than restricted.” Rather than ever having appeared marginal or provincial, Hatoum’s art has often effectively pointed up instead a degree of provinciality that may inhere in the work of her Euro-American forerunners and peers. All the while she has been coming to prominence, Hatoum has been steadily helping to remake the West’s contemporary art scene as more truly the art world it had for so long, so unconsciously, pretended to be.

44. In 1987, while she was working principally as a performance artist, Hatoum has observed, “I have experimented with my work about my experience of living in the West as a person from the Third World, about being an outsider, about occupying an unassigned position, being excluded, being defined as ‘Other’ or as one of ‘Them.’ I work with black groups in London on shared issues of colonization, imperialism, racism and the stereotyping of people from other cultures.” Interview with Sara Diamond, 1987,” in Arthur et al., Mona Hatoum, 116. Exiles enjoy “plethora of visions...an awareness of simultaneous dimensions” that is “contemporary,” further suggested Said. Ibid. (Emphasis in original.)
45. Hatoum, in “Unstable Ground: Mona Hatoum Interviewed by Virginia White,” 5. A range of contemporary critical theorists suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement—that we learn our most enduring lessons for being and thinking. There is even a growing conviction that the affective experience of social marginality—as it emerges in non-canonical cultural forms—transmutes our critical strategies. It forces us to confront the concept of culture outside objects set far beyond the canonization of the “ideal of aesthetics, to engage with cultures as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival,” noted Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 144–47.
MONA HATOUM  TERRA INFIRMA

MICHELLE WHITE
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY
ANNA C. CHAVE
ADANIA SHIRLI
REBECCA SOLNIT

The Menil Collection, Houston
Distributed by Yale University Press,
New Haven and London
at the Menil Collection, Houston, 2013. Straw, wood, and metal, 31 × 53 × 19 inches (78.7 × 134.6 × 49.3 cm). Courtesy of the artist.

All works listed below are by Mona Hatoum unless otherwise noted; installation shots listed below are from Mona Hatoum: Terra Infirma at the Menil Collection, Houston, 2017, unless otherwise noted.

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