



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ART INSTITUTE EXAMINES THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ARCHITECTURE
THROUGH WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY ARTIST MONICA BONVICINI**

First *focus* Exhibition Presented in the Modern Wing

***Light Me Black* on View November 20, 2009 to January 24, 2010**

Italian born, Berlin-based artist **Monica Bonvicini (b. 1965)** creates videos, sculptures, installations, and drawings that explore the physical and psychological effects of institutional, particularly museum, architecture. The first ***focus*** contemporary art exhibition presented in the Art Institute of



Chicago's Modern Wing, ***Monica Bonvicini: Light Me Black***—on view **November 20, 2009 through January 24, 2010**—directly engages with the Renzo Piano–designed building. Bringing together an early iconic work entitled *Plastered, 1998–present* and a newly commissioned sculpture, this site-specific installation acknowledges the aesthetic achievements of the building while hinting at its potential vulnerabilities.

Favoring industrial materials that reference the modernist canon, such as metal and glass, Bonvicini confronts the power structures and contradictions inherent in built environments. Her work consistently prompts a deeper engagement with one's surroundings: a reminder that there is no such thing as a neutral space. In *Plastered* (1998) the entire gallery floor is constructed out of unfinished drywall panels—bringing the pristine white walls of the

museum down to the floor. Creating a surface that progressively cracks and fragments over the course of the exhibition as visitors move through the space, this work foregrounds the vulnerability and instability of the supposedly timeless museum environment.

Light Me Black is inspired by Renzo Piano's reference to the Modern Wing as "a temple of light . . . a building about light and lightness" and consists of an immense sculpture comprising 144 custom-built fixtures fitted with bright white fluorescent tubes.

Commissioned specifically for this *focus* show, this sculpture is conceptually based on data collected about the artificial illumination in the Modern Wing, and concentrated in the square footage of the gallery housing the installation. The work's intense glow illuminates the entire exhibition and creates a disorienting, uncomfortable spectacle at odds with the symmetrical, light-filled, and levitational quality of the Modern Wing as a whole.

The third component of the installation involves untitled laminated safety glass panels mounted directly on the gallery walls. The glass sheets depict altered renderings of several of Bonvicini's previous large-scale text-based sculptural installations. Dropped letters and reversed text function to critique the Modern Wing's claims to transparency and stability.

The exhibition title, *Light Me Black*, a twist on the 1966 song *Paint It Black* by the Rolling Stones, refers to this interplay between light and dark. The "me" in the title also attempts to bring the experience of the art out of the realm of the institution, transforming it into a personal, physical encounter in which the audience must take action. Disoriented by light and walking a crumbling floor, visitors directly confront their assumptions about architectural monuments and the modernist sensibility.

Monica Bonvicini: Light Me Black is curated by Lisa Dorin, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, the Art Institute of Chicago. Ongoing support for *focus* exhibitions is provided by the Alfred L. McDougal and Nancy Lauter McDougal Fund for Contemporary Art.

IMAGE: Monica Bonvicini, *Light Me Black*, 2009. Fluorescent lighting fixtures. 1.6 x 1.4 x 5.3 m. (5 ¼ x 4 ¾ x 17 ½ ft.).
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin

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MUSEUM HOURS

10:30 am–5:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

10:30 am–8:00 pm Thursday

10:00 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

TARGET FREE THURSDAY EVENINGS AFTER 5:00 pm

SUMMER HOURS (from Memorial Day to Labor Day)

10:30 am–5:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

10:30 am–9:00 pm Thursday, Friday

10:00 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

TARGET FREE SUMMER EVENINGS THURSDAY AND FRIDAY AFTER 5:00 pm

FREE FEBRUARY 1 TO 28

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

ADMISSION

Adults \$18.00 Includes all special exhibitions and coat check

Children 14 and over, students, and seniors \$12.00 Includes all special exhibitions and coat check

Chicago residents receive a \$2.00 discount with proof of residency

Children under 14 always free

Members always free

Free Evenings are free to all. City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Museum Passport" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago.

The Art Institute of Chicago is a museum in Chicago's Grant Park, located across from Millennium Park. Visitors can enter the museum via the Michigan Avenue entrance or the Millennium Park entrance on Monroe Street.