

Goshka Macuga

(Warsaw, Poland, 1967)

Incorporating the roles of artist, curator, historian, and researcher, Goshka Macuga develops her work in relation to various exhibition contexts. Beginning with in-depth research, Macuga develops connections, juxtapositions, and associations among events, characters, and cultural artifacts, investigating the relationships that link art with history, politics, and memory. Rather than providing answers, her practice is involved with the ability to raise questions and to subject the mechanisms for the production of culture and knowledge to a continuous process of review, from a perspective that restores to the individual the responsibility for collective history.

Invited to participate in the Biennale di Ceramica in Albisola in 2006, Macuga first completely immersed herself in the history of artists who had worked in this Ligurian town. Among these, she focused particularly on Pinot Gallizio, finding certain correspondences between that Piedmontese artist's method and her own, such as the ambition to create "total" environments, capable of accommodating the creativity of many different minds. In *Untitled - after Pinot Gallizio (1955)*, dated 2006, Macuga brings together some drawings Gallizio made in 1955 in collaboration with the artist Piero Simondo, and she presents them with some of her own ceramics, inspired by those very drawings. Re-implementing the expressive potential of projects that Gallizio only partially brought to fruition, Macuga's complex work extends the realization of these fertile intersections and creative exchanges that Gallizio had earlier fostered, bringing them right up to the present moment and recognizing them as an integral part of her own practice.

The installation *The Nature of the Beast*, 2009, is inspired by events related to Picasso's famous painting *Guernica* and its use in the political realm. Only two years following its creation, in 1939, the work was exhibited at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. The occasion was an exhibition—organized in conjunction with a fundraising effort—aiming to sensitize the public to the cruelties perpetrated by the German Fascists against the Spanish people. In 1955 Picasso's painting was the source for a tapestry version, commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller. The tapestry is exhibited at the United Nations headquarters in New York, where it is installed outside the Security Chamber, a place where important statements to the press are made. In 2003, when Colin Powell, speaking from the United Nations Headquarters, argued in favor of the attack against Iraq, the tapestry was intentionally covered with a blue curtain.

Macuga's installation consists of a new tapestry inspired by photographs taken at the Whitechapel in 2009, when the artist, on the occasion of the gallery's reopening, arranged to borrow the Rockefeller tapestry from New York. It acts as a backdrop for a large round table with chairs, elements that in turn have a considerable number of historical references. The work, which includes a statue of Powell, is presented as a meeting place and a platform available for public debates and conferences. (MB)