

ARTnews

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Monica Bonvicini, *Built for Crime*, 2006, broken safety glass, lightbulbs, 5 dimmer packs, lan box, 4' x 40½'.
SculptureCenter.

Monica Bonvicini

SculptureCenter

Viewers entering the SculptureCenter's courtyard were greeted by the word "desire" writ large in capital letters formed of stainless steel burnished to a mirror finish. The flashy construction, by the provocative sculptor Monica Bonvicini, resembled a freestanding billboard placed near the courtyard's back wall. It seemed to comment on the reflective and self-reflexive nature of desire, as well as on consumerist fantasies and the fetishization of objects and materials—all as transitory as desire itself. It could also be read as a challenge or an order.

Inside the cavernous main gallery, white lightbulbs spelled out "built for crime" in a 40-foot-long string of capital letters. The work suggested a 1940s movie marquee flashing the latest noir feature. The ambiguous, glittery menace of the words was reinforced by the painful brightness

of the lights, which was bearable for only a few seconds, a much shorter interval than the one at which Bonvicini—who clearly wants to assault viewers' senses—set the on-off cycle.

These two dramatic, boldly enigmatic text installations by the Venice-born, Berlin-based artist—known best for her eroticized social commentary and her deconstructions of male egos and institutions—highlighted her most distinctive qualities: an oblique delivery and a kind of ironic jocularly, which can sometimes end up sabotaging the message. This can be a good thing insofar as it renders the work less didactic and politically correct.

While these works looked somewhat lost in the context of this vast space, they became more interesting as the various meanings of the unanchored words became clearer. The title of the show, "Never Missing a Line"—a dare if ever there was one—adds its own riddles to Bonvicini's ambivalence and to her theater of the absurd.

—Lilly Wei