

Alicja Kwade

Dimora Dislocata

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"The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper."
- Arthur Stanley Eddington

MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to announce *Dimora Dislocata*, an exhibition by Alicja Kwade specifically conceived for the spaces of Casa Corbellini-Wassermann - her first project with the gallery in Milan. Drawing from twenty years of her practice, it brings together a unique selection of works that appear, at first glance, to be ordinary. In the former apartment of Casa Corbellini-Wassermann - a space that still carries the memory of the home it once was - they find their perfect setting.

In *The Nature of the Physical World*, published in 1928, the English physicist Arthur Stanley Eddington proposed that every object exists twice. "Two tables! Yes; there are duplicates of every object about me - two tables, two chairs, two pens." The first table he had always known: solid, coloured, substantial, the unquestioned furniture of daily life. The second had been revealed to him through years of physics - mostly empty space, a temporary agreement between particles that had decided, for the time being, to behave like a surface. Both tables existed. They occupied the same place at the same time, one known to the senses, one known to physics, and between them - that thin, vertiginous gap - the world kept its secrets. Alicja Kwade has spent the better part of twenty years in exactly that gap - inside the most ordinary objects imaginable, attending to what lies within them and beyond them, from the smallest particle to the scale of the universe.

Six years after Eddington wrote those words, on Viale Lombardia, the architect Piero Portaluppi began building a house. The commission came from two families: the Corbellinis and the Wassermanns, heirs to a German pharmaceutical fortune. Among their forebears was August von Wassermann, the bacteriologist who in 1906 had devised the first reliable blood test for syphilis - a method for finding what the body conceals, for making the invisible legible. Portaluppi, who had his own ideas about surfaces and what lies beneath them, gave them exactly the house that followed.

The façade is clad in grey and rose marble, but only at the piano nobile; above, it gives way to plain white plaster, as if the building had spent its grandeur early and was resting. Inside, fifteen varieties of marble - among them verde Roja, bianco di Carrara and rosso di Levanto. Along the garden façade, a helical staircase spirals upward, salvaged from a pavilion Portaluppi had shown at the Triennale di Milano in 1933. The windows are wide and horizontal, hungry for light. The rooms move between austerity and excess never quite deciding what they want to confess.

Casa Corbellini-Wassermann exists in two registers at once - former home and exhibition space, private history and public present. A space suspended between what it was and what it is now, familiar and slightly elsewhere at the same time: a dislocated dwelling - *Dimora Dislocata*. It is here that Kwade assembled a world.

Walking through these rooms, something has shifted. Objects that appear familiar reveal themselves, on second glance, to be something else entirely - pinned to stillnesses they were never designed for, buckling under weights that have no business being there, standing in the middle of rooms as if they have forgotten what they were originally for. Things have been taken apart and begun again, matter honouring its oldest instinct: not to disappear, only to transform. Letters written in a hand that is and isn't Kwade's. Everything here carries a former life inside it, or a question, or both.

There is something of Giorgio de Chirico and the Pittura Metafisica in these rooms - the object displaced just enough from its context to reveal its enigmatic essence - and something of Arte Povera's conviction that materials carry their own history, that matter, submitted to the right kind of pressure, will always confess what it is actually made of. But the strangeness Kwade finds is not borrowed from the subconscious. It was already there, in the object, in the matter, in the gap between the two tables.

Between every object, in the quality of silence that has gathered in these rooms, something vibrates. The feeling - soft, persistent, impossible to locate precisely - that the apartment has not stopped being an

apartment, that the lives lived here have not entirely left but thinned, become permeable, made space. By the time the last room is reached, it is no longer entirely clear what was known coming in, and what has shifted since. A kind of strange dream is produced - like waking in the middle of the night and believing, for a moment, to recognise a person in a chair.

Alicja Kwade

Alicja Kwade (b. 1979 in Katowice, Poland) lives and works in Berlin.

Alicja Kwade is known internationally for sculpture, expansive public installation, film, photography and works on paper that challenge scientific and philosophical concepts by dismantling the boundaries of perception. Her distinctive artistic language involves reflection, repetition, and the deconstruction and reconstruction of everyday objects and natural materials in an effort to explore the essence of our reality and to examine social structures. Often veering towards the absurd and transforming commonly accepted assumptions into open-ended questions, her poetic and mesmerizing oeuvre disrupts familiar systems and searches for new explanations to comprehend our world.

Kwade has exhibited widely at institutions including Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk; Whitechapel Gallery, London; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA; Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin; Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Espoo; and Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich. Over the past years, she has increasingly worked in the public realm, creating vast installations that respond to the architecture and the natural phenomena of various sites. In 2019, Kwade was commissioned to create a monumental installation for the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Two sculptures made of steel and enormous spherical rocks to evoke a solar system settled temporarily above Manhattan's skyline. For her 2022 installation *Au Cours Des Mondes* on Place Vendôme in Paris the artist set a dialogue between natural stone globes affixed to endless concrete stairs and a set of natural stone spheres. Both works explore our place in the world, underlying mechanisms of

power and our relationship to knowledge thereof. Other notable installations include a 2022 participation at Desert X AIUla and an acclaimed presentation at the 57th Venice Biennale Viva Arte Viva in 2017.

Her works are part of numerous public collections, such as the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington; LACMA - Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek; Mudam - Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; and mumok - Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna.