FRIEZE

Ghislaine Leung Causes a Short Circuit
By Barbara Casavecchia

Installation view, Ghislaine Leung, *SCORES*, Ordet, Milan, Italy, 2022

From time to time, we may find ourselves dreaming of a perfectly safe space: a cosy bubble sealed off from all the dangers and let-downs of the world. Such fantasies have little to do with reality, however. Sheltering-in-place for the past two years has taught us hard lessons about isolation: the inequitable distribution of it, the alienation, monotony and anxiety it induces. Our collective containment also exposed other harsh mechanisms of separation, often hidden in plain sight: the enclosures that regulate our social relations and means of subsistence: that is, the apparatus (dispositif) of power, as Michel Foucault would call it. In his lecture 'Society Must Be Defended' (1975–76), the French philosopher explains: 'Power is exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power. They are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays.'

In 'SCORES', London-based artist Ghislaine Leung's solo exhibition at Ordet, power, isolation and networks are made visible, in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The works exhibited rely on the circulation and consumption of energy to function; they also manifest the entangled relations of co-dependency with the art system and marketplace that allow an independent space, such as Ordet, to exist. The title refers to the set of instructions provided by the artist on the collocation

of different ready-made objects inside the space, as well as to the orchestration of the potential movements of visitors inside it.

Ghislaine Leung, *Shrooms*, 2016 (detail). Mushroom nightlights. Dimensions variable. Installation view, Ordet, Milan, Italy.

Each of the gallery's three rooms is guarded by a big, white, inflatable arch of the same size and design, bearing the word 'Welcome' (Arches, 2021). This restrained, white-cube- friendly version of a garish kids' outdoor inflatable is kept up by a generator working only during opening hours: over time, the internal pressure decreases and the work's message proves a little less buoyant and convincing. By the third time of reading, its candid exuberance starts to dwindle, like a store entrance bell, which greets all customers with the same cheerful tone.

All thresholds are protected by white baby gates (Gates, 2019), discouraging unattended movement and limiting accessibility to those who know how to bypass the gates. Mushroom-shaped night lights (Shrooms, 2016), plugged into every available socket, diffuse a cosy, lethargic-yellow glow. Alongside repetition, there is difference: a small photo pinned to the wall shows a domestic scene, with Leung smiling between two old people on a couch; their closeness is evident, but their degree of kinship remains undisclosed (Power Relations, 2021).

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Neatly lined up along the walls of one room, three series of objects stand in for the anonymous donors, sponsors and supporters who help run Ordet (Violets 3, 2019). The artist instructed each of them to provide a minimum of one object for display, without restrictions. There are a couple of lamps, a shipping box, a Pantone colour set, a harness leash, a bike rack ripped from the ground, a longboard, a melting pot, a Barbie doll dressed in salmon chiffon, a silver teapot, a box of blueberry mints and an iconic black, Pan-shaped cocktail stirrer from the Chateau Marmont hotel in Hollywood. These objects share the privilege of uniqueness, as simulacra for the celebration of those who kindly lent their personal collections in exchange for opaque visibility. As Stefano Faoro writes in the show's companion text: 'Here are currencies [...] for our endless exchanges of value'. We know that capital is not a real thing: it only exists as the result of our social interactions. Sometimes, we may decide to pull its plug.