

ROMAN ROAD

PRESS RELEASE MARIE ORENSANZ *SHUTDOWN!*

Private View:

Wednesday 21 February 2018, 6pm – 8pm

Exhibition:

Thursday 22 February – Saturday 24 March 2018

Opening Hours:

Wednesday – Friday, 10am – 6pm

Saturday, 12pm – 5pm and by appointment

Roman Road is pleased to present *Shutdown!*, the first solo exhibition by Marie Orensanz with the gallery. Featuring selected works from the 1970s to the present day, the show looks at how an early discovery of the political power of words made a lasting impression on Orensanz' conceptual practice.

During the turbulent and oppressive years of Onganía's dictatorial rule in Argentina (1966-1970), Orensanz created her installation *El pueblo de la Gallareta* (The village of Gallareta, 1969), following a poignant encounter with workers from a small village in the Santa Fe province. The workers gave her a pamphlet that contained the following text: "The people of La Gallareta fight for their sole source of employment." Her installation, in which she reproduced these words on the walls of a gallery, was in ode to these villagers, who were imminently losing their livelihoods since the factories where they worked were about to close their doors. The day after its opening, Orensanz' exhibition was shutdown, stopping any further interaction with this consequential phrase.

Beginning with that installation, words have continued to reappear in Orensanz' later works. In the 1970s, when she moved to Italy and began to develop her unique sculptural language, her works started to display only parts of sentences or fragmented text; isolated and combined with symbols, words and letters are separated from their intrinsic meanings and form new associations in the viewer's mind. Her drawings, minimalistic and diagrammatic, often seem nonsensical, but together they hint at a whole that is never entirely revealed. They push the viewer to interpret the work on their own terms and refuse to allow one reading of the work to be dominant, or to be rendered censorable.

Shutdown! presents a collection of sculptural and framed works from Orensanz' oeuvre, including a variation of *Pensar es un hecho revolucionario*, a piece from 1974, recently shown in *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. The exhibition opens on Wednesday 21 February and will be on display at Roman Road until 24 March 2018.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Marie Orensanz (b. 1936) is an Argentinian artist living and working in Paris. She began her career studying painting in Buenos Aires under Argentinian Modernist masters Emilio Pettoruti and Antonio Seguí. In 1972, Orensanz moved to Milan and began working with sculpture after discovering the Carrara marble quarries. It was here that she developed her unique sculptural language, utilising found fragments of marble to explore concepts of incompleteness, symbolism and the relationship between linguistic and visual modes of representation. These ideas were drawn together in Orensanz' 1978 "Manifiesto of Fragmentism," in which she explains the conceptual basis of her work and develops her preoccupation with the fragment as the basic unit of her artistic production. Over the past decades, Marie Orensanz' work has been shown internationally in solo and group exhibitions. She received a retrospective at Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires (MAMBA) in 2007, and has had solo shows at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Rosario, Argentina; Maison de l'Amérique Latine, Paris, France; and Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her work is held in collections worldwide, including at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Centro de Multimedia Internacional, São Paulo, Brazil; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France; and Bremen Museum, Germany.

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Marie Orensanz, *Aimant la Terre*, 1984. 2 closed pages of white statuary marble with pencil drawings, 15 x 19 x 8 cm, unique. Courtesy of Roman Road and the artist. © Ollie Hammick

ABOUT ROMAN ROAD

Roman Road was founded in 2013 by Marisa Bellani and initially began as a project space. The peculiarity of the premises has had a direct impact on the gallery's programme since its beginning. Tall and with a small footprint, the space led the director to challenge artists to employ the architectural elements in order to develop or restructure a body of work. Artists have frequently been asked to use the exhibition as a medium and have managed to transform the gallery room into a unique work of art. In 2014, the building underwent refurbishment to instate an additional private viewing space that gathers varied works by the gallery's represented artists, which are viewable by appointment. Since completing this renovation in 2015, Roman Road has established a qualitative programme, including participations at art fairs, and has seen its represented artists become internationally recognised by institutions and collectors.

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