

GALERIE DIX9 Hélène Lacharmoise

vue d'installation, 2018



Esmeralda Kosmatopoulos

vue d'installation , 2018

serie Libro d'Oro

neon, gold leaf

Unique artwork

courtesy Galerie Dix9 H  l  ne Lacharmoise

Description:

installation view of a commission curated by Nicolas Vamvouklis, Suzanna Petot and Alexandra Etienne for Gallerie delle Prigioni, Luciano Benetton Collections, Treviso, Italy

Libro d'oro" is a site specific installation that appropriates the symbol of the Guest Book; its basic concept, linguistic codes, and visual imagery, to explore the marks the Other leaves on a place. In Italian, the Guest Book is called Libro d'Oro, or "Golden Book." In this installation, Kosmatopoulos interprets these words in a literal way to imagine the larger-than-life Guest Book of the old Italian jail, home of Luciano Benetton's Gallerie delle Prigioni.

To do so, the artist fully covers one of its cells with gold leaf and places a myriad of texts and drawings throughout the space in the form of white neon signs that represent blown-up versions of actual graffiti left on the stone walls by prisoners over the span of more than two centuries. Beyond its shining walls, the cell remains empty, leaving the observers on their own inside this imaginary environment that evokes the recollection of religious byzantin icons, or palazzos of the Italian Renaissance. Here, the marks of the prisoners are sublimated and celebrated rather than hidden or erased.

Beyond its opulent and quasi-mystical dimension, the piece also invites the viewer to reflect on the role of prisons and the status of the prisoners, as the beauty of the messages comes in direct contrast with the perception they may have of their authors. Dovetailing with Jannis Kounellis' epochal work *Tragedia civile* (1975), the installation comes to question the loss of human identity – in this case that of the prisoner.

Exhibitions:

Gallerie delle Prigioni, Collection Luciano Benetton, Treviso, Italy