

# VIN VIN

**Lydia Ricci**

***You Don't Go Anywhere***

**Curated by Eleonora Milani**

as part of curated by – the gallery festival with international curators in Vienna

**Inauguration:** Friday, September 13, 12 p.m. - 19 p.m.

**Duration:** September 14 – October 19, 2024.

Occupying a space comes before thought. This might be one of the maxims on art uttered by the most radical of conceptualists, or perhaps they would say that it is the idea that comes before anything else: of the object or of the art itself given that it is the medium, to quote Sol LeWitt.

Even so, I insist on prioritising space and the urgency of occupying it, be it with the body, with the idea or with the object, this attitude is what has made us, we as human beings, producers. Irrepressible producers. How we decide to occupy our space in the world undoubtedly determines the ideas that follow and in turn generates an infinite number of ideal spaces that we end up internalising. In dancing, something similar happens; in classical technique, everything is contained in that ideal square, the one we derive by drawing a circle around us with our leg extended and our foot at its maximum extension. Yet such space has never been sufficient for anyone. We have deconstructed every conviction and every category, in every form of art. And I look at art today against a background steeped in the deconstructions of the isms and “posts-” of the last century.

It is an awareness, or a banality of us humans: we are not sufficient for ourselves, either within that ideal space or beyond it. During my first encounter with the “things” of Lydia Ricci (born and raised in Pennsylvania), I thought those *things*—mainly small objects, real, curious and melancholic—really said a lot about humankind. I put that background on hold and place those works into a liminal space before thought and categories. Here I am speaking of a memory that passes through the senses—and memories and for which only the very first input from the brain suffices, putting its superstructures on hold. Lydia Ricci has been working on her objects for about sixteen years. A time frame, nearly more than half of her life, she was devoted to observing the world on an altered scale, more similar to that of children.

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Infants learn to be in the world through things, always testing gravity in relation to something else, without reference or fixed spatial and scalar criteria. This seems to be how Ricci's objects work. Exiguous, her sculptures are made from discarded materials and debris salvaged from an infinity of objects accumulated by her family for over thirty years: her Italian father and her Ukrainian mother who emigrated to America with her family in the 1940s to escape the Stalinist regime. These sculptures are the result of dilated time that seems to function like Proustian memory. Lydia Ricci's works are familiar because they reflect the way we exist and relate to the world. They are real-not-real reworkings of objects, small, even useless, mostly miniature things. They live in contingency. That is why they are melancholic, bittersweet and imperfect. They are also a reflection of the stasis of existence that we have shaped according to constructed feelings, to which we have forcibly attached forms, places, labels.

Lydia Ricci fabricates her objects with maniacal care, zeroing the scalar difference between her and them: they exist in relation to her gaze, which is divorced from dimensional scales and specs. This is why she photographs her sculptures in tableaux that distort the criteria of size and transport the objects into a time which lives in a feeble memory. The artist lives her infinite number of spaces together with her objects, in a tender, visceral and at times inaccessible symbiosis. She begins to produce her first objects to exorcise an everyday weakness, and the resulting hyperproduction is merely a domestic therapy that occupies the interstices of memory and voids.

Ricci questions herself on universal feelings like joy, looking at its dark side: the filters we have put in front of fun, of that muffled happy time. We needed to construct places, objects and tools designated for playing that conceal our immobility in front of ourselves, trapped in our carefully engineered structures. Thus, the series of game machines, 8x8x21 cm made from Ukrainian embroidery belonging to her maternal family, and of discarded materials, embody the bleakness of joy, our failure. A veiled sadness and disguised stasis recur in each object and in this exhibition, her first in Europe, in which things go hand in hand with thoughts that become titles of works, existential questions and intimate conversations with her objects.

From this dense dialogue she weaves daily with these things, she develops a series of animations that beyond visual *divertissement* conceal a discomfort pertinent to everyday, domestic life.

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Before they are static, her objects are thought of in motion, in a dialogue on par with our existence, so the textual fragments in each multimedia production function like the *punctum* of a photograph, they become fundamental remnants of thought that overpower objects and images.

Objects inhabit our lives because we decide so, until they become part of our own physical and mental landscape. Things remain if we continue to give them a space in which to exist, whether they are rooms or mnemonic archives, as opposed to us. And it is precisely this attitude, at times manic, to accumulate and occupy the space surrounding our infinitesimal existences that relegates us to a condition of paralysis.

We do not exist if not in our own things. We never really go anywhere.

- *Eleonora Milani*

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**LYDIA RICCI**

## **Education**

Carnegie Mellon University, PITTSBURGH, PA BFA Graphic Design 1991-1995  
Schule für Gestaltung, ST GALLEN, SWITZERLAND Graphic Design Spring 1994

also:

University of the Arts, PHILADELPHIA, PA Holga Photography Summer 2013  
University of Georgia, CORTONA, ITALY Printmaking Summer 1998, 2000

## **Exhibitions**

YOU DON'T GO ANYWHERE

VIN VIN Vienna Solo Exhibit / September 2024 - October 2024

DES MOINES ART CENTER

Group Exhibit / October 2023 - January 2024

COVE STREET ARTS

Group Exhibit / September 2023 - November 2024

WOMEN'S STUDIO WORKSHOP

Group Exhibit / July 2023 - September 2023

BERMAN MUSEUM OF ART

Exhibit / January 2022 - April 2023

JOHN MICHAEL KOHLER ARTS CENTER

Exhibit / Aug 2022 - February 2023

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Group Exhibit / January 2022 - May 2023

JAMES OLIVER GALLERY

Group Show / March 2022

I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU

PARADIGMA GALLERY Solo Show / March 2021

TELLING STORIES FROM SCRAPS

Philadelphia International Airport Exhibit / Nov 2019 - May 2020

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HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO YOU

Conduit Gallery / DALLAS

The Project Room / Dec 2019 - Jan 2020

COME TALK TO ME

Huddle / PHILADELPHIA Solo Show / July 2020

PULP & PROCESS

Society of Arts + Crafts / Boston Group show / February - April 2019

FASTER, FASTER!

The Art of Motorcycle Culture Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art Group Show /  
March 2019

OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR Wrong Marfa / TX

Solo Show / February - April 2019

DON'T YOU FORGET ABOUT ME

Morris Adjmi Architect / NY Solo Show / June 2018

MOST INCLINED

Space 1026 / Philadelphia Group Show / May 2018

BADASS MINIATURES

D. Thomas Fine Miniatures / COLD SPRING, NY Group Show / May 2018

PIECEMEAL

The Indianapolis Art Center Group Show / February 2018

UNLISTED

The Ice Box Project Space / PHILADELPHIA Group Show / 2016

## **Experience**

Adjunct Professor

SCHOOL OF DESIGN

University of the Arts 2010 - 2024

Designer BRANDING, PACKAGING, BOOKS & MARKETING

Clients included: Chronicle Books, Bank of America, Bare Escentuals, QVC,  
Juice Beauty, Aramark Introduction Design Studio 1998 - 2018

Podcast & Film Producer BRANDING & MARKETING, PRODUCTION

Roam Schooled 2015- 2019 At the Video Store 2017-2019 OH, DENISE! (in  
production)

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## Recent Press

An Artist's Miniature Monuments to Big Memories

Hyperallergic

Everyday objects sculpted from scraps - in pictures

The Guardian Mother Tongue Jerry Saltz LadyCult

## ELEONORA MILANI

Eleonora Milani is a writer, editor and independent curator based in Rome. She graduated in art history from the University Sapienza in Rome. She formerly worked as an editor for *Flash Art* magazine from 2016 to 2023, and as a managing editor from 2019 to 2023 at both editions, International and Italian. She teaches "Critical Writing" at the MA in Visual Studies and Curatorial Practices at NABA - Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Rome; previously she held the same course at NABA Milano (2019-2022). She contributes to international art magazines including Spike and 032c. Her current research investigates practices that refer to time-based media and performance art in institutional spaces. She curated a group show "intergenerational forms" with new commissions by James Bantone, Simone Holliger, PRICE at Galleria Francesca Minini, Milan (May-July 2024).