

Barbara Kasten

20.3.–25.4.26

Surrealist Spiral

“My work has changed from a photograph as an object to now using photographic, the essence of photography. Light, photograms, pattern of light and dark contrast, shadows, all of that are photographic properties, but now I’ve taken them solely out of a photograph and used all those in different ways, that’s more physical and more sculptural. One that one can experience more than just looking at it, you’re actually in it.”

The re-enactment of the relationships between body, space and material has been at the heart of Barbara Kasten’s installations, photographs and objects for over five decades. Originally trained as a painter and sculptor in the 1960s, in the 1970s Barbara Kasten studied under the renowned representatives of textile art Trude Guermonprez and Magdalena Abakanowicz. During this period, she began exploring the dynamics between the body and its social environment. At the beginning of her career, this was impressively demonstrated by the textile objects “Seated Form” (1971/72) and the diazotype prints “Figure/Chair” (1972/73). The body as an “image-creating element” remains invisible yet decisive in Barbara Kasten’s subsequent abstract groups of works to this day. All abstract motifs are based on analog installations with props such as mirrors, metal grids, or plastic elements in her studio, which Barbara Kasten “stages” with light in relation to her own body. The relevance of the body within Barbara Kasten’s oeuvre was remarkably expressed in the stage design for the Jenkins Dance Academy’s 1985 production of *Inside Outside/Stages of Light*.



Barbara Kasten and Margaret Jenkins, *Inside Outside/Stages of Light*, 1985
Photo: Bonnie Kamin

Barbara Kasten’s tenth exhibition, entitled “Surrealist Spiral,” focuses on the physicality within her work and, for the first time, shows her series of photographs “Masks” from 1998 alongside her unique cyanotype



DLWP II, 2024

Digital chromogenetic print / fujiflex chrysal archive

106,7 x 71 cm

works “Hierophany” from 1996 in dialogue with her most recent series of DLWP photographs and “Mural Flats” from 2023-2025. The motifs are both adaptations and abstractions of spatial and physical reality. Their aesthetic is reminiscent of the digital illusions that are part of our contemporary synthetic visual world, yet they are produced using analog techniques. The images of the “Masks” are based on the surreal staging of male and female bodies in “oneiric light spaces.” The mask as a prop reinforces the “rapture” of the body from our familiar reality towards the abstraction of the psychological. The “light paintings” in the “Hierophany” series are abstract, impasto cyanotype works. A light-sensitive emulsion was applied to heavyweight paper and exposed to the sun. Through this unique working process, organic, amorphous color reliefs in blue and white were created, which, despite their impasto-like characteristics, simultaneously allow the viewer to experience mental transcendence. In fact, the title is also a play on words. In Greek, it is a combination of the meanings ‘holy’ and ‘to reveal, to bring to light’. Barbara Kasten’s latest series of DLWP photographs literally embodies the transcendence of real experience into abstract space.

Kadel Willborn

Birkenstraße 3 & 20
D – 40233 Düsseldorf
www.kadel-willborn.de

Barbara Kasten

20.3.–25.4.26

Surrealist Spiral

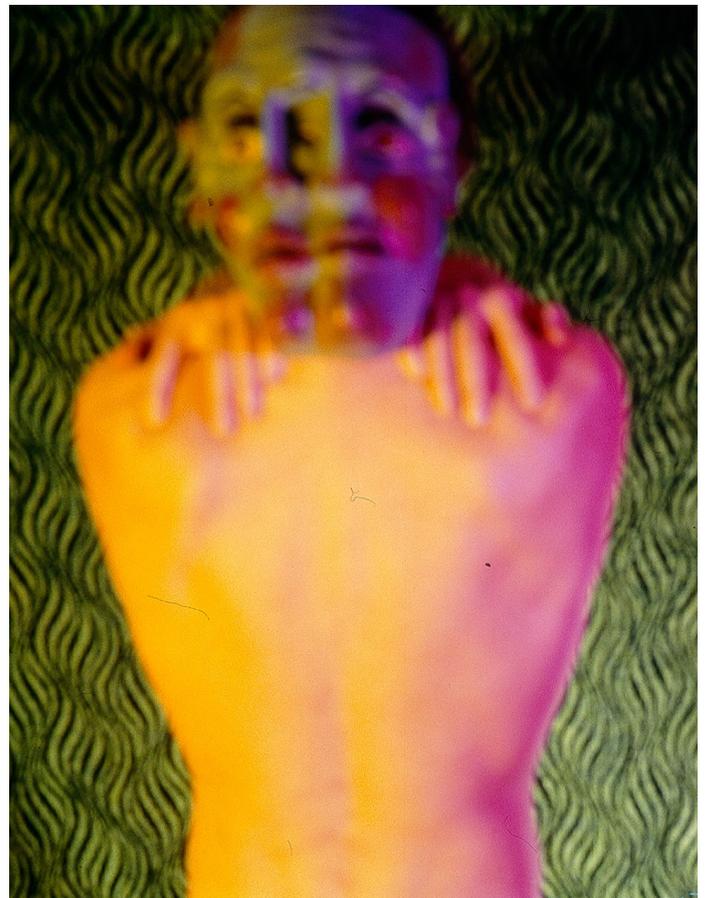
The motifs are based on the staging of her space-filling installation with colored mirrors and geometric plastic objects for her solo exhibition at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill in 2023. If one looks closely at the painterly, gestural forms „tamed“ by geometric grids, one sees flashes of elements from the coastal landscape of southern England. Similar to Barbara Kasten's „Architectural Site“ series of the 1980s, here real space is analogously re-staged by Kasten into an abstract composition, dependent solely on her own bodily position and perspective. The freestanding elements „Mural Flats“ are currently also part of her solo exhibition at the Zachęta Museum in Warsaw, where their reflections allow visitors to physically experience the transition between different perceptions of reality.



Barbara Kasten installing her exhibition *Centric 2*: Barbara Kasten, *installation/photographs*, University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach 1982 © Barbara Kasten, courtesy University Art Museum, California State University Long Beach.

Biographical Note:

Barbara Kasten (b. 1936 in Chicago, Illinois) lives and works in Chicago. She received her BFA from the University of Arizona in 1959 and MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1970. Her work has been exhibited across the United States and Europe. Most recently, Kasten was the subject of a major survey exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, which traveled to Sammlung Goetz Munich, Germany, „Scenarios“, Aspen Art Museum (all 2020-22) and „Site Lines“, De La Warr Pavilion Bexhill, UK (2024). Currently, the Zachęta Museum Warsaw is dedicating a solo exhibition to her. In 2026, the Akron Art Museum will open a solo exhibition for Kasten and the Josef Albers Museum Bottrop will dedicate the next comprehensive solo show in Europe to her. Recent exhibitions include Barbara Kasten: „Making Their



Double Face Back, 1998

Fujiflex Crystal Archive print

76 x 61 cm

Mark“, Berkeley Art Museum (2024-2025), „Dialogues“, EMMA - Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Espoo, FIN, PAMM Miami (both 2025) „Re-Inventing Piet. Mondrian und die Folgen“, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen (2023), „Women in Abstraction“, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, and Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain (2021); the Busan Biennale (2020) or „Shape of Light: 100 Years of Photography and Abstract Art“, Tate Modern, London (2018). Her work is featured in collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NY, Tate Modern, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Centre Pompidou, Kunstsammlung NRW, Kunstpalast Düsseldorf or Pinakothek der Moderne Munich, amongst others.

Kadel Willborn

Birkenstraße 3 & 20
D – 40233 Düsseldorf
www.kadel-willborn.de