

BARBARA KASTEN

*CHROMA*

FEBRUARY 11 - APRIL 4, 2020

In collaboration with Bortolami, New York

3400 W Washington Blvd, Los Angeles 90018

Hosted by Kristina Kite Gallery

Organized in collaboration with Bortolami Gallery, New York, *Chroma* brings together a selection of Barbara Kasten's photographic works from 1986-2019. In juxtaposing recent works with those created more than three decades ago, the exhibition sheds new light on Kasten's abiding interest in color, form, light, and spatial representation.

Kasten's most recent photographs are vivid compositions constructed from planes of fluorescent Plexiglass and expert lighting techniques. Works like *Collision 5 T* (2016) and *Collision 6 E* (2017) feature high-keyed colors that shift in tone and hue due to the expiration date of the film used. As physical matter dissolves into pure light these images become visual puzzles in which color is afforded a rare autonomy. With light sources that are hard to decipher and sectors of color that seem to pulse with an inner glow, Kasten's photographs feel at home in a contemporary image culture awash with stylized distortions born of digital editing. Kasten's effects, however, take shape well before she releases the shutter of her camera. In the studio she arranges and configures the materials until they align for an optimal image. Lights of varied intensities and colored gels give shape to overlapping shadows and new color combinations. Kasten perfects her photographs through a process of experimentation and staging in front of the camera.

Among the artists who have inspired Kasten since she started are modernist masters like László Moholy-Nagy and the Russian Constructivists. Dedicated to developing the language of geometric abstraction, these artists studied the ways light interacts with three-dimensional volume. In groundbreaking compositions they devised new ways to represent this relationship on a two-dimensional surface. Kasten began her own experiments in this vein in the 1970's. To make her *Construct* and *Metaphase* series she staged sculpted forms and used saturated light gels to elicit hallucinatory scenes that seem to defy the laws of physics. These early successes laid the groundwork for images like *Crown Hall 1* (2018-2019) and *Crown Hall 2* (2018-2019), which were produced during a summer-long residency at the Illinois Institute of Technology working in the iconic S. R. Crown Hall, designed by Mies Van der Rohe. In these works planes of fluorescent acrylic intersect with architectural details, furniture forms, and the diffused light of the space to create a body of work in which architectural space dissolves into abstraction.

Early in her career Kasten occasionally exhibited the sculpture and stagings captured in her photographs. Such pairings highlighted for viewers the alluring, hyper-real effects made possible through photography and gave view to her process of translating three-dimensional objects in space into the two-dimensional plane of a photograph. Concurrently with the opening of *Chroma*, Hannah Hoffman and Bortolami will exhibit at Frieze Los Angeles *Intervention* (2018) Kasten's most ambitious freestanding sculpture to date. In a dramatic composition, *Intervention* casts shadows on the wall and floor – what Kasten deems “temporary photograms” – and brings the elements she typically captures and dematerializes through the camera lens, out into physical space. Originally realized as part of *Creative Chicago: An Interview Marathon* with Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Intervention* incorporates many of the same elements used in her *Crown Hall* series.

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. She is a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow, NEA Grant recipient, and a Fulbright-Hays Fellow. In 2015, her survey exhibition *Barbara Kasten: Stages* originated at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, travelled to the Graham Foundation in Chicago and MoCA in Los Angeles. Her work has been exhibited globally, including in the Sharjah Biennial 14, United Arab Emirates; TATE Modern, London; Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt, Germany; Tokyo Metro Museum of Photography, Tokyo; the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. among many others. This year, Kasten will be the subject of solo exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg in Germany and the Aspen Art Museum.