

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new and early works by Marisa Merz. Known for her unusual use of materials, such as copper wire, clay, and wax, Merz makes sculptures and drawings that reflect a poetic sensibility, which delicately entwines her vision of art and life. The exhibition will feature painting, sculpture, and works on paper, and will highlight Merz's pioneering role as a central figure and the only female artist in the Arte Povera movement.

The Arte Povera movement, which formed during the late 1960s and was given a formal name by Germano Celant in 1967, called into question established ideas and assumptions about the processes and materials that had come to define the Western artistic practice. Merz, along with the other innovative, seminal artists associated with Arte Povera, including her late husband Mario Merz, began using everyday and organic materials in an effort to subvert the elite status that the art object had attained in its role in the consumerism-based culture of advanced capitalism.

Using abstracted, organic forms, Merz creates intimate portraits and sculptures that insist on subjectivity and ever-shifting meaning, espousing her belief that every shape must be capable of transforming into another shape. Merz attests that she draws no distinction between her art and her life, and her work advances a critical framework that draws on traditional customs associated with female domesticity, using craft techniques and unconventional materials to explore the infinite possibilities of the everyday. Throughout Merz's oeuvre, the figure of the face emerges – a symbol of the eternal human spirit. Composed of fleeting arabesque lines, Merz's figures are disconnected from any social or narrative context. Instead, each reveals a ghostly configuration of abstracted features that defy expressions of individual identity, fixing each form in a state of suspended time.

Marisa Merz was born in 1926 in Turin, Italy. She has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at museums including: Centre Internationale d'art et du Paysage, Île de Vassivière, France; Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples, Italy; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, among other international venues. Selected group exhibitions include: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein; CCS Bard/Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; Tate Modern, London; and the Hirschhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. This summer she will be included in "Il Palazzo Enciclopedico/The Encyclopedic Palace" at the 2013 La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Massimiliano Gioni.

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