

The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is pleased to present *Barbara Kasten: Stages*, the first major monographic survey of the work of artist Barbara Kasten, February 4 – August 16, 2015. Organized in conversation with the artist and with full access to her extensive archive, the exhibition includes approximately eighty works spanning nearly five decades of Kastens's career—from her early experiments in the 1970s and brightly colored photographic studio constructions of the 1980s to a new site-specific installation. Although Kasten is primarily recognized for her photographs, her expansive practice has developed through the lens of many different disciplines, including sculpture, painting, theater, textile, and installation.

*Barbara Kasten: Stages* situates Kasten's work within current conversations around sculpture, abstraction, and photography, tracing its roots to the unique and provocative intersection of Bauhaus-influenced pedagogy in America, the California Light and Space movement, and postmodernism. Kasten's concern with the interplay between three-dimensional and two-dimensional forms, her interest in staging and the role of the prop, her cross-disciplinary process, and the way she has developed new approaches to abstraction and materiality are all intensely relevant to the present artistic moment. Pushing her work forward, she is constantly folding older concerns into new contexts, as energized by the ideas and innovations of her younger artistic peers as they are by hers.

This exhibition focuses on selections from major bodies of work spanning the 1970s to the present. It brings together and contextualizes for the first time Kasten's earliest fiber sculptures, mixed media works, cyanotype prints, photographic series, and forays into set design, alongside archival material and select video documentation. In addition, Kasten will create an ambitious new architectural-scale video installation in ICA's high space that underscores her interests in light, form, and shadow.'

Barbara Kasten (born 1936, Chicago; lives Chicago) trained as a painter and textile artist, receiving her MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland in 1970. There she studied with pioneering fiber artist Trude Guermonprez, a former teacher at Black Mountain College and an associate of Anni Albers. In 1971 Kasten received a Fulbright to travel to Poznań, Poland, to work with noted sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz. During the 1980s she embarked on her *Construct* series, which incorporates life-size elements such as metal, wire, mesh and mirrors into installations produced specifically for the camera. Kasten was one of the first artists to be invited by Polaroid to use its new large format film, and it was with this that she made many of her best known works, her palate became bolder in response to the lush, saturated quality of the medium.

In the mid-1980s Kasten stepped out of the studio and began working with large architectural spaces that were symbolic of both economic and cultural capital. Institutions such as the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, designed by Richard Meier, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, designed by Arata Isozaki, as well as the World Financial Center in New York, designed by César Pelli, were eager to showcase their new postmodern buildings via the cinematic lighting, mirrors, and fabrications that were part of her monumental productions. Following these architectural projects she continued working on a large scale, creating dramatic displays in the midst of ancient ruins. After that she shifted her focus to talismanic objects and artifacts, returning to the cyanotype process she had embraced at the beginning of her career, Kasten's most recent work has taken her back to the studio, where she has explored a more minimal palette with many of the same materials that shaped her early constructed photographs. Over the years her vocabulary and interests have provided a through-line and given a unity to her artwork, even as she has experimented with multiple processes from cyanotypes and Polaroids to Cibachromes and video installations.

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