

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Lynda Benglis: *Spettri*

Private view: 14 December, 6-8pm

Exhibition dates: 17 December 2019 – 14 March 2020

Thomas Dane Gallery
Via Francesco Crispi, 69
Naples

‘How far can I go, also, with the illusion of the material? How far can I go with it expressing something that is inside me? How can I make it work visually? It’s a matter of drawing, always. It’s a matter of creating an image that moves.’

Lynda Benglis

Since the 1960s, Lynda Benglis has pioneered free, ecstatic forms that are simultaneously playful and visceral, organic and abstract. She began her career in the midst of the male-dominated art scene of downtown New York in the late 1960s, which she took by storm with her latex poured *fallen* paintings, disrupting the hegemony of Pop and Minimalism as well as the genres of painting and sculpture, with inimitable provocation and freedom. Benglis’ performative approach to sculpture-making is deeply original in the way it consistently pushes conventions and revolves around the body, *her* body—as Benglis has pointed out: ‘*she* (the human) is the form’. Her work—embracing a seemingly boundless variety of materials from beeswax, latex, and polyurethane foam to later innovations with metal, plaster, gold, vaporised metal, glass, ceramics, paper—demonstrates a continued fascination with process, form and movement.

For *Spettri*, Thomas Dane Gallery in Naples brings together seldom documented features of Benglis’ prolific career: weightlessness and light. Benglis’ historic sparkle works are placed in relation to more recent glitter and paper sculptures, enigmatic light vessels, phosphorescent reliefs and rarely seen carved marble knots from the 1980s. This exhibition attempts to trace a voyage through the plethora of locations that her sculpture evokes: In Naples, from the ghosts of Pompeii to the Secret Cabinet of the Archaeological Museum, but also the places in which she continues to live or make work: New Mexico, New York, Greece, India.

Benglis’ nomadic spirit finds an enriched context in Naples, a city home to complex geological and cultural histories. *Spettri* is composed from the spectres of this archaeology, but also of her own repertoire and memories: Benglis vividly remembers her maiden boat journey to Europe in 1953, aged 11; her arrival in a pitch-dark Naples, on her way to her ancestral Greece, and the stampede that followed. Nearly 70 years later, she connects the Mediterranean dots again, having just opened a memorable retrospective of her work at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens. This dialogue reveals a deep reflection on her own practice—its constant metamorphosis, its expanded meanings—given the coalescence of multiple geographies and the alignment of historic and contemporary works. Through texture, form and shape, many of these sculptures inspire animist qualities—that elemental materials and objects possess spiritual essence.

While Benglis’ manipulation of volume may evoke artefacts or ancient relics, her inclusion of sparkles, glitter, and gold-leaf imply ornamentation and excess. The use of surface effects, pattern, and embellishment demonstrates her implicit critique of the gendered category of craft. This surfeit of decoration in her *Lagniappe* series and paper sculptures merges with the bustling atmosphere of Naples and the festive period of Mardi Gras in her native Louisiana. On the *Lagniappe*, Benglis mentions her childhood: ‘In New Orleans, lagniappe means something extra. When there is a parade, they throw presents. They are made of cotton and paper... This is of no value, like cotton candy. It is a bow, a gift of no value, a gesture, an object.’

Traversing the ghosts of multiple geographies and histories, including her extensive practice, *Spettri* presents Benglis’ passionate exploration of sculpture through a lens of delicacy and luminosity.

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Lynda Benglis b. 1941, Lake Charles, Louisiana. Selected institutional solo exhibitions include: *In the Realm of the Senses*, Museum of Cycladic Art, presented by NEON, Athens, Greece (2019); *Lynda Benglis: Face Off*, Kistefos-Museet, Jevnaker, Norway (2018); *Lynda Benglis: Secrets*, Bergen Assembly, KODE Art Museums of Bergen, Norway (2016); *Lynda Benglis*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen CO (2016); *Lynda Benglis: Water Sources*, Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York NY (2015); *Lynda Benglis*, The Hepworth Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England (2015); and *Lynda Benglis: Figures*, The SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah GA (2012), among many others. Selected public collections include: Tate, London, England; Dallas Museum of Art TX; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago IL; Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles CA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York NY; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York NY; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, among many others.

Lynda Benglis is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and two National Endowment for the Arts grants, among other commendations.

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Gallery hours:

Tuesday to Friday 11am -1:30pm and 2:30pm-7pm

Saturday 12pm-7pm

Or by appointment