

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

### Lynda Benglis

“Lynda Benglis review: all vitality and good dirty fun,” *The Guardian*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015, by Adrian Searle

**Benglis has always gone her own way, and this has sometimes got her into trouble, but trouble can lead to interesting art**



📷 'Lynda Benglis can be mucky, she can shimmer in gold.' Photograph: Bryan Derballa/The Hepworth Wakefield

Lynda Benglis's sculptures drool and slump. They flex, they tie themselves in knots and fly across the walls. They are full of variety and contradiction. Benglis is great at inchoate mute lumps and just as good with delicacy, the decorative and highly crafted.

For me, her retrospective at the Hepworth Wakefield is a revelation. I never realised she was so playful and dirty, inventive and full of vitality. She can be mucky, she can shimmer in gold. Filling three open galleries, the show is big enough to give the measure of the artist without overloading us. There is great diversity in her use of materials and sculptural techniques. Even at its most formless, there's a sense of rightness in what she does. She does good ugly.

Benglis is famous as much for working against the muscle-flexing poses and macho manners of her male peers in late 1960s and early 70s New York, as for her work itself. Yet she has always gone her own way, and this has sometimes got her into trouble. Trouble can lead to interesting art.

One surprise here is a series of self-portrait photographs, with the artist in a number of different guises, as soft-core pin-up, demure girl in Greek national costume, and, infamously, the 1974 Artforum exhibition ad, which had the artist naked, slathered in Vaseline and wielding a double-ended dildo (a bronze version of which, bent as a banana and called Smile, sits in a glass case). The photographs anticipate Cindy Sherman's in-character selfies by a number of years. There are also two early videos. In one, she makes out (in a stylised way) with fellow artist Marilyn Lenkowsky.

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They kiss. One licks the other's ear. They caress, and all to a soundtrack of early 1970s shock-jocks, good ol' boy country and western music and off-the-wall preachers. While the men rant, the women are doing it for themselves.

Benglis's pleasure in materials – from paper to bronze and ceramics, to confections of plastic, enamel and glass – are matched by an insistence on the body and sexuality. Her work can be sexy and funny, gorgeous and faecal. There are lovely ceramic glazes, surfaces covered in a mixture of gold leaf, ink and paint, twisty intestinal things, things that fall, coil and rise in surprising ways. Some works are like husks or broken vessels. A great molten and twisted lump of aluminium arcs like a gigantic bit of aeroplane wreckage from the wall (no wonder it's called Wing). Other lumps fill corners or sit like huge piles of dung on the gallery floor. Her early pigmented latex and polyurethane puddles may have aged a bit, resembling ice-cream on the pavement, bits of lurid abstract paintings that have escaped and run away, but there's real freshness here too. In 1975 she made a mad sculpture involving a swath of velvet, cast bits of ancient columns, a statue of Jesus and a tiny model Porsche on a plinth. It was called Primary Structures, nodding to a seminal early minimalist show. This instead was maximal, vulgar, silly. It looks like a lot of art now. Benglis was just doing her thing.

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/feb/05/lynda-benglis-review-good-dirty-fun>