

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

'Kasten: Spatial Materiality', *Aesthetica Magazine*, 17th January 2017



Barbara Kasten's restless innovation and unique artistic vision come to the fore in *Intervals* at Thomas Dane Gallery, London. The exhibition encompasses both historic and recent work that highlights the Chicago-based artist's distinctive approach to multidisciplinary compositions. Her practice, described as "painting in motion" marries sculpture, photography and film in a poignant exploration of light and space. Meticulous planning and intricate detail go into the assemblies, with the use of glass, mirrors, acrylic and metal elements adding an extra dimension of depth into each.

Kasten takes inspiration from a wide range of sources, from postmodern design and architecture, constructivism, alongside the lives and works of Kazimir Malevich and Lázló Moholy-Nagy. Furthermore, she is deeply informed by the 1970s California Light and Space Movement, and as a trained sculptor and painter, began to challenge the conventional notions of these disciplines through lens-based practice.

A chronological approach to her oeuvre reveals a manipulation of space through elegant style and complex compositions. For example, in *Construct*, developed in the late 1970s, Kasten captures the transformation of building materials into tableaux with a Polaroid camera. A similarly adventurous approach can be seen in her recent series *Transpositions* (2014-2016) and *Collisions* (2016), in which she uses Plexiglas elements to create large-scale installations. The use of this material imbues each piece with its fascinating properties, the combination of its transparency and vivid colour fuse the foreground and background as one abstract surface. In amalgamating a meticulous treatment of materials and an inherent interest in the mysticism of light, Kasten evokes questions concerning the nature of the image-making process. With the descent of physical photographs and the rise of digital pictures, the tension between the substantial and the flat surface adds a poignant and increasingly topical dimension to her oeuvre.

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Revolutions (2017) sees the artist roam freely across a world of ideas, evoking the use of mixed media projections, alongside her signature use of Plexiglas and neutral light. The elements recorded exclusively in photography now move to the three-dimensional world. This shift to moving image evokes the constructivist ideology to combine art, life and technology, Kasten embraced the possibilities of the contemporary advancements demonstrating both a creative flexibility, and a deep, thorough understanding of the modern-day society.

<http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/kasten-spatial-materiality/>