

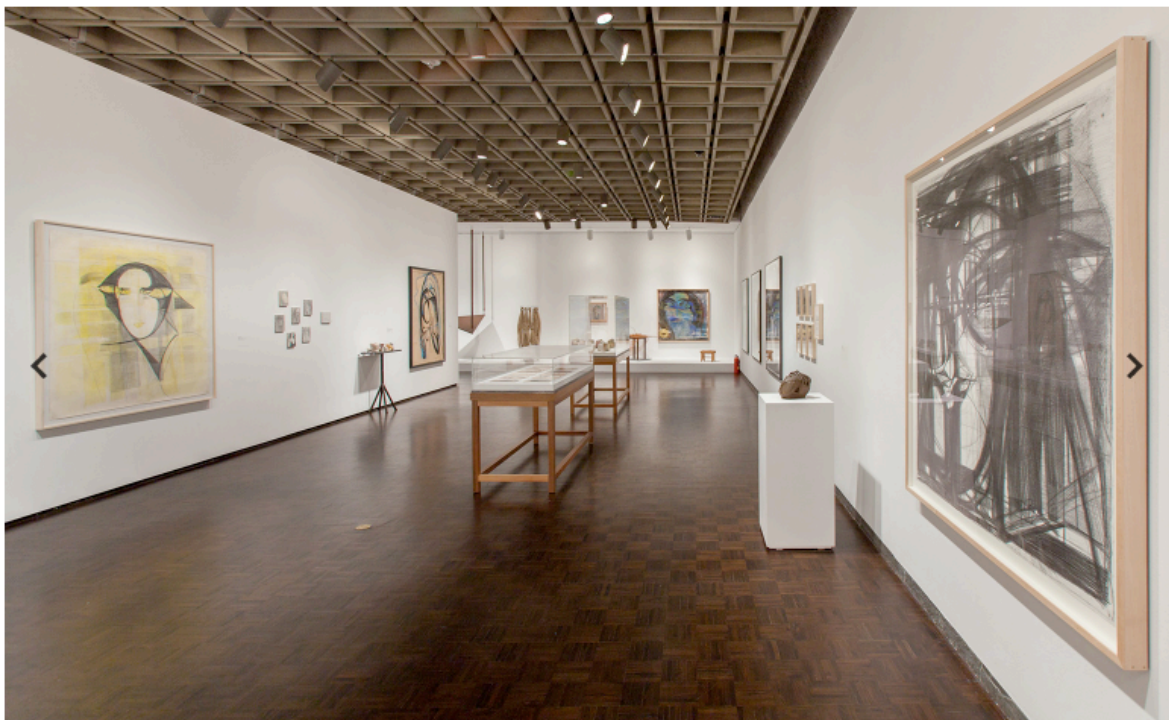
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Jansen, Charlotte. "Meeting Merz: the Met Breuer exhibits the sole female artist of the Arte Povera movement". *Wallpaper*, 30 January 2017

Wallpaper\*

## Meeting Merz: the Met Breuer exhibits the sole female artist of the Arte Povera movement

ART / 30 JAN 2017 / BY CHARLOTTE JANSEN



Meet Marisa Merz, sole female artist of the Arte Povera movement. Aged 90, Merz is receiving recognition of her contributions to radical art in the form of a first US retrospective at the Met Breuer in New York.

Arte Povera began in the north of Italy in the 1960s, a reaction to the rapid industrialisation in the region and the rise of a new commercial middle-class. Favouring 'poor', everyday and non-traditional materials, 'Marisa was an active part of this dynamic and contributed by proving to herself and others that it was possible

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to disengage from the fixed canons without giving up her identity, and to achieve maximum freedom of expression,' Beatrice Merz, her daughter, and founder/president of Turin's Fondazione Merz, explains.



*'Untitled', by Marisa Merz, undated. Photography: Agostino Osio. Courtesy of the artist and Fondazione Merz*

Merz continues to work every day in Turin, where 'her studio is also her home, or any place in which she finds herself', says Beatrice. This spontaneous attitude to art-making emerges in her imaginative use of materials: shoes knitted with copper wire, her mammoth, iconic aluminium *Living Sculpture* (1966), and more recent and ethereal works, layering wax, pastel and spray paint – all going on show in New York.

Curated by Connie Butler (of the Hammer Museum) and the Met's Ian Alteveer, 'Marisa Merz: The Sky Is a Great Space' highlights the freedom of Merz's imagination – a freedom she perhaps didn't have in her daily life, dedicated to being a mother and wife. 'To detail Merz's full contribution to Arte Povera is complicated. She was

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certainly outnumbered as well as often overshadowed and undervalued as a contributor by her male contemporaries, not least of them her late husband Mario, whose career she supported and aided,' Alteveer says. 'Her own work, especially the early sculptures made in the late 1960s and early 1970s, were made in time carved out from her own duties at home,' he reveals.



*Marisa Merz's apartment, Turin, 2016. Photography: Renato Ghiazza. Courtesy of Archivio Merz, Turin*

The constraints of being a woman in her times hardly held Merz back – if anything, they made her more determined and free in her artistic expression. Arguably, Alteveer suggests, 'her work, it could be said, might be the best of the bunch because of it'.