

BORTOLAMI

Barbara Kasten

CONSTRUCTS 1981-1982

28 June – 9 August 2019

Opening Friday, June 28 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Bortolami is pleased to announce a viewing room presentation of Barbara Kasten's Polaroids from the early 1980s.

Kasten has been photographing objects for forty years, capturing them in a way that simultaneously redefines the space they occupy and abandons reality completely. She has described her practice as “a specific personal photographic vision with the arrangement of non-representational objects as the source,” staging such materials as plexiglass, metal wiring, and mirrors.

Kasten first came to photography in the mid-1970s by way of camera-less images—cyanotypes, photograms, and hybridized sculptures that allowed her to play with emulsion as paint and objects as stage props. The boxes and window-screening that sat atop her photosensitive paper became subjects themselves, which Kasten began to capture with her instantly gratifying Polaroid camera in 1979. She titled these early Polaroid photographs *Constructs*, making dozens of images and compositions through the late 1980s.

At its core, Kasten's work is concerned with the interplay of light, color, and geometry while challenging and manipulating her materials. Many of the components are staged in positions that rely on gravity to hold them together, lending them a sense of fragility and implying a mysterious existence. Kasten actively arranges each tableau; relocating lights, and physically moving in and around these constructions. Her work is theatrical: it is literally staged. The placement of these objects in space is a way of mark-making and the camera's final output is a two-dimensional plane.

Barbara Kasten (b. 1936 in Chicago, Illinois) lives and works in Chicago. She received her BFA from the University of Arizona in 1959 and MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1970. She currently lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. She is a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow, NEA Grant recipient, and a Fulbright-Hays Fellow. In 2015, her survey exhibition *Barbara Kasten: Stages* originated at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, travelled to the Graham Foundation in Chicago and MoCA in Los Angeles. Her work has been featured globally including in the Sharjah Biennial 14, United Arab Emirates; TATE Modern, London; Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt, Germany; Tokyo Metro Museum of Photography, Tokyo; the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. among many others. Kasten will be the subject of a solo exhibition at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg in Germany next year.