

BORTOLAMI

Mary Obering

Window Series, 1973

11 October – 9 November 2019

Bortolami is pleased to present Mary Obering's first solo exhibition with the gallery, *Window Series, 1973*.

Obering's five monumental paintings that comprise this exhibition are on display for the first time since 1973, when they were selected by her longtime friend and champion, artist Carl Andre, to be shown at the newly-formed Artists Space. The works in *Window Series* are composed of large stretched canvases overlaid with squares and rectangles of loose painted canvas tacked to the top stretcher bar, weighed down by gravity alone. The overlapping pieces of material create an illusion of receding space, suggestive of open window shutters.

Obering moved to New York City in 1971 at the behest of Andre, upon receiving her MFA in painting from the University of Denver. She quickly integrated herself into the burgeoning community of artists living in SoHo, the city's creative epicenter, building close ties to Conceptual Minimalists like Donald Judd and Sol Lewitt. Throughout her decades-long career, Obering has balanced the dual influences of Minimalism and the history of painting through her geometric abstract compositions.

In a 1974 *ArtForum* review of the Artists Space exhibition, art critic Roberta Smith wrote that Obering was "involved with a current kind of painting, one which involves visibility of process or construction." She rendered the *Window Series* paintings in sumptuous tones reminiscent of Italian Renaissance color palettes, an influence derived from her years of travel in Italy. Smith also observed that "the work vaguely suggests a semiabstract Classical landscape." The series playfully calls to mind Leon Battista Alberti's Renaissance notion of the framed painting as a window onto the world, and perhaps, functions more directly as representations of the large industrial shutters of Obering's first SoHo loft that looked over Wooster Street.

In addition to the five large *Window Series* paintings in the main gallery, Obering will present eight collages for the first time, in the viewing room. These works on paper are composed of thick, tangram-like pieces of painted cut paper placed atop single-color monoprints. Obering made these studies to resolve formal concerns and experiment with color for the subsequent *Window Series*.

Mary Obering was born in 1937 in Shreveport, Louisiana. She received a BA in Psychology at Hollins College in 1959. She studied calculus at Radcliffe College (Harvard's women's college) and did post-bachelor work in experimental psychology with BF Skinner at Harvard shortly after. She received an MFA in painting from the University of Denver in June 1971, and shortly thereafter she moved to NYC. Obering's works have been included in exhibitions at 1975 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Fine Art, Boston; Artists Space, New York; the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; The Denver Art Museum and Nelson-Atkins Museum among others. Her works are in the permanent collections of major institutions, including The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Detroit Institute of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Wadsworth Atheneum.

For more information, please contact Emma Fernberger (212)-727-2050 or emma@bortolamigallery.com