



Rosemarie Castoro, *Land of Lashes*, 1976
8 sculptures: steel, fiberglass, epoxy, styrofoam, pigment
322 x 122 cm

Rosemarie Castoro
"Wherein Lies the Space"
Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac (Marais)
21.02. – 30.03.2019

Small, nifty creatures, whose bodies are made of coarse, grainy steel, scamper across the floor with discomforting swiftness. Reminiscent of spiders lurking in dark corners, they fill viewers with a slight sense of unease, not so much because of a potential danger but because they escape our systematic mapping of space. This 1976 sculpture *Land of Lashes* by Rosemarie Castoro is the first thing one encounters in "Wherein Lies the Space" at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in Paris. Last summer, the gallery also staged an exhibition in London that took its title from this piece and its related

work, *Land of Lads* (1975), and featured Castoro alongside Wanda Czelkowska and Lydia Okumura. These three women, active during the 1960s and 70s, are relatively forgotten pioneers of Minimal and Post-Minimal art, despite their ability to simultaneously subvert the avant-garde language of the time.

This duality is crucial, especially in understanding Castoro's work and, in turn, this four-floor survey of her oeuvre. The main room establishes a dialogue between her early paintings, which explore colour and structure through large, bi-chromatic geometric compositions; her large black and white brushstrokes on curved wall reliefs, which were made after she abandoned colour in 1968 in reaction to the Vietnam War; and her monumental public

sculptures, developed in the late 70s and 80s. The two 1965 paintings *Red Blue Purple Green Gold* and *Red Blue Green Bar* take a first step towards putting geometry in movement as the coloured bars appear to dance in space. *Armpit Hair* (1972), an aerial wall relief, add dissolution to the mix. The uneven edges and grainy surface texture display her signature elements: the grey graphite scale, the choreographical gesture in space, as well as the wordplay – some works from the same series she named *Guinness Martin*, a mischievous nod to painter Agnes Martin. In the same decade, she developed what are arguably her most recognisable bodies of work: Post-Minimal sculptures, including the "Flasher" public sculpture series from the 80s.

Courtesy Anke Kempkes Art Advisory and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, Paris, Salzburg © The Estate of Rosemarie Castoro

On the upper floors, works on paper including sketches, concrete poetry scores, and documentation of her studio process are presented alongside personal ephemera. One vitrine showcases postcards sent to her by Carl Andre, to whom she was married from 1960 to 1974, as well as a copy of *ARTnews's* October 1980 issue, which featured twenty female artists: on the cover Castoro stood alongside Louise Bourgeois, Hannah Wilke, Nancy Holt, and Faith Ringgold, to name just a few. By including such biographical elements "Wherein Lies the Space" focuses on a specific angle. The category of Forgotten Female Minimalist Artist is a trending one, and also one that appeals to the market. While the reintegration of female – and non-occidental – artists to the canon is a vital task indeed, it always errs on the side of negating individuals such as Castoro, because the artist, who died in 2015, was far from overlooked during her lifetime. She was definitely part of the scene and there were multiple



Rosemarie Castoro performing in front of her installation *Break in the Middle*, 1970
3 Polaroid photographs
each 9 x 11 cm



Rosemarie Castoro
Flashers, 1984
Installation view, 780 Third Avenue, New York
Print on photo paper
12 x 18 cm

reviews of her shows, as early as 1966 in *Artforum*. Yet these articles also allude to another possible interpretation and reception of her work: while she collaborated with Yvonne Rainer during her student years, she would entertain a lifelong intellectual companionship with critic and curator Lucy Lippard, who coined the term "eccentric abstraction". Like Bourgeois or Eva Hesse, more closely associated with that sensibility, Castoro's work appears infused with erotic and quirky undertones – something that was absent from other Minimal- and Post-Minimalists. Castoro proposed a versatile and sensory approach to Minimalism, one full of puns and dead-ends, and what remains today is a body of work that encourages us to invent a new narrative rather than merely adding to the existing one. Gracefully erring outside of the minimalist grid, Castoro commands us, as Donna Haraway would say it, to "stay with the trouble".

Ingrid Luquet-Gad