



Lauretta Vinciarelli, *Water Enclosure in Landscape*, 1986, watercolor on paper, 22 1/8 × 29 7/8".

Lauretta Vinciarelli

JUDD FOUNDATION | 101 SPRING STREET

Bringing to light the women artists who lived in the shadow of their more famous male partners is hard. To focus on Lauretta Vinciarelli (1943–2011), we must extricate her legacy from her ten-year relationship with Donald Judd as a professional collaborator, friend, and lover. Between 1978 and 2000, Vinciarelli was a distinguished professor at New York's Columbia University, where she taught studio courses that questioned the values of modernist architecture through the study of building typologies. The Italian-born artist's cultural interests were vast, ranging from Greek and Latin literature to classical music and opera. Vinciarelli's spiritual searching was incredibly catholic, too, imbued by the writings of Saint Augustine and the philosophies of Zen Buddhism. She lived austerely, and we see this in her flawless renderings of incandescent edifices, interiors, and landscapes in watercolor on paper—images that demanded rigorous planning, concentration, and control. (Thankfully, her love of Italian wines and cuisine mellowed her more rigid tendencies.)

Vinciarelli's art has entered the collections of major museums in the United States and Italy, but unfortunately the exhibition of her work at the Judd Foundation doesn't help viewers grasp the range of her mature creative production. Though the selection is concise,

it is primarily limited to the decade she and Judd were romantically involved—from 1976 until 1986—leaving unaddressed the circuitous path this eccentric architect took to become an extraordinary artist. Indeed, she is being kept under *that* shadow, again.

Vinciarelli worked closely with Judd on numerous projects, some of which were executed in Marfa, Texas, where Judd had acquired a house and three airplane hangars, and which is now perhaps his foundation's most famous branch. His conception of space was influenced by the ways Vinciarelli thought about it, and her 1980 drawings of open- and closed-plan homes in this show reflect the open and closed volumes of his sculptures. Also featured are the drawings Judd acquired for an unrealized work by Vinciarelli and the architect Leonardo Fodera, made between 1975 and 1977, commissioned by Italy's Regional Council of Puglia for a typological study of gardens, where some of Vinciarelli's preferred motifs, including pergolas, water enclosures, and courtyards, were already present (Judd later used these plans for his home and studio in Marfa). And from her meticulously conceived *Project for a Productive Garden in an Urban Center in South West Texas*, ca. 1979, Judd embraced her notions of sustainability and the idea of a "garden as a spatial fabric"—with trees, pools, doors, posts—that he incorporated into the design of his contemporary-art museum, the Chinati Foundation, also in Marfa.

A trio of beautiful watercolors from 1986 (donated to the Judd Foundation in 2012 by the artist's husband, Peter Rowe) are just a sampling of works that allow audiences a glimpse into Vinciarelli's later style. Based on idealized renderings of Marfa, these works feature three of the artist's most familiar pictorial elements: a roofless structure, trees, and water enclosures. The delicate *dégradé* of mountains into luminous skies across the suite calls to mind the works of Georgia O'Keeffe, or even the formal and perspectival exquisiteness one finds in the paintings of the Italian Renaissance. Vinciarelli's watercolor technique is exceptional and emphasizes light's metaphysical aspects. No detail is accidental, and every component in these watercolors—a void, shadows, reflections on water—was painted for one purpose only: to capture how light works. In a 1997 interview, Vinciarelli said she focused on "transforming fields of light and color into 'places,' " because architecture was no longer the impetus for her making. The artist worked as her vision demanded—and she did so on her own.

— Ida Panicelli