

T O T A H

LAURETTA VINCIARELLI

Intimate Distances

September 10th - October 25th, 2020

TOTAH presents *Intimate Distances*, a selection of works by Laretta Vinciarelli (1943 – 2011). This is the gallery's second exhibition featuring Vinciarelli's works.

Laretta Vinciarelli's work radiates a mindful austerity that binds warmth with tactility. Her almost architectural renderings emphasize the uniqueness of the artist's hand. Site elides into touch; seeing itself seems to emit a particular temperature; light takes on the volumetric concreteness of a textile. All of this creates a visionary setting where expectations are promised, then revoked; where objectivity is downplayed to highlight the conceptual underpinnings of perception.

Vinciarelli's watercolors are both mysterious and direct. Associated with minimalism, what distinguishes her drawings from the work of her peers is the severity of her medium. Her watercolors were made by way of a linear process: every gesture was registered, every color became a saturated field superimposed onto another. *Atrium II* (1991), included in this exhibition, is representative of her methods. *Atrium II* depicts a room that opens outward in three directions. What's uncanny about this room is less how the viewer is thrust into an unseen doorway or wall, and more the ambiguous source of light spilling onto the reflective floor.

Laretta's subtle yet incisive explorations resulted in a lasting and meaningful collaboration with her long-term partner Donald Judd. Her drawing *Vineyard* (1984), also on view, produced during their Marfa years, blends internal and external with a set of curvilinear features. Her later work, after 1987, focused on space as a field of impossibility, its intangible qualities resisting altogether what she would describe as, "solutions to specific demands of use." In the series titled *Intimate Distances* (2002), an idealized space informs the emergence of a concrete object. Even here, however, the opposition of the "ideal" and the "concrete" quickly gives way to a literal, almost pragmatic environment.

Using perspective against itself to depict an otherworldly vista is, in a sense, the non plus ultra of art. Yet Vinciarelli's works don't lead the viewer into a fantastical history or into the imaginary of surrealism. Rather, she depicts a sort of tranquil shelter where symbolism (the meaning of a work, the gestures which compose it) shades into the very medium from which a work is made. Her environments unpack like a language. The renderings she creates—containers bound by the edges of paper—have the eloquence of ideograms, as though space itself could communicate the interiority of awareness.

Laretta Vinciarelli (Arbe, Italy, 1943 – New York, 2011) was an architect and artist whose works and drawings are held in the permanent collections of the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Modern Art in New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Archive of the Biennale of Venice; and the Italian Archive of Drawings. Having completed her PhD in Architecture and Urban Planning at the Sapienza University of Rome in 1971, she came to the U.S. and taught at City College New York and the Pratt Institute, before being appointed to Planning and Preservation at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, between 1978-2000. She was included in the 2002 Whitney Biennial. Her work is the subject of two monographs: Clear Light: The Architecture of Laretta Vinciarelli, 2015, and Not Architecture But Evidence That It Exists, 1998.

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