



Lynda Benglis, *Stainless Wax*, 2007, unique cast polyurethane and stainless steel in fifteen elements, dimensions variable

## Lynda Benglis

May 19 - July 22, 2022



Locks Gallery is delighted to present the eighth one-person exhibition by Lynda Benglis that detail the artist's celebrated sculptures, on view from May 19 through July 22, 2022. Her unabashed approach to painting, sculpture, and installation is defined by a hybridity of both two-and-three-dimensional space and a wide array of material exploration and experimentation. The artist's body, and her physical gestures, are always present in the playfulness of the works and the tactile qualities of their making. Themes of nature, fluidity, and world culture are intrinsic to the objects themselves. This exhibition will feature a unique selection from across Benglis's oeuvre beginning with her earlier Wax works to later paintings and sculptures including her Pleats, Bows, Molds, Knots, Wings, and Eggs.

Benglis was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana in 1941. After she received a BFA from Newcomb College, New Orleans, in 1964, she relocated to New York City. While there, she began exhibiting in group shows leading to her first one-person exhibition at the University of Rhode Island, in 1969. Benglis's resistance to strict forms of art making, openness to unconventional materials, and a willingness to improvise placed her at odds with the prevailing notions of the day—particularly those driven by a male-dominated art field—and put her ahead of her time. "Rather than hew to prevailing critical paradigms," writes art historian Anna C. Chave, "her work followed instead, in the late 1960s and early '70s, from the sharp-witted dialogues she tacitly initiated with the art that specially impressed

[continued on reverse]

or challenged her.” This meant engaging with a practice somewhere between formlessness and form by pouring, flowing, oozing, trickling, melting, bending, folding, knotting, and so on.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, Benglis began to employ these approaches ultimately defining the future of her practice and expanding the very definition of painting itself. Her wall-mounted wax paintings, such as *Blue Pair* (1971), embraced the action of Abstract Expressionism through the pouring of hot, pigmented wax onto a substrate and then rubbing it as it cooled. The build up of layers along with the artist’s touch produce, as critic Carter Ratcliff writes, “a series of lush, intricate structures that seem to be filled with life—teeming with it.”



Lynda Benglis, *Kearny Street Bows and Fans*, 1985, sprayed bronze, nickel, and chrome over stainless steel mesh (five elements), 50 x 36 inches each

Unlike the achromatic approach many Minimalists took, Benglis embraced the wild, saturated, and exuberant qualities that came with modern materials such as acrylic, Day-glo, and phosphorescent pigments. She welcomed material as distinct culturally as glitter and gold leaf. Her *Lagniappe* works—cast paper sculptures painted in brightly colored metallic sparkles—attest to her embrace of color and surface quality. *Lagniappe I* (1978) features a candy-wrapped shape painted with gold, pink, and purple acrylic and glitter. The top bursts out—as if a champagne bottle has popped—with iridescent polypropylene. *Lagniappe* is a Louisiana-French word often translated as “a little extra”, meaning a small gift given beyond what is expected. The use of this word points to Benglis’s upbringing in Louisiana and in the overall conceptual roots of her practice as opposed to Minimalism.



Benglis continued using paper with her Mold series, such as the earth-toned feminine form in Untitled (1980), to more recent hand-made paper and wire works Sage Thrasher (2014) and Sparkle Player (2017). Her exploration of metals includes bronze, silver, nickel, chromium, stainless steel, lead, and aluminum. Her investigations into process, form, and medium often span across materials. Her Knot works were realized in fabric, metal, and ceramic. The pleated and knotted Kearny Street Bows and Fans (1985) attests to Benglis's physical approach to metal while exuding the lightness that the works suggest visually. Her Egg works, such as Chiron (2009), are made with tinted polyurethane and are hung like paintings not unlike many Light and Space artists.

Themes of flowing water have been with the artist throughout her career. Benglis's childhood in Lake Charles and a career of pouring and molding materials, that the artist would make works that suggest various qualities of water seen in the icicle-like forms in Stainless Wax (2007) and the glistening, crashing swirls of Power Tower (2019). In the early 1980s, Benglis adopted the use of water into her sculptures with a series of fountains beginning with The Wave (The Wave of the World) (1983–84). Pink Lady (For Asha) (2013) consists of five neon-pink cup-like objects stacked on top of one another. The texture, reminiscent of Benglis's early wax works and Egg series, is coagulated and suggestive of stalactites that form in caves from minerals and the flow of water. Like those mineral formations, Pink Lady (For Asha), the undulating surface drips with water into a pool below, drawing to a head the sensory, natural, and malleable qualities, which have defined Benglis's entire career.

Benglis currently lives and works between U.S. cities New York and Santa Fe, as well as Kastellorizo Greece. She has an upcoming exhibition, titled Lynda Benglis, opening in May of 2022 at the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX. The 2009–2011 traveling retrospective Lynda Benglis toured six venues in Europe and the United States, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, NY. Benglis's work is in numerous public collections including the Dallas Museum of Art; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, NY; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Tate Modern, London; the Walker Art Center, MN; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY.