

ROSEMARIE CASTORO Land of Lashes

MAK – Press and PR

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Press Release

Vienna, 23.5.2023

Press Conference

Tuesday, 23.5.2023, 10 am

The comprehensive solo exhibition *ROSEMARIE CASTORO: Land of Lashes*—the first such presentation of this important New York artist in a German-speaking country—inaugurates the new MAK Contemporary exhibition hall in the MAK on the Stubenring. The exhibition's titular work, *Land of Lashes* (1976), is placed in juxtaposition to the installation *Land of Lads* (1975). In these two works, Rosemarie Castoro (1939–2015) comments on the wide range of sexual identities, creating monuments to fluid gender roles. Grouped around these two central works in the exhibition are objects, sculptures, installations, relief-like paintings, drawings, and texts that focus on Castoro's major creative period in the 1970s.

Castoro developed *Land of Lashes* as a serial arrangement of gigantic eyelashes that mutate into animated bodies with limbs. The installation *Land of Lads* consists of a number of elements. As pendant to the female *Land of Lashes*, the *Land of Lads* stands on permeable ground. Solitary ladders bend and stretch like a row of young trees. According to the artist: "The ladder is a cultural tool; the forest a source of nourishment. I, a cultural animal make tools to build forests."

Combining text, graphic art, drawing, painting, stage sets, sculpture, and performance, Rosemarie Castoro was one of the most versatile artists in the New York of her time. In a diary entry to Carl Andre—dedicated by "R" to "C"—she describes herself as a "paintersculptor." In the 1970s she began to create sculptures that developed their own graphic and painterly qualities. Through her experimental methodology, Castoro interpreted painting and sculpture in her actional radius as interfacing with performance, writing her own personal

narrative within the context of Minimal Art, Post-minimal Art, Concept Art, and Feminism.

A photograph taken with a self-timer in 1969 in SoHo, Manhattan, shows the artist in her studio with Carl Andre (to whom she was married from 1964 to 1970), Lawrence Weiner, Richard Long, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson, Jan Dibbets, and others. Eva Hesse and Agnes Martin were also part of her circle. She was inspired by modern dance and collaborated with choreographer Yvonne Rainer. Rosemarie Castoro's artistic practice is interwoven with that of Eleanor Antin, Lynda Benglis, Harmony Hammond, Lee Lozano, Charlotte Posenenske, and Anita Steckel. A trademark of Castoro's art is her experiments with surreal and sexual connotations. As an artist she responded to the social and political upheavals and debates of the 1960s and 1970s—the era of the civil rights movement, the fight for women's rights, and the Vietnam War.

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According to art theoretician and curator Lucy R. Lippard, an early supporter and mediator of Castoro's work, Castoro focuses on the line as a formal solution; she projects the body into space. This transposition of graphic and painterly media into sculptural language and space is visible in a range of works in the MAK exhibition. *Non-Correspondence Letter* (1969) functions as painting, text, and sculptural object, marking a turning point in Castoro's oeuvre.

Subsequently she begins to develop variable spatial forms such as the "Freestanding Walls," constructed of panels that form screens alternating between image carrier, action painting, stage setting, and architectural element. An example presented in the exhibition is the installation *Two Curves* (1970). It consists of screens covered with dynamic brush strokes, referencing the gestural, performative quality of painterly actional space, elucidated by surveying painting's dimensions, as an action photo shows.

Her work group "Brushstrokes"—in the exhibition represented by *Corner Cut*, *Party of Nine* and *Bangs* (all from 1972)—is fashioned from constellations of curves and knots powerfully executed in gigantic brushstrokes. Here Castoro weaves the line into processually created organic forms. The relief-like works—fashioned of gesso, modeling paste, and marble dust applied with a broom or mop and cut with a saw—spread out into the room in choreographic compactness like limbs or hairs. Castoro herself draws attention to (her) body expanding into architecture.

In her installation *Beaver's Trap* (1977)—the title is a play on words, Castoro being the Italian for "beaver"—Rosemarie Castoro stages a vagina dentata as a symbol of female self-empowerment. Using sharpened branches stripped of their bark but otherwise left unaltered, she illuminates the ambivalence of her own role as woman and artist. The work is about inhabiting one's own territory, about a zone in which sexuality can be freely lived out. The installation is related to other works in wood such as *Branch Dance* (1977), that Castoro



describes as a “sculptural drawing,” as well as to a project created in an outdoors workshop with students at Berry College, Georgia. In *Mountain Range* (2003–2006), Castoro transposes the performative principle into a group of newly developed sculptures—enormous arches and organic structures formed of brushstrokes on folded and welded stainless steel panels.

Rosemarie Castoro (born 1939 in Brooklyn/NY, died 2015) studied graphic design at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and was an active member of the New Dance Group. Initially she devoted herself to abstract painting using a polychrome palette of colors. Starting in 1968 she turned to Concept Art and Minimalism, eschewing the use of color. From the 1960s onwards she worked in the studio in Spring Street, that in the early years she shared with Carl Andre. The artist wrote some memorable texts, varying from short notes to concrete poetry, that afford her readers an insight into her thoughts and comments on art and everyday life.

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In past years retrospectives of Rosemarie Castoro’s work have been staged in the MACBA, Barcelona (2017) and in the MAMCO, Geneva (2019). She is represented in a number of important collections, including the MoMA in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Thanks to purchases by the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, the MAK has been able to acquire *Land of Lads* and *Land of Lashes* on permanent loan to its Contemporary Art Collection.

MAK Contemporary

In May 2023, the MAK Contemporary will open in the former location of the MAK Permanent Carpets Collection, as a restructured, centrally located exhibition hall in the main building on the Stubenring devoted to contemporary perspectives on art, design, and architecture. The former room for temporary exhibitions above the MAK Permanent Collection Vienna 1900 will from 2024 onwards house the MAK’s outstanding collection of carpets.

Press photographs on the exhibition are available for download at [MAK.at/en/press](https://mak.at/en/press).



Press Conference

Tuesday, 23.5.2023, 10 am

Opening

Tuesday, 23.5.2023, 7 pm

Admission free from 6 pm

Exhibition Venue

MAK Contemporary

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

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Exhibition Dates

24.5.–1.10.2023

Opening Hours

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

Curator

Bärbel Vischer, Curator, MAK Contemporary Art Collection

Accompanying Program

Talk on Tuesday, 23 May 2023, 6 pm

MAK Columned Main Hall

Art Critic Sabeth Buchmann in conversation with MAK Curator Bärbel Vischer

The accompanying program is continually updated at MAK.at

MAK Admission

€ 15, reduced € 12, every Tuesday 6–9 pm: admission € 7

Admission free for children and teens under 19

MAK Press and PR

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