

**GALLERIA POGGIALI
MILAN**

presents

**Thomas Kovachevic
*Portrait of a Room***

curated by Chiara Bertola

15.02.2019 - 27.03.2019

Opening Thursday 14.02.2019 from 7 to 9 p.m.

From 15 February to 27 March 2019 the Galleria Poggiali of Milan presents *Portrait of a Room*, the first solo show in Italy by the American artist Thomas Kovachevich (Detroit, 1942), curated by Chiara Bertola.

Portrait of a Room brings together a corpus of works conceived by the artist specially for the Gallery and connected with the material that has principally characterised his artistic career: paper and its infinite possibilities of life and transformation. This is a unique installation that enters into relation with the cubic space of the project room and with the large front window opening onto Foro Bonaparte, offering an unexpected spatial depth.

In the space illuminated by natural light, Kovachevich has taken the simplest materials – white packing tape and grosgrain ribbon – to create three separate works that can be seen as sculptural and pictorial at the same time. Each *tableau* on the wall is made up of long strips of grosgrain ribbon attached at top and bottom to a broader strip of packing tape. Hung one after another, these strips create a square of living colour that is transformed and moves in the space as a result of the humidity in the air. The strip of paper moves and curls around the ribbon; it is a living, breathing thing that alters over the course of the day with the changes in the level of humidity in the room. The three large ‘paintings’ on the walls of the gallery not only register changes in the environment but also represent a particular way of perceiving the room, making the invisible visible. When the strips of paper glued to the grosgrain open and close, the entire wall vibrates and moves as if the wind and air were moving through it, in exactly the same way as the light vibrates in an Impressionist *plein air* painting.

As Chiara Bertola, the curator of the exhibition, writes in the catalogue: “To address Thomas’ work made using only paper I had to go back to studying aspects of seeing and looking that I had taken for granted. I felt the need to reread Rudolf Arnheim’s studies on perception and turn to the ancient wisdom of Socrates to remind myself that we don’t see because we have eyes but that we have eyes so that we can see.”

All Thomas Kovachevich needed to transform the space of the gallery’s room into a ‘frozen’ landscape were three cubes of crepe paper, a pillar made of tubes of transparent paper and a series of shapes cut out of thick paper just transparent enough to let the light through. One has the sensation of looking at a landscape composed of icebergs, stalactites and geysers, in which the semi-transparent forms acquire volume and size by holding light inside.

Much of Kovachevich’s work has an intimate quality that plays on control and the incidental, charging the geometry with emotive energy. For him, forms are rational explorations of geometry, while the inherent emotive content constitutes an irrational element. As Kovachevich himself explains: “I guess one of the reasons I was attracted to minimalism was for its attempt to define purity. However, in my work I am also seeking to invest geometry with an emotional content.”

Thomas Kovachevich belongs to the generation of American artists who, between the late 1960s and the early 70s, explored the possibilities of dematerialising art to make the creative process more accessible to the public. His research is akin to that of Process Art in the comparative use of natural

and industrial materials, bringing out the primary expression of their physical properties. The artists closest to him are Richard Tuttle, in the use of materials, James Lee Byers, who makes his art invisible, and Tom Shannon, who plays with the wonders of science.

Harald Szeemann and Jean-Christophe Ammann invited Kovachevich to *Documenta 5* in 1972, Speaking of the group of artists in which he was included, they referred for the first time to “individual mythologies”.

Today Kovachevich’s works are in many important international collections, including the Bern Kunst Museum in Berne, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles and the Museum Marseille/Cantinni in Marseilles.

A catalogue with a critical essay by Chiara Bertola will be published to mark the occasion.

Thomas Kovachevich (Detroit - 1942) lives and works in New York.

He took part in *Documenta 5* curated by Harald Szeemann in 1972 and he has had major solo shows at leading international museums including: the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago; the Musée Cantini in Marseilles; the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; the Hotel Wolfers – residence of di Herman Daled in Brussels; the Albert and Vera List Center at the MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Art Museum of Santa Monica in California and the Musée de la Vieille Charité in Marseilles.

Recently, in 2018, he took part in the group show *Una fornace a Marsiglia* curated by Chiara Bertola and Isabelle Rehier at the “Stanze del Vetro” of the Fondazione Cini and at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice.

His works are held in important museum collections including the Bern Kunst Museum, Berne, Switzerland, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, the Ministry of France, the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, Switzerland, Le Musée-Chateau d'Annecy, Annecy, France, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, the Museum of Jurassic Technology, Los Angeles, CA and the Museum Marseille/Cantinni, Marseilles, France.

INFORMATION

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Tuesday - Saturday: 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. / 3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

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