

Paola Besana

Intersections

kaufmann repetto is delighted to announce a monographic exhibition devoted to the textile artist Paola Besana (Milan, 1935-2021). The project, curated by Cristina Miglio with the scientific contribution from the collective Sistemamanifesto per Paola Besana Archivi, presents four works from different moments in the 40 years spanned by Besana's career, from 1979 to 2019.

From the end of the 1950s Paola Besana was impelled by her interest in weaving to make numerous journeys in order to study the craft in textile factories in various parts of the world. After a period spent in Scandinavia she moved in 1961 to the United States, where she studied for a couple of years under the weavers Lili Blumenau and Trude Guermonprez; the latter was a pupil of Anni Albers, the legendary pioneer of textile design at the Bauhaus. In the same years Besana discovered the structural models of Richard Buckminster Fuller and got to know—among others—Alexander Calder and his delicately balanced kinetic sculpture. Returning to Italy, she opened the "Studio di tessitura Paola Besana" in Milan in 1968, together with Paola Bonfante and Lalla Ranza. It would become both a place of production and a workshop for teaching and research activities.

While starting to collaborate with the inspiring scene of Milanese designers the artist was impressed by the transdisciplinary genius of Bruno Munari, an experience which further whetted her technical and intellectual curiosity. Besana focused on the structural and combinatory possibilities of the textile medium, on the balancing of tensions, on the opportunity to "to do more with less," leading her to conceive works created by superimposition and intersection, always on the basis of highly abstract schemes.

Intersection, which gives this exhibition its title, is in fact a word that reflects Besana's natural bent, that evokes both her figurative and artistic research and her ceaseless study of the links between disciplines, people and things. The works on display have for the most part been produced by the process of double weaving, which she described as "a fascinating and rather magical technique that makes it possible to have two different planes grow on the same loom."

This allowed her to investigate the possible relations between several planes, and to develop various ways of turning a two-dimensional surface into a three-dimensional work. In *Piani (Plans)* and *A passeggio (Strolling)*, while still set in the realm of two-dimensionality, Besana has added an extra and interstitial dimension through the rotation and staggering of nonwoven warps that pass through one another. *Quel chiodo fisso (That Fixed Idea)* and *Uno scambio (An Exchange)* are works consisting of planes that are the same at the structural level but different in color, alluding to the artist's relationships with friends, situations and experiences.

By subjecting the loom and its infinite combinatorial possibilities to the scrutiny of her own acute gaze, from an "engineering" perspective, Paola Besana arrived

kaufmann repetto

in her research at a new expressive vocabulary, applying a system always open to new structural configurations. Shattering the traditional relationship between warp and weft, her works developed more freely in space, to the point where they became true sculptures that would be shown, from as early as the 1970s, in major group exhibitions.

Her works have been presented by international museums and biennials, such as La Triennale di Milano, Milan (2017), Palazzo Reale, Milan (2016), Museo del Tessuto e del Costume, Spoleto (2015) Teatro Litta, Milan (1990), 6th International Triennale of Tapestry, Lodz (1988), World Craft Council, Milan (1983), British Craft Centre, London (1973), 5th International Biennial of Tapestry, Lausanne (1971), 5th Międzynarodowe Biennale Tkaniny Sztukowskiej w Lozannie, Warsaw (1971).