

# LYNDA BENGLIS IN THE REALM OF THE SENSES

22.11.2019-  
15.03.2020

# NEON

Exploring Lynda Benglis's intensely original output as a whole, this is the American-born artist's first solo museum exhibition in the country that has long played a major role in her life, identity and creative vision: Greece. Across a span that covers half a century – from 1969 onwards – the thirty-six sculptures in this concise retrospective display Benglis's diverse imagery, ideas and methods. The show also presents three key ancient artefacts generously lent by the Museum of Cycladic Art itself.

Benglis's distinctive materials include beeswax, bronze, aluminium, latex, ceramics, paper, fabrics and glass. Her stylistic repertoire encompasses the iconic early "fallen paintings", "knots", "lagniappes", "torsos", "pleats" and "fountains". Throughout, the selection stresses visual conversations, as it were, between textures (liquid-looking, delicate, strongly metallic, and so forth), color (gold's uniform glow versus the multi-hued papers layered over wire armatures) and orientation (flowing horizontals that oppose totemic verticals). Often, a sense of sparse solemnity mingles with a deliberate, almost gaudy playfulness. Thus Benglis ever defies conventional boundaries between "high" and "low" aesthetic categories.

In the present Mediterranean setting, the artist's overall engagement with deep time and sensuousness swings into full focus. Likewise, Benglis's allusions to Greek culture and art, especially its ancient sculpture – notably the Winged Victory of Samothrace (c.220-190 BCE) clad in swirling drapery – here assume a new importance. Indeed, Greece has been Benglis's recurrent muse. In her hands dynamism may change into what she once strikingly called the "frozen gesture". So the speed associated with modern American Action Painting coexists with the stillness of antique statuary.

***In the Realm of the Senses*** celebrates a maverick artist who began her career as a female pioneer of Post-Minimalism in the late 1960s and still works with joyous freedom in the twenty-first century. Describing Benglis's first wax reliefs, as early as 1968 a New York critic noted that "skin, pull, sensuousness" ranked among her primary concerns. Such intense corporeal sensations continue into the present – as Benglis's achievement constantly shifts between fixity and movement, nature and flesh, surfaces and interiors, with a virtuosity both graceful and bold.

David Anfam, Curator