

Marignana Arte

NANCY GENN: INNER LANDSCAPES

curated by Francesca Valente

Marignana Art Gallery

Dorsoduro, 141 - Rio Terà dei Catecumeni 30123 Venice

Press conference: Friday 16 April 2021: 11 am

Opening: Saturday 17 April 2021 from 2 pm

Open to the public until July 24, 2021

Nancy Genn, one of the most significant California artists of the post World War II period, returns to Venice with a solo exhibition at Marignana Arte, curated by Francesca Valente.

A leading exponent of the informal art movement that developed around the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1960s, Genn has been associated by the philosopher and art critic Michel Tapié with major international artists such as Carla Accardi, Alberto Burri, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Lucio Fontana, Emilio Vedova, as well as Robert Motherwell, Louise Nevelson, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko.

The leitmotif of her long creative journey is tireless experimentation with techniques and materials, cultivated during frequent travels especially to Japan. She was among the first artists in the United States to express herself with paper, used not only as a medium, but as an artifact, the object of her unique pioneering technique of manual production combining sculpture and painting.

Intimately connected to Italy and its artistic heritage, Nancy Genn is widely represented in the permanent collections of key Venetian cultural institutions such as the Giorgio Cini Foundation, the Fortuny Museum and the Ca' Pesaro Museum of Modern Art.

In 2018 Palazzo Ferro Fini, on the Grand Canal, hosted the most important retrospective of her work in Europe. At the same time a special exhibition honored her at Ca' Pesaro, along with interdisciplinary seminars at the Ateneo Veneto and at MACRO, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome. In 2020 the Todi Festival of the Arts included a solo show of Nancy Genn's works on paper in memory of the American artist Beverly Pepper.

In this new Venetian chapter, Marignana Arte Gallery presents fifty years of Genn's artistic career, illustrating different phases of her work: from the three-dimensional handmade papers of her early period to rare intaglio prints from glass plates (vitreography) and the most recent mixed-media works on canvas.

The exhibition opens with hand-made paper works from the early 1970s, in which Genn shows skilful mastery from the in-depth study of the physical and symbolic properties of the various fibers to the pioneering use of a tearing technique, which has become known as the "Genn method".

The same care for craftsmanship is evident in the more recent, boldly experimental, mixed-media works in pencil and casein. Rigorously balanced compositions and a subdued palette of colors invite the viewer to pause and contemplate.

Many of the works on paper and on canvas draw inspiration from the water and fog of San Francisco Bay, so perfectly blending with the ever changing atmosphere of Venice.

The presence of water in particular stands out not only in the *Tideline* and *Shape of Water* series, but also in the more recent and mature *Waterfalls* featuring the presence of a powerful, vital energy that is both physical and spiritual, constantly renewing itself through a unique alchemical process.

Francesca Valente, the curator of the exhibition has been a cultural mediator and director of Italian Cultural Institutes in North America for over thirty years and met Nancy Genn in San Francisco in the early 1980s. She remembers today how Genn's work even then "emanated a mighty meditative force, almost like the sacred reiteration of a mantra, capable of triggering a myriad of synaesthetic experiences".

"Her works" she continues "emerge as rarefied inner landscapes that transcend any reference to the contingent, and lead the viewer into a dimension that inspires a serene, yet passionate harmony, born from an archaic sense of wonder at the mystery of life itself".

The exhibition at Marignana Arte is complemented by films, documentaries and bibliographic material such as a rare copy of Michel Tapié's *Morphologie Autre* and the lavishly illustrated bilingual monograph by Francesca Valente, published by Skira, Milan.