

# Graham Foundation

For Immediate Release

## Barbara Kasten: Stages *October 1–January 9, 2016*

*Chicago, August 5, 2015*—The Graham Foundation, in partnership with the 2015 Chicago Architecture Biennial, is pleased to present *Barbara Kasten: Stages*, the first major survey of the work of Chicago-based artist Barbara Kasten. Widely known for her photographs, since the 1970s Kasten has developed an expansive practice through the lens of painting, textile, sculpture, theater, architecture, and installation. Organized in conversation with the artist and with full access to her extensive archive, the exhibition offers fresh vantages onto Kasten's five-decade career as an innovative multidisciplinary artist engaged with abstraction, light, and architectonic space.

*Barbara Kasten: Stages* situates the artist's work within current conversations in art and architecture and traces its roots to the unique and provocative intersection of Bauhaus-influenced pedagogy in America, the California Light and Space movement, and the ethos and aesthetics of postmodernism. Kasten's interest in the interplay between three-dimensional and two-dimensional forms, her concern with staging and the role of the prop, her cross-disciplinary process, and the way she has developed new approaches to abstraction and materiality are all intensely relevant to contemporary architecture's critical engagement with visual arts practices as well as to a new generation of artists who have drawn inspiration from Kasten's evolving aesthetic and process.

Loosely chronological, the exhibition focuses on selections from major bodies of work spanning the 1970s to the present. It brings together and contextualizes for the first time Kasten's earliest fiber sculptures, mixed media works, cyanotype prints, forays into set design, archival documents, and video documentation, along with Kasten's best known photographic series—her studio constructions and architectural interventions. In addition, Kasten will create a new site-specific video installation in the Graham Foundation's historic Madlener House ballroom, which marks a significant development in the artist's interests in surface and bodily scale in relationship to architectural space.

*Barbara Kasten: Stages* is organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania and is curated by ICA Curator Alex Klein. The Chicago presentation of the exhibition will open to the public with a reception at the Graham Foundation's Madlener House on October 1, 2015.

Major support for *Barbara Kasten: Stages* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from the Nancy E. and Leonard M. Amoroso Exhibition Fund, Pamela Toub Berkman & David J. Berkman, Bortolami, the Carol T. & John G. Finley Fund, Kadel Willborn Gallery, the Marjorie E. and Michael J. Levine Fund, Toby Devan Lewis, Gallery Luisotti, Amanda & Andrew Megibow, Stephanie B. & David E. Simon, Babette L. & Harvey A. Snyder, and Meredith L. & Bryan S. Verona.

The Chicago presentation is supported by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

## PUBLICATIONS

*Barbara Kasten: Stages* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue co-published by the Institute of Contemporary Art and JRP|Ringier that includes a biography of the artist, a conversation between Kasten and artist Liz Deschenes, and new scholarly essays by Alex Klein, Jenni Sorkin, and Alex Kitnick. Copies of the exhibition catalogue are available for purchase in the Graham Foundation Bookshop.

Additionally, the Graham Foundation and Distributed Art Publishers will co-publish *Barbara Kasten: The Diazotypes*, a special small-run artist book of Kasten's diazotypes—a body of work she created while living in California in 1973 with a process used to create architectural blueprints. This unique artist's book will be released at the exhibition opening on October 1, 2015, and will be available for purchase at the Graham Foundation Bookshop. Each copy will be signed and numbered by Kasten.

## RELATED EVENTS

*Thursday, October 1, 5-8PM*

Opening Reception with comments by ICA Curator Alex Klein and artist Barbara Kasten

*Thursday, October 22, 6PM, Talk*

Alex Kitnick

Use Your Illusion: Barbara Kasten's *Architectural Sites*

*Thursday, January 7, 6PM, Screening and Conversation*

Chelsea Culp in conversation with Barbara Kasten

Followed by a special screening of *Inside/Outside: Stages of Light*, 1985 (Choreographed by: Margaret Jenkins; costumes and set design by: Barbara Kasten).

Additional events will be announced throughout the run of the show. For more information about upcoming events, visit: [www.grahamfoundation.org/public\\_events](http://www.grahamfoundation.org/public_events)

## PARTICIPANT BIOS

**Barbara Kasten** (born 1936, Chicago; lives Chicago) trained as a painter and textile artist, receiving her MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC) in Oakland in 1970. There she studied with pioneering fiber artist Trude Guermonprez, a former teacher at Black Mountain College and an associate of Anni Albers. In 1971 Kasten received a Fulbright to travel to Poznań, Poland, to work with noted sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz. During the 1980s she embarked on her *Constructs* series, which incorporates life-size elements such as metal, wire, mesh, and mirrors into installations produced specifically for the camera. Kasten was one of a select group of artists to be invited by Polaroid to use its new large format cameras, and it was with these that she made many of her best known works, her palette becoming bolder in response to the lush, saturated quality of the medium.

In the mid-1980s Kasten stepped out of the studio and began working with large architectural spaces. Institutions such as the High Museum of Art in Atlanta designed by Richard Meier and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles designed by Arata Isozaki, as well as the World Financial Center in New York designed by César Pelli, were eager to showcase their new postmodern buildings via the cinematic lighting, mirrors, and fabrications that were part of her monumental productions. Following her architectural projects she continued working on a large scale, creating dramatic displays in the midst of ancient ruins. In the intervening years she shifted her focus to talismanic objects and artifacts, returning to the cyanotype process she had embraced at the beginning of her career. Her most recent work has taken Kasten back to the studio, exploring a more minimal palette with many of the same materials that shaped her early constructed photographs. Over the years her vocabulary and interests, including her ongoing experimentation with constructions, sets, and installations at the human scale, have provided a through-line and given a unity to her artwork, even as she has experimented with multiple processes, from cyanotypes and Polaroids to Cibachromes and video installations.

Kasten's photographs of studio constructions and cinematic stagings are included in major museum collections such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

**Alex Klein** is the Dorothy and Stephen R. Weber (CHE'60) Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania. Selected exhibitions and initiatives at ICA include *Barbara Kasten: Stages* (2015), the first major survey of the artist's work; *Consider the Belvedere: Tamara Henderson and Julia Feyrer* (2015); *AVANT-GARDEner: Ian Hamilton Finlay* (2014, co-curated with Lynne Farrington); *Vishal Jugdeo: An Education in the Logic of Leaves* (2014); *Excursus I-IV* featuring Reference Library, East of Borneo, Ooga Booga, and Primary Information (2011–2013); and *First Among Equals* (2012, co-curated with Kate Kraczon). Most recently she has served as an agent in the Carnegie Museum of Art's Hillman Photography Initiative where she co-curated with Tina Kukielski the exhibition *Antoine Catala: Distant Feel* (2015) in association with the New Museum Triennial, *Surround Audience*. Her writing has been published in collections including *How Soon Is Now?* (LUMA, 2012) and *The Human Snapshot* (Sternberg Press / CCS Bard, 2013), and she is the editor of the critical volume on photography, *Words Without Pictures* (LACMA/Aperture, 2010). Previously she held positions in the Wallis Annenberg Photography Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Roski School of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. She is the co-founder of the editorial project and publishing imprint Oslo Editions.

#### ABOUT THE CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL

The Chicago Architecture Biennial seeks to convene the world's leading practitioners, theorists, and commentators in the field of architecture and urbanism to explore, debate, and demonstrate the significance of architecture to contemporary society. Entitled "The State of the Art of Architecture," the inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial will be North America's largest international survey of contemporary architecture and will take place October 3, 2015 through January 3, 2016.

## ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts makes project-based grants to individuals and organizations, and produces programming designed to foster the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society.

## THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion, designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. Gardner (1901–02) and renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000 square-foot historic home now houses galleries, a bookstore, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-lending library of grantee publications, and a ballroom where the foundation hosts a robust schedule of public programs.

## BOOKSHOP

The Graham Foundation's bookshop, designed by Ania Jaworska, offers a selection of new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, art, and design, many of which have been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation.

## GALLERY HOURS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission to the galleries and bookshop are free and open to the public Wednesday through Saturday, 11AM–6PM. Group tours are available by request.

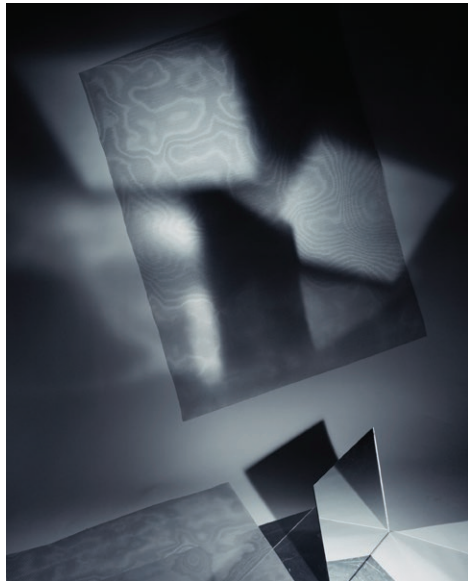
## ACCESSIBILITY

The second floor galleries and third floor ballroom where events are held are only accessible by stairs. The first floor galleries and bookshop are accessible via outdoor lift. Please call ahead to make arrangements.

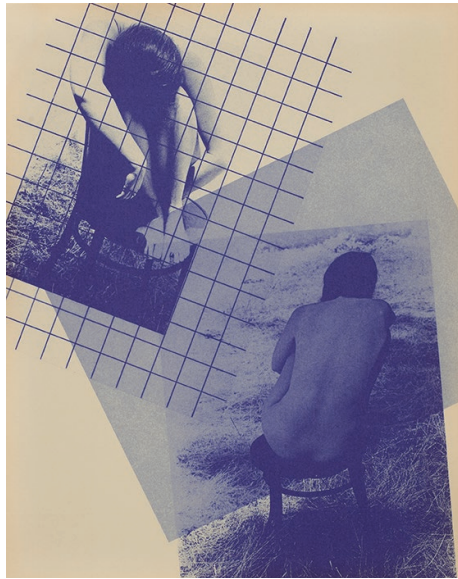
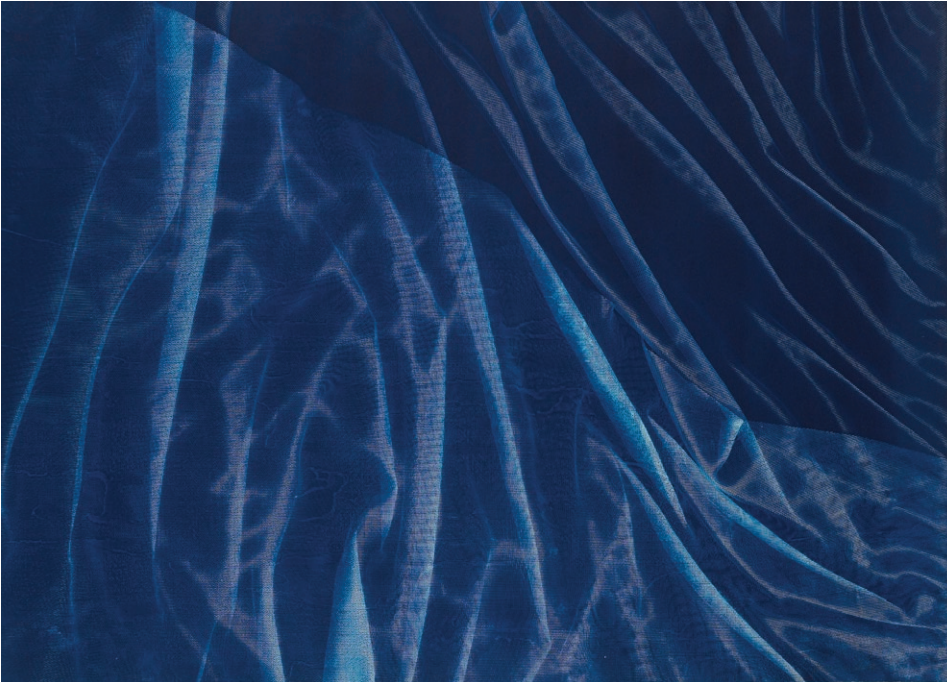
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High-resolution digital images are available on the press section of our website; email Mia Khimm at [mkhimm@grahamfoundation.org](mailto:mkhimm@grahamfoundation.org) for the press login or additional information. Press tours welcome by appointment.



Images (top) Barbara Kasten, *Architectural Site 17, August 29, 1988*, 1988. Cibachrome. 60 x 50 inches. Location: High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA. Architect: Richard Meier; (bottom left) Barbara Kasten, *Construct VIII*, 1982. Polaroid. 10 x 8 inches; (bottom right) Barbara Kasten, *Scene III*, 2012. Archival pigment print. 53  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 43  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. All images courtesy of the artist.



Images (top) Barbara Kasten, *Photogenic Painting, Untitled 72/21*, 1975. Cyanotype. 30 x 40 inches; (bottom left) Barbara Kasten, *Transposition 7*, 2014. Fujiflex digital print. 60 x 48 inches; (bottom right) Barbara Kasten, *Figure/Chair*, 1973. Diazotype on newsprint. 22 x 17 inches. All images courtesy of the artist.