



# Barbara Kasten Geometric Abstraction on Photography

## 二维上的几何抽象空间

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photo courtesy of Jessica Silverman Gallery

从摄影的尝试者  
到先锋实验者，  
**Kasten**的形式  
探险体现出了非  
凡的创造力。

“人们想当然地以为一摁快门照片就出来了，但实际上，我的作品从开始制作到最终完成需要经过很多步骤，照片出来前我并不知道会得到什么，可当它来了，你会说：是的，我想要的就是这个。”Barbara Kasten（1936年生于芝加哥）毕业于亚利桑那大学，1970年获得加利福尼亚艺术和工艺学院硕士学位。自那时起，Barbara就开始了关于视觉环境模式的实验，几何形体、镜子、玻璃、金属板、塑料板、纸板，现代建筑，这些构成了她创作几何抽象空间摄影的材料。

虽然Barbara的作品最终以照片的形式呈现，但她的艺术实践却是雕塑、绘画、建筑和现成品等多种媒介经验的综合。起初她对摄影并不太感兴趣，后来她在加利福尼亚艺术和工艺学院和她未来的丈夫Leland Rice相遇，通过他接触到很多从事摄影创作的艺术家，继而与摄影有了进一步

的关联。1974年，一次偶然的机会，她创作出了最早的“无题”系列，其中所采用的玻璃纤维纱布来自她上纤维雕塑课时向学生做示范用的材料。她用刷子在BFK丽芙版画纸上手工涂抹铁氟化钾感光液，让光直接透过折叠的玻璃纤维纱布在感光纸上显影，最后得到蓝色基调的照片。此后几年，这个系列进一步延伸，绘画与色彩的元素得到强化。Barbara说，一开始恰恰是因为没有接受过关于版画摄影的专门训练，这样的尝试才对她有新鲜感，持续几十年的创作实践由此开启。从Barbara的作品可以清楚地看到以几何线条为基本造型的包豪斯现代化建筑风格对她的影响。曾经为包豪斯剧场设计海报的Stenberg兄弟也是构成主义的代表人物之一，他们对Barbara的启发无疑是深远的。进入80年代以后，Barbara的宝丽来照片显示出了与俄国画家Kazimir Malevich（他是从构成主义发展而来的至上主义的代言人）相似的几何抽象形式，所以这个系列的标题采用了“构成”一词。她用色彩、形体和空间构建出戏剧性的画面组合，再通过大画幅相机拍摄成照片，Barbara



三她主要用了当时最新的色彩控制技术——宝丽来相机，要知道全世界只有六台这样

机器而已。当然，此时的她已经跃升为古根海

美博物馆收藏者了。

尝试者到先锋实验者，Barbara的形式体现了非凡的创造力。例如以上提及的宝丽来系列，当她发现宝丽来相纸上的色块在

上呈现出很厚的层次感，犹如浮雕一般

质感。于是她就发挥这样的材料特性来拍摄

布兰和玻璃等材料，突出它们的边缘，她用雕

刻刀将之称谓感光剂中的蚀刻线条。

是元的艺术，Barbara从一开始就清楚这点。

1982年，她生活在洛杉矶，彼时南加州

“光与空间运动”正如火如荼地进行着，James

Knoll和Robert Irwin, DeWain Valentine和

Larry Bell利用光与材料进行的光实验，深深地

吸引着Barbara。与此同时，极少主义艺术家

Agnes Martin也是她的重要参照对象。所有这

些都体现在2011年在工作室室内环境中搭

建摄影棚中，剔除了色彩，光与影的组合建构

三维的几何空间，形体的边缘线条依然锐利。

实际上，就在80年代的“建筑场所”系列中，她就曾利用类似纽约的世贸中心和洛杉矶MOMA这样的现代建筑空间进行现场拍摄。她指挥着多达15人的摄影组，利用几何状的镜子装置、彩色滤光板，以及拍电影专用的外景灯光照明等元素，切割这些现代建筑，用单次曝光的方式连夜拍出具有时代缩影感的彩色画面。

在Barbara Kasten新近创作的录像装置《玻璃幕》中，光与影投射到镜子并蔓延到整个展厅，她说，以这样的抽象形式所揭示出的过程即是其作品所要表现的对象，也就是说，她的摄影并非现实世界的直接再现。Barbara的新作越来越自觉地显示出基于镜头的光学敏感，例如2009至2010年之间创作的《发生》系列，通过镜头将光转化为影，而树脂玻璃上刻意磨出的刮痕在镜头里充分展现出材料的物理质感。

Barbara Kasten曾问鼎多项知名艺术奖，作品曾在全球各地广泛展出，国际摄影中心，纽约现代艺术博物馆等大量重要机构都收藏有她的作品。如今，她以摄影教授的身份在芝加哥的哥伦比亚学院执鞭任教。

#### 01.

##### **Construct XV-A**

宝丽来彩色胶片

20 × 25 cm

版本：3/7

1982

#### 02.

##### **Construct PC/XI**

宝丽来彩色胶片

61 × 51 cm

版本：3/6

#### 03.

##### **Construct NYC-2**

宝丽来彩色胶片

61 × 51 cm

版本：4/5

# JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY

## Barbara Kasten: Geometric Abstraction on Photography

From novice to pioneer, Kasten's explorations of form in photography reflect an extraordinary creativity

Text: Dai Weiping; Editor Chen Yamei; Translation: JiaJing Liu

"Some people have a misconstrued idea that a photograph is one snap of the shutter. The reality for me is that there are multiple steps along the way to making the final result, without knowing what that is until it arrives. And then, when it's on your doorstep, you say: yes, I was expecting you."

Barbara Kasten was born in Chicago in 1936. She received her BFA from University of Arizona, and then graduated from the MFA program at California College of Arts and Crafts in 1970. Since the very beginning of her career, Kasten has continuously experimented with different configurations of the visual environment. She incorporates geometric shapes, mirrors, glass, metal boards, plastic boards, cardboards, and contemporary architecture into her photographs of geometric and abstract spaces.

Although Kasten's works ultimately take the form of photographs, her art practice is a combination of sculpture, drawing, architecture, ready-mades and the multimedia experience. She wasn't interested in photography until she met Leland Rice, who later became her husband, at California College of Arts and Crafts. Through Rice, Kasten met many photographers and photography subsequently found its way into her experiments.

In 1974, a chance opportunity led her to create the series "Untitled." Kasten was using fiberglass screens to demonstrate techniques to students in a fiber sculpture class. She decided to make cyanotype photographs using the fiberglass screens. She manually applied potassium ferricyanide emulsion on Rives BFK printing paper; then she let sunlight shine directly onto the photosensitive paper through folded fiberglass screens. As Kasten continued working in this experimental mode for the next few years, she added colors and the influence of painting in the photographs became more pronounced. Kasten has said it was precisely because she was not trained in cyanotype photography, that these experimentations held fresh possibilities to her. In subsequent decades, she would continue to experiment creatively with all of the limitations and rules of photography.

Kasten's photographs use geometric lines as their basic form. She counted as early influences the Bauhaus interdisciplinary style and the Stenberg brothers, who designed sets for Soviet Constructivist theatre. In Kasten's Polaroid photographs from 1980s, the geometric abstractions offer a visual link to Russian painter Kasimir Malevich (who was a representative of the Suprematist movement, which evolved from Constructivism). So it is no surprise the title of this series was "Constructs." Kasten used color, shape, and space to create sets with a theatrical flair, and then photographed them using large-format cameras. Kasten even found ways to use the latest color technology at the time—the 20x24 Polaroid camera, of which there now are only six in the world. And Kasten's Guggenheim Fellowship further confirmed her importance as an artist.

# JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY

From trying her hand at photography, to becoming a pioneering experimenter, Kasten's explorations of form showed extraordinary creativity. For example, in the Polaroid series, she realized that the layers of color form a thick emulsion on the backing paper, which made for contrasting effects as in relief sculpture. So she expressed this special aspect of the material by photographing metal wires and mirrors, emphasizing the edges. Borrowing from the language of printmaking, she called this an "etched line" in the emulsion.

Photography is the art of light; this is a rule that Kasten knows well. Living in Los Angeles from 1972 to 1982, she came into contact with the Light and Space movement that was happening in Southern California. Artists such as James Turrell, Robert Irwin, DeWain Valentine, and Larry Bell were experimenting with light and materials, and their work interested Kasten. At the same time, she also counted Minimalist artist Agnes Martin as an influence. These influences are collectively brought together in 2011 in the "Studio Construct" series, which took on the form of installation photography built inside the studio. Removing the element of color, Kasten relied on the composition of light and shadow to create a three-dimensional geometric space, where the lines and edges of shapes remain sharp. There is a tangible connection between the "Studio Constructs" and Kasten's series from the 1980s, "Architectural Sites." Taking her camera out of the studio, she used modern architectural spaces such as the World Trade Center in New York and Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles as subjects. Directing crews of up to 15 people, Kasten used mirrors, colored gels, and movie studio lighting to create segmentation in the buildings, which she photographed in single exposure, creating colorful photographs that are snapshots of time.

In Kasten's recent video installation *Glass Curtain*, patterns of light and shadow are projected onto mirrors and extend throughout the gallery space. Of her approach, Kasten said that it is an abstraction whereby the process reveals the object, which is to say that her photographs are not intended as representations of reality. Kasten's newer works increasingly show a sensitivity to light as seen through the camera lens. In the "Incidence" series created from 2009 to 2010, light shone through the Plexiglas was transformed into shadows, while intentional scratches left on the Plexiglas's surface could only be seen through the camera lens, fully exhibiting the physicality of the material.

Kasten has received many honors for her artistic work. Her photographs are exhibited internationally, and collected by renowned art institutions including the International Center for Photography and Museum of Modern Art in New York. Kasten is Professor Emerita of Photography at Columbia College in Chicago.