

Eva Hesse: Spectres and Studiowork



No title

1969

Cheesecloth, adhesive

43.7 x 28.5 x 11.5 cm / 17 1/4 x 11 1/4 x 4 1/2 inches

© The Estate of Eva Hesse.

photo: Abby Robinson, New York

February 28 – April 7, 2012

■ Exhibition Information

Artist: Eva Hesse (American, 1936-1970)

Exhibition Title: Eva Hesse: Spectres and Studiowork

Exhibition Dates: February 28 – April 7, 2012 (Opening Reception: February 28, 5-7pm)

Exhibition Space: Kukje Gallery Space 2

Website: www.kukjegallery.com

KUKJE GALLERY

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■ **About the Exhibition**

Kukje Gallery presents “Eva Hesse: Spectres and Studiowork,” an exhibition exploring the work of one of the twentieth century's most critically celebrated and influential artists.

Curated by renowned Hesse scholars Briony Fer and E. Luanne McKinnon and Barry Rosen, Director of The Estate of Eva Hesse, the exhibition at Kukje will include sculptures and wall works that have been drawn from two critically acclaimed recent surveys: “Eva Hesse Spectres 1960” and “Eva Hesse: Studiowork.”*

The focus of the exhibition provides an unprecedented opportunity to experience both recent surveys in a condensed format, exploring both of these powerful bodies of work that are finally receiving the critical attention they deserve.

First, the exhibition examines the paintings Hesse made shortly after her graduation from Yale University when she moved to a new studio in New York in 1960. Hesse completed an astonishing 48 paintings in 1960 and 20 are on view at Kukje Gallery. This remarkable body of work was never exhibited during the Hesse's lifetime and reveals a vitally important part of her evolution as she moved away from abstraction to striking semi-figurative subjects that show her relentless exploration of the psychology of self.

During this formative time Hesse wrote in her journal, “Only painting can now see me through and I must see it through. It is totally interdependent with my entire being.” (December 27, 1960)

The oil paintings from this remarkable year feature a series of expressive faces and figures that hover between a rich corporality and a ghostly shadow-like presence. Her gestural brush strokes employ an earthy palette, drips and *sgcraffito* that are reminiscent of Willem de Kooning and the portraits of Alberto Giacometti, yet the figures command a unique place and cannot help but suggest a mirroring of the artist herself.

These early paintings are historical as much as they are personal, providing a critical examination of the artist at a seminal point in her formal and conceptual development. In this way they function not only as self-portraits but, more profoundly, as an early indication of her complex spiritual and psychological oeuvre — providing invaluable insight into this influential artist's private struggles and professional aspirations.

The second body of works on display includes a group of small sculptures, all of which are being presented in Korea for the first time. Eva Hesse is widely recognized for her large-scale materially inventive works that played a central role in the radical transformation of sculptural practice in the 1960s. Alongside these larger better-known sculptures, Hesse produced a broad range of small experimental works using a diverse range of materials including latex, fiberglass, Sculp-Metal, wire-mesh, cheesecloth, masking tape and wax.

These unique pieces were left in the studio at the time of her death, sold or given to friends during her lifetime. Renamed “studioworks” by the curator Briony Fer, they are objects that resist easy categorization, having been previously considered ‘test-pieces’ or prototypes for larger sculptures. Delicate and handmade, the shapes of these objects are undefined but ephemeral and evoke the vulnerability of the body while simultaneously pointing to the visceral work Hesse is famous for. The "studioworks" occupy a rare and wonderful place in Hesse's life work, exhibiting traces of the artist's touch as well as illustrating her constant experimentation.

The two distinct bodies of work included in the exhibition offer a profound glimpse into Eva Hesse's studio practice. Each of the works are bound by indeterminate ideas such as presence and absence, corporeality and the spectral, as well as tensions between materiality and immateriality, the geometric and the organic. For an artist who asked, “Where does painting end and drawing begin?” and wrote that “A lot of my sculpture could be called a painting,” the works provide an essential introduction to Hesse and her life's work.

This unique exhibition traces the progression of Hesse's work as a young and ambitious artist and highlights key moments of experimentation during her short but prolific career. By including these two disparate but intimately related bodies of work, Kukje Gallery and guest curators are able to present a rare, intimate portrait of Eva Hesse that frames both her courageous studio practice and her radical contribution to the history of sculpture.

* "Spectres" was organized and exhibited at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque; and the Brooklyn Museum, New York. "Eva Hesse: Studiowork" was organized and exhibited by the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; Camden Arts Center, London; Fundacio Antoni Tapies, Barcelona; Art Gallery of Ontario; and the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

■ **About the Artist**

Eva Hesse was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1936 into a Jewish family. In 1939, she arrived in New York. At the age of nine, her parents separated and her father remarried. A few months later, Eva's mother, who had a history of depression, committed suicide.

From 1954 to 1957, Hesse studied at Cooper Union in New York and then studied painting at Yale University of Art and Architecture in New Haven, where her teachers included Josef Albers. She moved into her first studio in New York in 1960, soon participating in a group exhibition in 1961, followed by her first solo exhibition at the Allan Stone Gallery in New York (1963). In 1964, with her husband, sculptor Tom Doyle, she was invited to spend a year in Kettwig an der Ruhr, Germany. Until then, Hesse considered herself a painter but while in Germany she began to sculpt using materials left behind in the disused factory where she lived and worked.

In 1965 she returned to New York and began to work in materials that would become synonymous with her work, including latex and fiberglass. These materials were considered new and unusual to art making at that time — a unorthodox approach to materials that would come to be widely associated with Hesse's oeuvre. Finding her mature style Hesse began to create the maverick sculptures that brought international fame, until her life was tragically cut short due to a brain tumor at 34 years of age. Her death in 1970 ended a career spanning only ten years.

Hesse was friends with many important artists in New York in the 1960s including Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, Mel Bochner, and Dan Graham — all of whom became known for their radical reinterpretation of sculptural vocabularies and the use unorthodox materials such as aluminum, latex, rubber, plastic, lead, polythene, copper, felt, dirt, sawdust, paper pulp and glue. She was associated with the mid-1960s post-minimal and anti-form movements in sculpture and is widely held to have played a major role in the radical transformation of sculpture at a time when the nature of the artistic object itself was being questioned.

Many major exhibition of Eva Hesse have been organized in the United States and Europe since her death, including The Guggenheim Museum in 1972, the first exhibition of its kind organized around a female artist (held only two years after her untimely death), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2002), The Drawing Center in New York (2006), the Jewish Museum of New York (2006), and "Eva Hesse Spectres 1960" and "Eva Hesse: Studiowork" which were exhibited at eight different venues altogether in Europe, US, and Canada between 2009 and 2011.

■ Exhibition Images & Captions

Use of images must clearly credit the artist and other relevant parties.



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43.7 x 28.5 x 11.5 cm / 17 1/4 x 11 1/4 x 4 1/2 inches

© The Estate of Eva Hesse

photo: Abby Robinson, New York



Eva Hesse (American, 1936-1970)

No title

1960

Oil on Masonite

53.7 x 42.2 cm / 21 1/8 x 16 5/8 inches

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Eva Hesse (American, 1936-1970)

No title

1960

Oil on Masonite

40 x 30.5 cm / 15 3/4 x 12 inches

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Eva Hesse (American, 1936-1970)

No title

1960

Oil on canvas

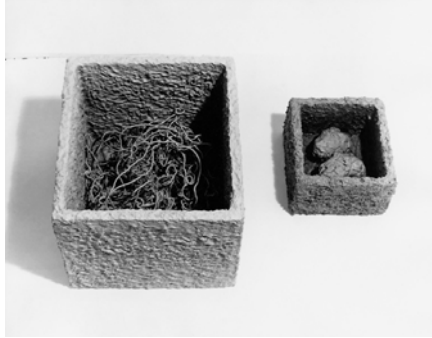
41 x 40.3 cm / 16 1/8 x 15 7/8 inches

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photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography Zurich

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Eva Hesse (American, 1936-1970)

Inside I

1967

Acrylic, papier-mâché, wood, cord, wire

30.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm / 12 x 12 x 12 inches

Interior object: 7 x 21.5 x 23 cm / 2 3/4 x 8 1/2 x 9 inches

© The Estate of Eva Hesse

Inside II

1967

Acrylic, papier-mâché, sawdust, wood, cord, metal, paper

13.7 x 18.4 x 18.7 cm / 5 3/8 x 7 1/4 x 7 3/8 inches

2 objects:

A: 6.7 x 10.3 x 6.2 cm / 2 5/8 x 4 x 2 1/2 inches

B: 5.2 x 8.7 x 6.4 cm / 2 x 3 3/8 x 2 1/2 inches /

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Papier-caché

6 1/8 x 6 x 3 1/4 inches / 15.5 x 15.3 x 8.3 cm

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