

Marisa Merz

(Turin, 1926–2019)

Intimate and solitary, Marisa Merz's work suggests the presence of secrets that are difficult to translate into words. Her works, often untitled, initially emerged in the late 1960s from the domestic sphere, maintaining a quality of that which is handmade and delicate. The artist uses traditional knitting needles to manipulate nylon or copper threads, composing grids that capture portions of space and the magic of light and shadow that only a direct encounter with the work can reveal. In other cases, sheets of aluminum are cut and sewn according to a process that enables the material to express its organic dynamism.

Time, implicated as the great sculptor, is the element that connects all of the artist's research. From tables on which traces of recently interrupted activity remain, to drawn or sculpted heads, the artist presents situations of passage, as in a dance where every gesture presupposes what has come before and what will follow. At the boundary of the immaterial, the work of Marisa Merz represents the poetic and anti-monumental side of Arte Povera.

In *Untitled*, 1971, the artist uses paraffin wax to mold the shape of a violin. The resulting instrument is enriched with a possible sonority through the presence of a jet of water that traverses it and a lead basin that functions as a sound box. In a delicate play of equilibrium, a small plumb bob, suspended from the ceiling on a copper wire, allows the jet of water to take on a spherical form whose geometry is continuously contradicted by minimal variations. Based on an incessant circularity of relationships, the installation seems to invite silence, suggesting an ideal condition amenable to contemplation. (MB)