Lauretta Vinciarelli
101 Spring Street
March 20–July 20, 2019
Public hours:
Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays
1:00–5:30pm
Lauretta Vinciarelli is made possible with support from Ronnie Heyman and Loren Pack & Robert Boyer

Exhibition Checklist

Short Wall:

I
Lauretta Vinciarelli and Leonardo Fodera, Puglia project, 1975-1977
Ink and colored pencil on mylar
17 1/4 × 22 3/4 inches (44 × 58 cm)

II
Lauretta Vinciarelli and Leonardo Fodera, Puglia project, 1975-1977
Ink and colored pencil on mylar
17 1/4 × 42 1/2 inches (44 × 108 cm)

III
Lauretta Vinciarelli and Leonardo Fodera, Puglia project, 1975-1977
Ink and colored pencil on mylar
17 1/4 × 22 3/4 inches (44 × 58 cm)

IV
Lauretta Vinciarelli and Leonardo Fodera, Puglia project, 1975-1977
Ink and colored pencil on mylar
17 1/4 × 22 3/4 inches (44 × 58 cm)


Long Wall (left to right):

I
[Drawings of the hangar and open and enclosed court house], 1980
Colored pencil on vellum
20 × 32 inches (50.8 × 81.3 cm)

II
[Drawings of the hangar and open and enclosed court house], 1980
Colored pencil on vellum
20 × 32 inches (50.8 × 81.3 cm)

III
[Project for a Productive Garden in an Urban Center in South West Texas], c. 1979
Colored pencil on tracing paper
1 of 3 drawings, each 23 1/4 × 41 1/2 inches (59.1 × 105.4 cm)

IV
[Water enclosure in landscape], 1986
Watercolor on paper
22 1/2 × 29 7/8 inches (57.2 × 75.9 cm)

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Lauretta Vinciarelli (1943–2015) was born in Arbe, Italy and raised in Rome. She attended graduate school at the Università di Roma La Sapienza, earning her doctorate in architecture and urban planning in 1971. During her studies, Vinciarelli encountered the typological and vernacular approaches to housing and urban design of Ludovico Quaroni and Mario Ridolfi, which provided a foundation for some of the critiques of market capitalism and materialism that permeated Italian architectural discourse in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Vinciarelli moved to New York City in 1975, where she became involved in the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) in 1975, continuing her involvement until its closure in 1984. Founded by Peter Eisenman, the IAUS served as a publishing house, think tank, exhibition space, and alternative school. In 1978, Vinciarelli was the first—and, ultimately, the only woman given a solo show through the IAUS. She was a vital member of the ReVisions study group, formed in 1981 and continuing until 1986, with her IAUS colleagues Bernard Tschumi, Joan Ockman, and Mary McLeod, among others. ReVisions hosted public programs that explored the relationships of art, architecture, and ideology, while also organizing reading groups that focused on texts by prominent Italian architects and thinkers, such as Manfredo Tafuri, Galvano Della Porta, and Antonio Gramsci.

Vinciarelli taught at various architecture schools during her career. She began with a position at Pratt Institute in 1975, and later taught at City College New York (1979–1992), and worked as a visiting professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago (1981) and Rice University, Houston (1982). Specifically, Vinciarelli was hired by the Dean of the Architecture School at Columbia University, James Stewart Polk, in 1978, becoming one of the first women to teach studio courses at Columbia along with her colleagues Ada Karmi and Mary McLeod, hired in 1977 and 1978, respectively.

Developed in an atmosphere of Italian political protests beginning in the early 1960s, fomented by the impact of the world-wide protests of 1968, Vinciarelli’s pedagogical practice emphasized the questioning of entrenched principles of modern architecture, rethinking these values through the study of building typologies and their relationships to specific social and physical contexts. While at Columbia, Vinciarelli introduced the “type” and led courses on “carpet housing,” one of the four primary housing typologies taught there. Similar to the layout of ancient Mediterranean villages, in which there was a balance between individual and community spaces, “carpet housing” often deploys private and shared courtyards in low-rise, high-density apartment designs that resemble a textile or carpet when viewed from above.

In addition to her pedagogical legacy, Vinciarelli’s contributions to the field of architecture include her visionary drawings, which were produced during a period of increased interest in “paper architecture” and the presentation of architectural drawings in an art context. Using a typological approach that centers on shared fundamental building types that persist over time, Vinciarelli developed a method of “drawing as research” which is vividly demonstrated in colored pencil and watercolor in the architectural proposals and drawings from the 1970s and 1981 included in this exhibition. In 1976, Vinciarelli began a ten-year research, both as a collaborator and romantic partner, with Donald Judd (1928–1994). Their collaboration can be seen in numerous realized and unrealized projects for Marfa, Texas and West Texas, more generally. Additionally, the two worked on a commission for a large work to be installed in front of the Providence City Hall (1984) and a proposal for a large complex for the Progressive Insurance company in Cleveland (1986). In the proposal for Providence, Vinciarelli created the axonometric drawing for the project, which Judd later installed in his Architecture Office. Additionally, Vinciarelli contributed her drafting skills to Judd’s printmaking endeavors, making drawings for plates used to create a set of twenty-seven etchings (1985–1986).

Vinciarelli’s works have been collected by numerous museums including the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Museum nazionale delle arti del xx secolo; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, and the Archive of the Biennale of Venice. Notably, Vinciarelli was the first woman to have drawings acquired by the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1976. Recent exhibitions of Vinciarelli’s work include: Light: The Architecture of Lauretta Vinciarelli (2012), a retrospective exhibition held at the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture at the City College of New York, and Light Un-reveiled (2007) at Tobah Gallery, New York.

Represented in this exhibition are Vinciarelli’s drawings and gardens in structures in West Texas and Puglia, Italy, projects which illustrate her architectural sensibility and interest in typological thinking, which she shared with Judd.

The works included in this exhibition are from the collection of Judd Foundation. Judd purchased a number of Vinciarelli’s drawings, including the Puglia Project, shortly after their realization. The remainder of the installed drawings and watercolors were generously gifted to Judd Foundation in 2012 by Vinciarelli’s husband, Peter Rowe, the Raymond Garbe Professor of Architecture and Urban Design and Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor.

Exhibition text:
Cassia Murray
Director of Marfa Programs and Architect

Dr. Rebecca Soto
Visiting Lecturer, Queens University

Lauretta Vinciarelli
Project for a Productive Garden in an Urban Center in South West Texas, c. 1979
Colored pencil on tracing paper
3 drawings, each 22 1/2 × 24 inches (57.2 × 61 cm)
In 1979, Judd purchased Vinciarelli’s drawing for a garden at the Walker House, a house owned by Marfa, similar to the drawings for the Puglia project, the drawings for the Walker House introduce various elements of the garden, such as pergolas, trees, and water features to be employed in the construction of the garden as a spatial fabric. Though the plus for the Walker House garden was uncovered, the influence of Vinciarelli’s proposal can be seen in the minimal elements, such as the design of the pool Judd incorporated at other sites. For example, the pool at the Walker House closely resembles the pool Judd later realized in his work at La Mansana de Chinati/The Block. Additionally, the detailed work on the north and south side of the property resembles the doors on the north and south side of the Arena at the Chinati Foundation, the public art foundation that Judd established in Marfa.

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