

# Liliana Porter

## *L'art de la joie*

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September 3rd — September 29th, 2022

Opening: September 3rd, 4 to 8pm



Liliana Porter, *Development of a Wrinkle* (detail), 1967

Spanning works separated by more than five decades of artistic trajectory, and in which recurring themes intersect, this exhibition by Liliana Porter is, more than a linear retrospective of her work, a folding of time upon itself in which the past contemplates itself in the present and vice versa. It allows us to see how different examples of her work present similar concerns, reveal complicities in terms of content and, above all, share the questioning of artistic practice and modes of representation as the backbone of her entire discourse.

As could not be otherwise, the exhibition opens with a self-portrait. An image in which she eludes our gaze but which concentrates the core of his creative concerns at the beginning of the 1970s: to reveal the contradictions between the different layers of the fiction that constitutes the work of art —particularly photography—. She does this, moreover, by incorporating her own body in the process, and this is no trivial matter, for she is among the pioneers in this field. In another example, *The Square* (1973), the geometric form "drawn" on paper slides playfully between the artist's fingers and over her hand. Here the fundamental notion of time appears, because through the ruse of sequencing, the square is suggested to be in movement. This is, then, the first major subject that we will see across the exhibition.

On the one hand, time as the theme of the work through countless metaphors of its passing and its loss. It manifests itself in small installations of broken clocks in which tiny characters intervene, or in paintings that integrate wheels and mechanisms as part of this narrative. But we must also take into account the time that is introduced as an agent that participates in the creation of the work. Is it not time that acts in *Wrinkle* (1968) offering the viewer the meticulous phases of the crumpling of a sheet of paper into a compact form? The wrinkle is the testimony of an action, of a gesture of the body and its movement, of that time incorporated within the work itself. *Development of a Wrinkle*, a diptych produced in 1967 that we would not exaggerate in describing as historic, deserves special attention. It is a crucial work in Porter's career, because it announces many of the themes she was to develop in the following decade: the *mise en abyme* of the wrinkle —confusing real and virtual space—, the idea of the shadow and the anonymous man, symbol of the American society she is beginning to discover. A year earlier she had produced *Fragment of a Crowd* (1966), composed as a pop-up book made from two engravings, and influenced by the urban images of New York, advertising posters and the subway, which exerted a certain fascination on the young artist.



Liliana Porter, *The Dangerous Game* (detail), 1979

A second theme, which also connects chronologically distant periods, is the assumption of a political position, fundamentally anti-war and rejecting all forms of conflict. It begins at the end of the 1960s, with readings of Gandhi's biography that inspire peaceful resistance and non-violence, in the context of growing opposition to the American intervention in Vietnam. The shadow of this war and the human losses on both sides hovers over several works of this period, in which pop culture and everyday-life elements start to intertwine with this more sinister, sometimes melancholic, and politically charged content. Porter begins to warn us of the risk of trivialization inherent in mass culture and its productions, despite the evident magnetism that these will exert throughout her career. The reflection on this "hazardous" ambivalence crystallizes in a series of works, including *The Dangerous Game* (1979), once again an example of a decisive turning point in his career. Produced at a time of rejection of painting as a medium and of "commercial" works, she transfers to the canvas a practice based on silkscreen printing that she had already been using in ephemeral installations. Porter

continues to play with the conventions of the real and the fictitious, opposing images with various geometric objects and paper characters that are integrated into the painting as an assemblage. Formally, it is organized in a Cartesian and legible way, in the manner of a visual poem or a hieroglyphic. The germ of all her later painting is already present in this work, and draws clear conceptual lines for the following decades. On the other hand, the figures of the soldiers and the theme of war will accompany her over time, the latest example being *Untitled (at War)*, produced in 2022 in tune with contemporary events. In this case we are also faced with a vision of chaos, which takes the shape of a black mass, inhabited by countless figurines and objects, thrown on the canvas in the manner of an action painting.

The links that we can establish between the works are multiple —sometimes surprising— and reveal a coherent conceptual framework over time. Porter's work invites us to a permanent reflection: aesthetic, political, metaphysical... Opening a door through which we can enter the interlaced paths of her artistic practice.