

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Schwendener, Martha, "Marisa Mertz, Barbara Gladstone," *Flash Art*, May-June 1995

NEW YORK

MARISA MERZ

BARBARA GLADSTONE

Despite a thirty year career as an artist and many shows in Europe, this show is the first United States exhibition of Marisa Merz's work. The reason for this is that Merz has taken an approach quite different from most artists, spending a good part of her career retreating from the public sphere, creating work in intimate settings, such as her home.

All three pieces in the show (all *Untitled*, 1994) employ elemental, even traditional materials: canvas, wood, copper, paraffin, clay, iron, lead, graphite, and gold leaf. Two pieces in the show combine small, altar-like constructions — a small crudely sculpted head placed on a stand — with an arrangement of small squares of knitted copper wire tacked on the wall. The knitted wire immediately calls to mind the work of those feminists who explore the connections between knitting and sewing, traditional women's work, and artistic production. However, in Merz's case, it seems more a way of interacting with her materials, creating a shimmering surface out of the thin thread of wire, rather than a statement on her gender and artthood.

These larger installation pieces effectively dominate the show. The third piece is a simple graphite-on-canvas drawing of an apparition, perhaps a face, which seems a little out of place and less interesting than the larger works. Every piece in the show, however, reveals Merz's fascination with her materials and, along with the installation quality of the work, marks her involvement with Arte Povera in the 60s and its lasting effects. The perishable nature of her materials, the oxidizable copper, meltable paraffin and gold leaf, and the molded clay which is dried instead of fired into stone, is the first sign of this. However, it is the delicate arrangement of her materials into ensembles which themselves seem highly perishable that underscores Merz's connection to Arte Povera.

While Merz's concern with Arte Povera naturalism, temporality, and, most importantly, materials, might seem a bit old fashioned, her work surpasses a rehashing of 60s values with its distinctly poetic quality which states the artist's peace with her work, and her insistence on its development within a personal and private, rather than a publicly sanctioned sphere.
Martha Schwendener

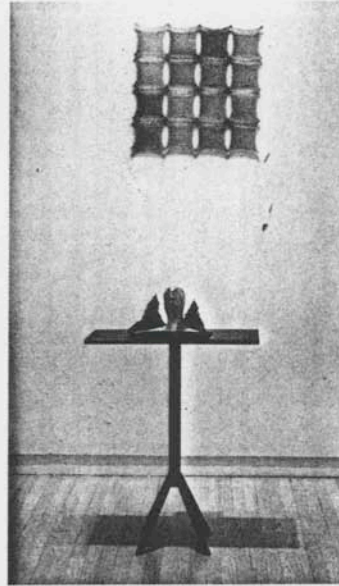
ISAMU NOGUCHI

PACEWILDENSTEIN

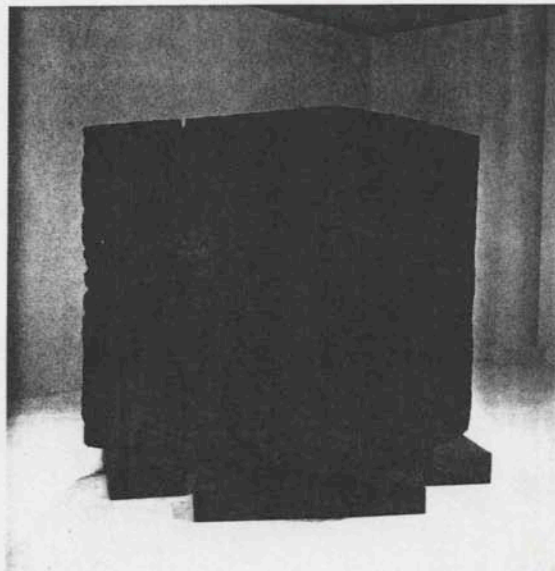
The work of Isamu Noguchi, one of the best known and most enigmatic New York School sculptors, has always been marked by its paradoxical nature. Not that this should be surprising considering his fusion of Eastern and Western aesthetic notions, and his difficult status as a Japanese-American artist who was seen in America as Japanese, and in Japan as "too American."

In this posthumous show, Noguchi's work serves as a document of his simultaneous in-

REVIEWS



MARISA MERZ, UNTITLED, 1994. COPPER, PARAFFIN, IRON, LEAD, CLAY, 219 X 67 X 107 CM.



ISAMU NOGUCHI, ENDS, 1986. SWEDISH GRANITE, 64" PER SIDE, 9 ELEMENTS, VIEW 1. PHOTO ELLEN PAGE WILSON.