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“Only recently I have come to recognize that the way I think is collage,  
and the way – really – that I speak is collage...  
I jump... It’s very stimulating to me.  
Whereas, if I had to go from A to B and Bo to C,  
I think I’d find it very boring.”  
(Louise Nevelson, 1980)

## Louise Nevelson

**Inauguration: 12 May 2016 at 18,00**  
**Exhibition period: 13 May - 22 July 2016**

On the occasion of the solo exhibition devoted to Louise Nevelson and held at the Fondazione Marconi at 15, via Tadino, **Studio Marconi '65** will present a selection of collages, multiples and graphic works.

Forty-three years ago, in May 1973, the first Louise Nevelson exhibition in Milan, was organized at Studio Marconi, at a time when she was still little known to the European public.

After seeing some of her works at an exhibition in Paris, Giorgio Marconi met her in person in 1971 through the auspices of the Pace Gallery in New York and later visited her in her studio-home.

*It was an assemblage of works created from leftover bits and pieces: Coca-Cola crates, table legs, timber offcuts, barrel slats, and so on. I spent a whole morning there: we talked about artworks, spaces, exhibitions, trips to Milan and a host of other subjects, as well as chatting about life in general...*

(Giorgio Marconi, *Autobiografia di una galleria*, Skira 2004)

In this way a close collaboration began that lasted a number of years and resulted in several exhibitions organised in Italy and other countries.

Nevelson was fascinated by Marcel Duchamp and other key figures of Dada and Surrealism: “Surrealism was in the art I breathed”, she said, recalling the years of her apprenticeship. Nevelson was also influenced by Picasso’s cubism, native North and Central America art, and, in particular, mural painting, after her experience working as Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo’s assistant.

Nevelson’s is a sculptural language that immediately adheres to the wall, borrowing its abstract signs from painting. Monumentality, monochrome and the dislocation of planes on a shallow depth are distinctive features of her assemblages or “environments”.

Nevelson gave the found objects that make up her abstract sculptures “a new spiritual life” different from their original one. She did this by subjecting them to a preparatory ritual, as though decontaminating them from the effects of the outside world.

A major figure in the renewal of sculpture and its transformations in the twentieth century, Louise Nevelson said of herself and her work: “I love putting things together.”

The range of her art, however, cannot be confined solely to the category of assemblage. As an emblematic figure of twentieth-century art, Louise Nevelson distinguished herself in the international art scene through her search for a universal language.

*I don’t know whether the label “sculptress” fits me. I make collages. I reconstruct the dismembered world into a new harmony.*

A volume devoted to Nevelson’s collages, containing an essay by Bruno Corà, will be published by Skira to mark the occasion.

## Biographical Notes

Louise Nevelson (Leah Berliawsky) was born in Kiev in 1899. At the age of six she immigrated with her family to the United States. Louise spent her childhood in Rockland (Maine), where she showed an early penchant for art. With her husband Charles Nevelson, a naturalised American born in Riga, in 1920 she settled in New York, where she studied music and theatre and visited avant-garde galleries.

In 1929 she enrolled at the Art Student's League, taught by Kenneth Hayes Miller, and in 1931 she travelled to Germany to take classes with Hans Hofmann. A few months later she travelled to Italy and Paris, where she visited the Musée de l'Homme, becoming fascinated with the African art on show there, and with the Cubist artworks she saw in the city's galleries. Once back in New York, she began to assist Diego Rivera in the decoration of the RCA Building and the New Workers' School. In 1933 she rented a studio space in Greenwich Village and began exhibiting her own works, mainly primitivist sculptures made from found objects and natural materials.

In 1935 she took part in *Sculpture: A Group Exhibition by Young Sculptors*, organised at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and in the following years she showed her work in several group shows. In September 1941 she held her first solo show at the Nierendorf Gallery, followed by another the next year. During these years she met many key figures of European contemporary art who had sought refuge in America after the outbreak of World War II. At Duchamp's suggestion, in 1943 Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, The Art of This Century, organised a women-only show entitled *Thirty-One Women*, in which Nevelson showed an all-wood piece entitled *Column*. From the mid-1940s on, her works were exhibited almost every year at the Whitney Museum. Her art was characterised by the absence of colour and the choice of abstract, geometric forms.

Nevelson created rigorously achromatic sculpture and assemblages from waste materials, often painting them matt black. Their dimensions increased in the following years, often taking the form of open-faced wooden boxes full of found objects and variously shaped and assembled wood offcuts, painted black, white or gold. From 1954 she organised a cycle of exhibitions at the Grand Central Modern Gallery, and major American museums began purchasing her works.

In 1959 she took part in the important exhibition *Sixteen Americans*, showing her room-size installation *Dawn's Wedding Feast*, her first white sculptures, composed of large-scale works that entirely covered the walls, and with central columns symbolising the sun and moon. In 1962 she was invited to take part in the Venice Biennale, and in 1964 she attended the *Documenta* in Kassel. In 1967 the Whitney Museum held a major retrospective of her work.

From the end of the 1960s she participated in numerous exhibitions all over the world, earning significant critical recognition and several awards. She created monumental works, such as the Chapel of the Good Shepherd for the Lutheran Church of St. Peter in New York (1977) and the sculpture *Sky Gate - New York* for the World Trade Center (1978).

In 1973 at Studio Marconi in Milan, Nevelson personally opened a show of eighty pieces of her work dating from 1955 to 1972, marking the start of a close, life-long collaboration with the gallery.

To mark her 80th birthday, the Whitney Museum mounted a retrospective entitled *Atmospheres and Environments*, with installations spanning from 1955 to 1961. In 1980, the Phoenix Art Museum organised a vast traveling retrospective entitled *The Fourth Dimension*.

Louise Nevelson died in New York on 17 April 1988.

Among the numerous retrospectives devoted to Nevelson was one organised in April 2014 by the Rome Foundation in collaboration with the Marconi Foundation, another was held in Catania at the Puglisi Cosentino Foundation, also in 2014, both curated by Bruno Corà; and a third in the same year at Die Galerie, Frankfurt am Main.

## Studio Marconi '65

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**Inauguration:** 12 May 2016 from 6:00 p.m.

**Exhibition period:** 13 May - 22 July 2016

**Hours:** Tuesday - Saturday 10-13, 15-19 until 11 June 2016;

Monday - Friday 10-13, 15-19 from 13 June 2016

**Free entrance**

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