

Exhibition: *Light, Space, Surface: Selections from LACMA's Collection*

Dates: April 2–October 1, 2023

Location: BCAM, Level 1



(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles, CA—January, 20, 2023) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Light, Space, Surface: Selections from LACMA's Collection*, an exploration of the art of Light and Space as well as related works with highly polished surfaces often referred to as "finish fetish." In the 1960s and 1970s, various Southern California artists began to create works that investigated perceptual phenomena. These artists were united by an interest in manipulating the medium of light to alter the perception of form, architectural space, and surface qualities. They used newly developed industrial materials, such as sheet acrylic, fiberglass, and polyester resin, to explore form, volume, presence, and absence through light, seen directly through other materials, reflected, or refracted.

Featuring 20 works by 16 artists, drawn almost exclusively from LACMA's collection, the works in the exhibition range from small sculptures shown on pedestals to larger phenomenological experiences. Artists in the exhibition include Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Billy Al Bengston, Judy Chicago, Laddie John Dill, Fred Eversley, Robert Irwin, Craig Kauffman, Helen Pashgian, and Hap Tivey. A new experiential work by Helen Pashgian, *Untitled* (2022) is on loan from the artist.

"This exhibition underscores the importance and depth of LACMA's holdings of Light and Space and 'finish fetish' work from the 1960s and '70s," said exhibition curator Carol S. Eliel, Senior Curator of Modern Art. "Many of the featured artists spent much of their career in Southern California, mostly in Los Angeles, where they first showed interest in Light and Space. We are excited to share this aspect of Southern California art history with audiences in Los Angeles."

"*Light, Space, Surface* is a selection of key works that recently traveled to several cities across the United States and is coming back to Los Angeles," said Michael

Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “Accompanied by LACMA’s first publication on its Southern California light and space works, this exhibition includes several pieces that have never been on view to the public, including a number of recent acquisitions. We are also excited to debut *Untitled*, a new work by Helen Pashgian.”

Exhibition Highlights

Larry Bell, *Cube*, 1966

Larry Bell considers the surfaces of his works to be paramount, and it was the surface properties of glass—simultaneously hard, transparent, and reflective—that attracted him to the material. He began vacuum coating glass in 1962, using a process that deposits a thin film of vaporized material on the surface. This coating modifies how the glass absorbs, reflects, and transmits light, and allows Bell to create infinite variations in the color, transparency, and reflectivity of his glass works. Vacuum-coated sculptures, including *Cube*, form the core of Bell’s practice. He continues to work with vacuum coatings today, at different scales and with materials that now include paper and polyester film in addition to glass.

Judy Chicago, *Pastel Domes #1*, 1968

Immediately after receiving her MFA in 1964, Judy Chicago went to auto body school, where she was the only woman among some 250 men. She did this not only to learn spray-painting techniques but also to prove her “‘seriousness’ to the male art world.” At auto body school, she “discovered the idea of merging color and surface [and] was hooked.” Chicago moved from painting metal to painting flat and then molded acrylic surfaces, which fused chemically with the automotive lacquers; for her, this fusion became like skin. *Pastel Domes #1* is one of a group of dome sculptures she made between 1968 and 1971 that—even as they echo the repeated geometric forms of contemporaneous Minimalism—evoke subtle female tropes. Chicago considered a group of three to be the primary family unit and likened the rounded forms to breasts or bellies.

Fred Eversley, *Untitled*, 1972

In 1967, Fred Eversley left a successful aerospace career to become a full-time artist. To make *Untitled* and his other parabolic lenses—the works for which he is best known—he adapted a turntable originally designed to produce atomic bomb casings. The centrifugal force generated when the turntable was spun at high speeds allowed Eversley to create concave disks out of liquid polyester resin, often mixed with pigment for color. He then ground and polished the Lenses by hand. Eversley is interested in how the viewer’s understanding of the lens changes in relation both to environmental conditions—especially lighting—and to the viewer’s movement around the sculpture.

Helen Pashgian, *Untitled, 1968–69* and *Untitled, 2022*

In *Untitled, 1968–69*, Pashgian set a bent acrylic rod within a cast resin object, complicating the way her almost transparent sculpture reflects and refracts light. “I was always interested in seeing into my sculptures and through them,” she has said. “I was also interested in how the ambient light or whatever light was put on them animated them. That’s why I was interested in having them highly polished.” Helen Pashgian’s recent work, *Untitled, 2022* exemplifies her desire, in her words, to “touch on this mysterious part beyond which the eye cannot go but beyond which the eye struggles to go.” She has also said that she likes the “tension between the eye and the brain. It makes you question what you’re seeing.” Despite its physical simplicity, this cast urethane disk causes the viewer to see auras and flares in colors that are not in fact materially included in the sculpture.

Publication

This volume explores the art of Light and Space and related “finish fetish” pieces with highly polished surfaces. *Light, Space, Surface: Art from Southern California* draws on LACMA’s deep holdings of this material, revealing the vibrancy and diversity of this slice of American art history. Co-published by LACMA and DelMonico Books, the publication is edited with text by Carol S. Eliel, and also includes texts by Kim Conaty, Michael Govan, Lawrence Weschler, Melinda Wortz, and Katia Zavistovski, with a photographic portfolio by Luisa Lambri.

Credit

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About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 149,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region’s rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA’s spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. Lacma.org

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