

WHITNEY

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PRESS RELEASE



Mary Corse (b. 1945), *Untitled (Space + Electric Light)*, 1968. Argon light, plexiglass, and high-frequency generator, 45 1/4 x 45 1/4 x 4 3/4 in. (114.9 x 114.9 x 12.1 cm). Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; museum purchase with funds from the Annenberg Foundation. Photograph by Philipp Scholz Rittermann

The Whitney To Present The First Museum Survey Of The Work Of Mary Corse

NEW YORK, April 6, 2018 — This June, the Whitney Museum of American Art will debut *Mary Corse: A Survey in Light*, the first museum survey devoted to the work of Mary Corse (born 1945, Berkeley, CA; lives and works in Topanga, CA). One of the few women associated with the West Coast Light and Space movement of the 1960s, Corse shared with her contemporaries a deep fascination with perception and with the possibility that light itself could serve as both a subject and material of art. Yet while others largely migrated away from painting into sculptural and environmental projects, Corse approached the question of light *through* painting.

This long overdue examination—which will run at the Whitney from June 8 through November 25 in the eighth-floor Hurst Family Galleries—focuses on key moments of experimentation in Corse’s career, highlighting the ways in which her unique formal and material investigations helped forge a new language of painting. Organized by Kim Conaty, Steven and Ann Ames Curator of Drawings and Prints, with Melinda Lang, curatorial assistant, in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition unfolds both chronologically and thematically, presenting approximately 25 works dating from the mid-1960s to the present. The exhibition is organized in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where it will be on view from July 28 through November 10, 2019.

In addition, in May 2018, Dia Art Foundation will unveil a new gallery dedicated to Corse at [Dia:Beacon](#). On view for three years, this long-term installation examines the artist's use of light and geometric form in painting. It celebrates recent acquisitions within a broader group of works that highlights the period from the late 1960s through the 1970s. On October 12, the Whitney is partnering with Dia to present a symposium at the Whitney reflecting on Corse's career and offering new perspectives on her work. Further details will be forthcoming. Scott Rothkopf, Deputy Director for Programs and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, commented: "Corse's exhibition at the Whitney and installation at Dia will finally position her as the true innovator she has been for more than half a century. Not only did she play a key role in the emergence of the West Coast Light and Space movement, but since then she has persistently developed a body of painting remarkable for its technical experimentation and otherworldly beauty."

Conaty noted: "It's an exciting moment to recognize Corse's pioneering achievements, now more than five decades after she began. The experience of her work, which can be both material and immaterial, minimal and maximal, makes us slow down and look, then look again. There is a real magic to the work that is felt, not just seen, and we're thrilled to offer our visitors the opportunity to discover it."

The Whitney exhibition begins in 1964, when, following an unusually intense education in abstract painting as a teen in Berkeley, Corse enrolled at Chouinard Art Institute and moved to downtown Los Angeles. There, she dove headlong into a sustained dialogue with painting, questioning its most essential elements and forms—the brushstroke, the edge, the monochrome, the grid—while charting her own course through studies in quantum physics and unconventional "painting" materials, from fluorescent light and plexiglass to metallic flakes, glass microspheres, and clay. The survey will bring together for the first time Corse's key bodies of work—including her early shaped canvases, freestanding sculptures, and the light encasements that she engineered between 1966 and 1968, in her early twenties, as well as her breakthrough White Light paintings, begun in 1968, and the Black Earth series that she initiated after moving in 1970 from her downtown studio to the rugged hills of Topanga Canyon.

As a focused survey that will introduce Corse's work to many visitors, this exhibition endeavors to historicize this understudied artist's career while placing significant attention on the viewing experience in the galleries. Corse's exquisite works capture the physical and metaphysical qualities of light on a two-dimensional surface and have the power to activate the viewer in the creation of the perceptual experience: the kinetic effect of the work is contingent upon the movement of the body through space. This experiential component of Corse's work will be of paramount importance to the installation.

About the Artist

Born in Berkeley, California, in 1945, Corse moved to Los Angeles in 1964 and earned her BFA at the Chouinard Art Institute (now California Institute of the Arts) in 1968. Her work was included at the time in several important group exhibitions, such as the *1970 Annual Exhibition* at the Whitney (1970); *Permutations: Light and Color*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (1970); and *Twenty-Four Young Los Angeles Artists*, LACMA (1971). Recently, her work has been featured in group exhibitions including *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface*, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (2011); *Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture, 1950–1970*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2011); *Surface, Support, Process: The 1960s Monochrome in the Guggenheim Collection*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2011); *Reductive Minimalism: Women Artists in Dialogue, 1960–2012*, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor (2014); and *Light and Space*, Seattle Art Museum, WA (2015). Corse is the recipient of the New Talent Purchase Award, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1967); the Theodoron Award, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1971); a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1972); and the Cartier Foundation Award (1993).

Catalogue

A richly illustrated monograph, published in cooperation with Yale University Press, will accompany the presentation. The publication features an essay by Conaty, along with additional texts by Robin Clark (Director of the Artist Initiative, SFMoMA), Michael Govan (CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), Alexis Lowry (Associate Curator, Dia Art Foundation), and artist David Reed, as well as an illustrated chronology and exhibition history. It will serve as the first sustained study of Corse's work and is intended to advance significantly the scholarship and interpretation around the artist's practice.

Curatorial Credit

The exhibition is organized by Kim Conaty, Steven and Ann Ames Curator of Drawings and Prints, with Melinda Lang, curatorial assistant, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Exhibition Support

Mary Corse: A Survey in Light is organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Significant support is provided by The Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation, Sueyun and Gene Locks, and Donna Perret Rosen and Benjamin M. Rosen.

Generous support is provided by the John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Mary Corse	June 8 – November 25, 2018
Pacha, Llaqta, Wasichay: Indigenous Space, Modern Architecture, New Art	July 13 – September 30, 2018
David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night	July 13 – September 30, 2018
Kevin Beasley	Opens Fall 2018
Andy Warhol – From A to B and Back Again	November 12, 2018 – March 31, 2019
An Incomplete History of Protest:	Ongoing
Selections from the Whitney's Collection, 1940–2017	Ongoing
Where We Are: Selections from the Whitney's Collection 1900–1960	Ongoing
Christine Sun Kim: Too Much Future	Ongoing
Juan Antonio Olivares: Moléculas	Until June 10, 2018
Zoe Leonard: Survey	Until June 10, 2018
Grant Wood: American Gothic and Other Fables	Until June 10, 2018
Between the Waters	Ongoing
Nick Mauss	Until May 14, 2018
Flash: Photographs by Harold Edgerton from the Whitney's Collection	Ongoing

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Museum hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm; Friday and Saturday from 10:30 am to 10 pm. Closed Tuesday. Adults: \$25. Full-time students and visitors 65 & over: \$18. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

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