

Press Release

Mary Corse *Variations*

6 October – 7 November 2020
27 Bell Street, London

Mary Corse will present an exhibition of all new work for her second show in London at Lisson Gallery, with work exhibited indoors and outside in the gallery's courtyard. While the exhibition serves as a timely reflection on our current period in history – with most of the works completed in 2020 in the artist's studio in Topanga, Los Angeles – the show is also a marker of Corse's practice to date, with these new works directly referencing different series developed throughout her career. In the presentation, the language that threads through all of the artist's work can be viewed in variations through history, from the 1960s to 2020.

Corse, recognized early in her career with inclusions in important exhibitions at the Whitney Museum, LACMA and the Guggenheim, has more recently received wide international acclaim. She has spent the last 50 years creating groundbreaking art that examines the realms of human perception, combining a philosophical quest for the portrayal of the infinite with a highly skilled methodical and scientific rigour. Corse's fascination with abstraction began early – studying Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann and Josef Albers – and in 1964, she moved to Los Angeles to enroll at the Chouinard Art Institute (now the California Institute of the Arts). Corse was one of the few women associated with the California-based Light and Space movement, but while many of the artists moved into sculpture and installation, Corse was focused on painting while discovering unconventional means through which to not just represent, but embody, light.

In the main gallery of the exhibition, the artist will present three works from a new series, including *Untitled (Double Cross)* (2020). Using a thin mirrored-edge metal sheet, Corse carved the material into a geometric shape and applied it with black acrylic squares, resulting in a dark shimmering double cross shape that emerges from the surrounding white space. The roots of this painting are in a significant work from 1975, *Untitled (Black Light Painting, Glitter Series)* – recently exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art and LACMA – that features a similar form delineated in black and white on the surface of a square canvas. Now the artist re-engages with the language of the cross but heightens the perceptual experience by installing the work flush with the wall, embedding the cross within the physical environment in order to activate the negative space. The white wall appears to come forward to greet the work, negating the distinction between the two. The materials for *Untitled (Double Cross)* are pulled from works that were shown at the 1974 LACMA exhibition 'L.A. 6/Summer '74' in which Corse exhibited five paintings made of thin aluminium rectilinear sheets covered in acrylic squares that floated out from the wall.

In addition, the cross – beyond being widely identified as a form rich with meaning historically – is also a manifestation of the artist's subconscious: the cross is a sketch repeated in Corse's latent drawings, one she is instinctively drawn to. *Untitled (Double Cross)* also illustrates the progressive, cyclical nature of Corse's work, showing how one work leads into another: be it a day, a year or many decades later.

A large-scale work, *Untitled* (2020), leads the viewer from one gallery space to another, acting as a bridge between two distinctive bodies of work. This painting features the same black acrylic squares as *Untitled (Double Cross)* but combined with Corse's signature white microspheres. The microspheres are a prism-like material that Corse discovered in 1968 after a drive home from Malibu, observing the effect of the headlights on the white line dividing the highway. By refracting rather than reflecting light, this utilitarian material creates light itself, inviting the viewer to experience changes in the work as they move around it. *Untitled* (2020) also features the evident brushstroke of the artist, something Corse actively reintroduced

into her work after being reminded, paradoxically through a re-engagement with the scientific process, of the layered subjectivity embedded in our perception: how perception *creates* reality, including our experience of light, a phenomena unique to every being. The brushstroke, a mark of subjectivity, is now maintained in Corse's paintings to demonstrate this. A series of *White Light* paintings that similarly incorporate the refractive glass microspheres, and feature the visible brushstroke, are exhibited in the following rooms.

The outdoor courtyard of the gallery will house the largest work in the exhibition, *Untitled (Modular Panel)* (2020), that unites the concepts and materials seen in the indoor spaces. This work brings the White Light paintings back outdoors, where Corse was first inspired to create them. *Untitled* (2020) relates directly to a painting the artist made on the exterior of her Topanga studio in 2016 and represents the first time she will exhibit a large-scale outdoor painting outside of the United States and in a commercial setting.

The presentation will also feature a new light box, *Untitled (Electric Light)* (2020) in the basement of the gallery, providing a glimpse into the artist's very early career. Corse began producing these works in the 1960s, first attached to the wall, like a painting, but later allowing them to float free without any seeming attachment utilising innovative Tesla coils. This particular work, made in human proportions, invites the viewer to have a new experience with this body of work and creates a link with Corse's Inner Band series. The light boxes also illustrate the artist's enduring practicality in reaching the desired effect of each work – even completing a course in quantum physics so as to construct the high frequency generators, and wirelessly power the light boxes, herself.

About the artist

Mary Corse has built a practice that occupies an independent space at the intersection of minimalist painting, Abstract Expressionism and scientific inquiry. First gaining recognition in the mid-1960s as one of the few women associated with the Light and Space movement that originated in Southern California, Corse is widely recognised for her innovative painting technique using materials which both capture and refract light. Corse's paintings obsessively engage with perception and embody rather than merely represent light, experimenting with the concept of subjective experience in new and innovative ways. Corse combines a philosophical quest for the portrayal of the infinite with a highly skilled methodical and scientific rigour.

Mary Corse was born in Berkeley, California in 1945 and lives and works in Los Angeles. She earned her BFA from Chouinard Art Institute (later renamed the California Institute of the Arts, or CalArts) in 1968. Recent solo presentations include *A Survey in Light* at the Whitney Museum of American Art (8 June – 25 November 2018), which travels to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (28 July – 10 November, 2019); and a three year installation at Dia:Beacon in New York, which opened in May 2018. Corse's work is in a number of public collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA; the Menil Collection, Houston, TX, USA; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, USA; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA; and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA, among many others. She is a past recipient of the Guggenheim's Theodoron Award, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and the Cartier Foundation Award.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and develops 60 international artists across three exhibition spaces in London, New York and Shanghai. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as other artists of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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