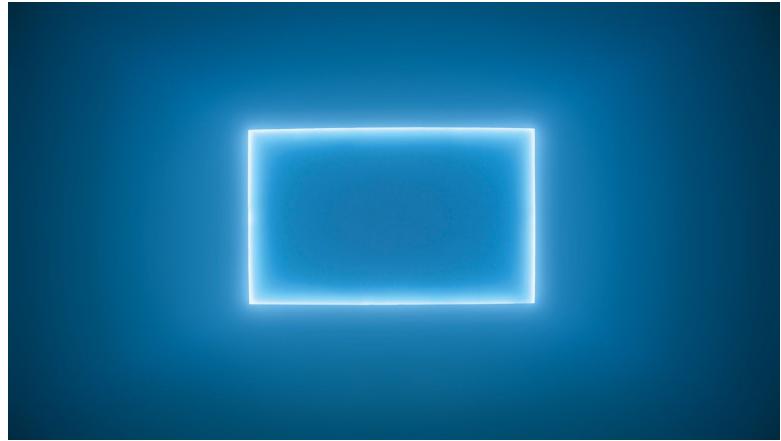


Doug Wheeler

January 24–March 21, 2020
519 West 19th Street, New York

Press preview:
Thursday, January 24, 5 PM

Opening reception:
Thursday, January 24, 6–8 PM



Doug Wheeler, *Eindhoven Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Installation (Environmental Light)*, 1969, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2007, Panza Collection, Gift, 1991 Installation view, *The Panza Collection*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., 2008–2009. © Doug Wheeler. Photo: Lee Stalworth Courtesy Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution

David Zwirner is pleased to present a new immersive light installation by American artist Doug Wheeler (b. 1939) at the gallery's 519 West 19th Street location in New York.

Over the past five decades, Wheeler has become known for his innovative constructions and installations that engage with the perception and experience of light, space, and sound. Although Wheeler began his career as a painter, his wall-mounted artworks soon began incorporating light as a medium and quickly gave way to an art-historical breakthrough: the construction of an absolute light environment, created in his Venice Beach studio in 1967. On view at the gallery will be an installation by the artist that further expands on his earliest investigations of the possibilities of luminous space.

In 1969, Wheeler was invited to realize an environmental installation at the Stedelijk Museum, in Amsterdam, using neon light embedded inside a viewing aperture that encompassed the entire surface area of the gallery wall within an enclosed, entirely white room. He stretched translucent nylon scrim overhead, creating a virtual ceiling that captured and reflected light and appeared to float above the room. The resultant environment produced the effect of light as a tactile and dense mass that enveloped the viewer while articulating a luminous volume, or plane, across the expanse of a wall. The work was at once inviting, immersive, and expansive. As artist Daniel Buren has noted upon recalling his impressions of Wheeler's installation at the Stedelijk, "One was no longer seeing a work: one was experiencing a spatial event. One was entering into light."^[1]

Subsequent iterations of this type of installation by the artist have explored distinct atmospheric and perceptual effects and have been presented at institutions that include the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (1969); Ace Gallery, Los Angeles (1970); and, more recently, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2004); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2008–2009); Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (2011–2012); and 49 Nord 6 Est – FRAC Lorraine, Metz, France (2012), where the work on view in this exhibition at David Zwirner was first presented.

49 Nord 6 Est 68 Ven 12 FL (2011–2012) culminates the evolution of this body of work and exemplifies Wheeler's evolving and refined employment of light, technology, and architecture to transform the gallery and to engage the viewers' phenomenological perception of pure light and space.

This is Wheeler's fourth solo exhibition at David Zwirner and coincides with the release of the first major monograph devoted to his work. The most comprehensive overview of the artist's career to date, this publication includes new scholarship by art historian Germano Celant and features extensive illustrations of Wheeler's most significant works from the early 1960s to the present, as well as never before published images, drawings, and other archival material.

Doug Wheeler (b. 1939) was raised in the high desert of Arizona and began his career as a painter while studying at the Chouinard Art Institute (now the California Institute of the Arts) in Los Angeles in the early 1960s.

Wheeler's first solo exhibitions were held at the Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California (1968); Ace Gallery, Los Angeles (1970); Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf (1970); Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles (1974, 1979); and Galleria Salvatore Ala, Milan (1975). His early environmental work was included in a number of important exhibitions in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, such as *Robert Irwin – Doug Wheeler*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, (1969); *Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, Doug Wheeler*, Tate Gallery, London (1970); *Rooms P.S. 1*, The Institute for Art and Urban Resources at P.S.1, Long Island City, New York (1976); *Ambiente Arte, 37th Venice Biennale*, Venice, Italy (1976); and *The First Show: Painting and Sculpture from Eight Collections*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (the Temporary Contemporary) (1983–1984), among others. In 1975, Wheeler's environmental projects from this period, some existing only as detailed architectural plan drawings, were acquired by Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, the noted Italian collector of American postwar art.

Wheeler's work has been presented in notable international exhibitions, including *Sunshine & Noir: Art in L.A. 1960–1997*, which traveled from the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, to Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, and UCLA/The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles (1997–1999); *Changing Perceptions: The Panza Collection at the Guggenheim Museum*, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2000–2001); *Time & Place: Los Angeles 1957–1968*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2008–2009), which traveled to Kunsthaus Zürich as the exhibition *Hot Spots: Rio de Janeiro/Milano/Los Angeles 1956–1969* (2009); and *Primary Atmospheres: Works from California 1960–1970*, David Zwirner, New York (2010).

In 2012, the artist exhibited a new "continuum atmospheric environment" at David Zwirner, New York. His work was also featured in *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, as part of the Getty Research Institute's *Pacific Standard Time* initiative (2011–2012). *49 Nord 6 Est – FRAC Lorraine*, Metz, France, presented a solo exhibition of Wheeler's work in 2012, and his work was included in *Light Show*, at the Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, London, in 2013. In 2014, a new "rotational horizon" installation by the artist, a culmination of circular works begun in the 1970s, occupied the ground floor of David Zwirner's West 20th Street location in New York, and, later that year, Wheeler presented a new light environment at Palazzo Grassi in Venice in conjunction with the group exhibition *The Illusion of Light*. In 2016, *Doug Wheeler: Encasements* was on view at David Zwirner, New York, and his 1976 PS1 installation was re-created for the anniversary exhibition *Forty* at MoMA/PS1, New York. The following year, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York presented *Doug Wheeler: PSAD Synthetic Desert III*, in which the artist realized a work conceived and drawn in 1971, transforming one of the museum galleries into a hermetic, "semi-anechoic chamber" that reduced ambient sound to imperceptible levels and produced the sensory impression of infinite space, an experience akin to those the artist describes in the vast desert spaces of Northern Arizona and New Mexico. Wheeler's work was recently on view at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin as part of the exhibition *Welt ohne Außen/World without Exterior. Immersive Spaces since the 1960s* (2018).

Work by the artist is held in prominent museum collections worldwide, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; the Panza Collection, Mendrisio, Switzerland; Pinault Collection, Paris; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Wheeler lives and works in Santa Fe and Los Angeles.

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¹ Daniel Buren, "Memories, Cross-Overs, Similarities, Differences: For Doug," cited in Germano Celant, *Doug Wheeler* (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2019), p. 225. Originally published in Béatrice Josse, ed., *Doug Wheeler*. Exh. cat. (Metz, France: 49 Nord 6 Est - Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Lorraine, 2016), p. 56.