

HELEN PASHGIAN
Spheres and Lenses

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New York, W 24th Street



Helen Pashgian, *Untitled*, 2012. Cast epoxy with acrylic rod, 6.5 inches diameter (16.5 cm)

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Lehmann Maupin is pleased to present *Spheres and Lenses*, artist Helen Pashgian's first solo exhibition in New York since 1969 and her first with Lehmann Maupin in the United States. This exhibition will feature a series of new lens and sphere sculptures, expanding on the bodies of work for which she is best known. Born in Pasadena, Pashgian is widely recognized as a pioneer and leading member of the 1960s Light and Space movement in Southern California, which explored Minimalism with a close eye toward the interaction between light and space. Over the course of her career, Pashgian has produced an extensive oeuvre of innovative sculptures—vibrantly colored columns, discs, and spheres—that engage light, color, and form in wholly unique ways. Often featuring an isolated minimal shape that appears suspended, embedded, or encased within, these works are characterized by their semi-translucent surfaces that somehow both redirect and contain illumination. In *Spheres and Lenses*, Pashgian focuses on two bodies of work—spheres and lenses—carefully experimenting with scale, from the intimate (6 inch spheres) to the immense (60 inch lens).

Using an innovative application of industrial epoxies, plastics, and resins to create her ethereal surfaces, Pashgian refers to her sculptures as “presences” in space that viewers must circumnavigate to fully experience. Every vantage point invites an observation of change—of color and light shifting, internal objects appearing and receding—a phenomenon of visual curiosity and pleasure. During the 1960s Pashgian created her first sphere-like sculptures that inspired her career-long investigation of how light changes as it passes through a translucent object. Since these early egg-shaped epoxy resin experiments, Pashgian has created an expansive series of brightly colored monochrome and multicolored spheres that contain a suspended element. These embedded “objects” challenge our understanding and assumptions around perception, causing the brain to question what the eye is seeing. As light enters each sculpture, distortions, illusions, refractions, and rainbows occur—a result of the interplay between the light, reflective surfaces, and cast forms inside. Pashgian's carefully researched choice of color plays a critical role in these effects, as each color reflects and refracts light in dramatically different ways.

Trained as an art historian with a focus on Dutch Golden Age painting, Pashgian was inspired by the many landscapes that depict a cool natural light similar to that of Southern California and the calm and composed interiors of Johannes Vermeer, who masterfully rendered light that appeared to emanate from a single source. These paintings continue to inform Pashgian's fundamental interest in making objects that engage with and expand our understanding of the effects and perception of light. During the late 1960s and early 1970s Pashgian created a series of circular, disc-like works that she refers to as lenses.

These works, both technically and aesthetically challenging, appear as discs of color floating in space, creating the illusion that the sculpture is both floating in front of and simultaneously receding into the wall behind it—an effect similar to watching the sunset on the horizon. The works in this series, which appear to hover just between materiality and immateriality, becoming and dissolving, most clearly illustrate Pashgian's ability to engage light as a material that alters, changes, and seemingly dematerializes an object. Pashgian began to revisit this series in 2010s, and is now pushing the scale and visual immateriality of these works to their limit, creating seductive optical effects that transfix the viewer. For this exhibition she has created a colossal lens that reaches 60 inches in diameter, the first presentation of a disc of this size in New York since the initial inception of the series in the 1960s.

While Pashgian has long gravitated towards experimenting with non-traditional materials, her primary concern has always been to maintain light as the object and subject of her work. In her most recent work, she draws viewers in by creating a range of ethereal, visual experiences through her unique ability to manipulate scale, color, materiality, and light. For Pashgian, light is not simply a metaphor, symbol, or allegory; light itself is both the medium and the message. In addition to her presentation at Lehmann Maupin New York, Pashgian will have a major solo exhibition at SITE Santa Fe, NM, and will be featured in a major survey exhibition of Light and Space opening at Copenhagen Contemporary, both opening in November 2021. Coinciding with this exhibition, the artist will publish *Helen Pashgian: Spheres and Lenses* with Radius Books in Spring/Summer 2021, with a major monograph forthcoming in 2022.

Helen Pashgian received her BA from Pomona College, Claremont, CA in 1956 and an MA from Boston University, Boston, MA in 1958. She also attended Columbia University, New York, NY from 1956 to 1957. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY (2020, forthcoming); Lehmann Maupin, Seoul, and Hong Kong (2019); Vito Schnabel Projects, St. Moritz, Switzerland (2019); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2014); Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA (2010); and Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA (2007). Select group exhibitions featuring her work include *Crystals in Art: Ancient to Today*, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK (2019); *Radiant Light and Expanded Space*, Pearl Lam, Hong Kong, China (2019); *Space Shifters*, Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2018); *Water & Light*, Ochi Gallery and Emily Friedman Fine Art, Ketchum, ID (2018); *Made in California*, Mana Wynwood, Miami, FL (2015); *California Dreamin': Thirty Years of Collecting*, Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA (2014); *Beyond Brancusi: The Space of Sculpture*, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA (2013); *Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture, 1950-1970*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2011), travelled to Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, CA (2011) and MartinGropiusBau, Berlin, Germany (2012); *Translucence: Southern California Art From the 1960s and 1970s*, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA (2006); and *The Senses: Selections from the Permanent Collection*, Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA (2006).

Her work can be found in numerous public and private collections internationally, including the Andrew Dickson White Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Bank of America, Los Angeles, CA; Bank of America, Singapore; Frederick Weisman Collection, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA; Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA; Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; and Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA.



ABOUT THE GALLERY

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.

