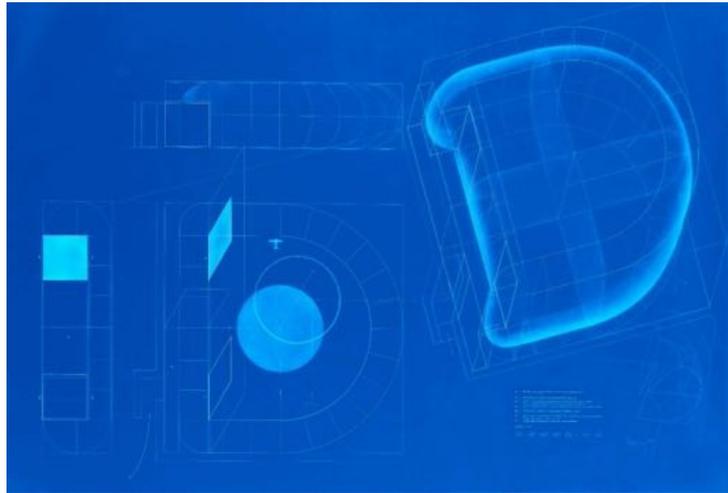


## Doug Wheeler *Day Night Day*

September 12–October 19, 2024  
537 West 20th Street, New York



Doug Wheeler, *DN ND WD 180 EN – NY 24*, 2024 (negative view)  
© Doug Wheeler. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present a new light installation by American artist Doug Wheeler at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location in New York. Over the past six decades, Wheeler has become known for his innovative constructions and installations that engage with the experience of light, space, and sound. On view will be an immersive environment by the artist that further expands on his groundbreaking investigations of the possibilities of luminous space. This will be Wheeler's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery and the first major presentation in the United States of his work since his 2020 exhibition at David Zwirner New York.

The exhibition presents *DN ND WD 180 EN - NY 24* (2024), which is among Wheeler's most ambitious installations to date. Upon entering the gallery, the viewer first encounters two luminous, rectangular thresholds or "walls" of light, which function as points of entry into an expansive environment that produces the experience of limitless space, or a "ganzfeld," where light appears to shift from day to night and back again. The viewer's perception is heightened to a degree in which, as the artist articulates, "space appears as a volume, almost as matter."<sup>1</sup>

Wheeler's work draws directly from the artist's own observations of natural and sensory phenomena, and *DN ND WD 180 EN - NY 24* distills the singular phenomenon of perceiving day and night as simultaneously occurring over the expanse of the sky while in flight. The artist has described how, while flying an airplane at certain times of the day, he would see daytime light on the distant horizon in one direction, while if he turned his plane 180 degrees, the darkness of night would be visible on the opposite horizon. Wheeler's experiences with flying go back to his childhood, when he would frequently travel by plane with his father, a doctor who cared for patients throughout remote areas of north-central Arizona, encompassing the Navajo, Hopi, and Apache reservations, where there were few specialized physicians. Wheeler was often allowed to fly his father's small planes—experiences that made a lifelong impression on him and taught him about the qualities and effects of light. Of these formative

<sup>1</sup> Doug Wheeler, quoted in Germano Celant, *Doug Wheeler* (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2019), 223.

experiences, he has noted, "I was very conscious of the sky, if it was daytime or nighttime.... I was conscious of the planet in the sense of light."<sup>2</sup>

The present work represents a continuation of Wheeler's pioneering light installations. Although he 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, his wall-mounted works soon began incorporating light as a medium, which quickly led to an art-historical breakthrough: the construction of an absolute light environment in his Venice Beach studio in 1967. The new installation has a lineage that traces back to the artist's earliest light environments, including the first such work he presented outside of his studio, at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1969, which incorporated a "light wall"—a single row of daylight neon light embedded inside a viewing aperture that encompassed the entire dimension of the gallery wall within an enclosed space. He stretched a nylon scrim to create a luminous "ceiling" that captured and reflected light and appeared to float above the room. Wheeler has continued to explore similar effects by manipulating architecture in distinct ways and with different types of lighting, creating installations, including *DN ND WD 180 EN - NY 24*, that explore the perceptual possibilities of light and space, and in which the viewer experiences the sensation of entering an infinite void.

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

The artist became a pioneer of the so-called Light and Space movement that flourished in Southern California in the 1960s and 1970s. His 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 appeared in a number of important exhibitions in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, such as *Robert Irwin—Doug Wheeler*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1969); *Kompas 4: Westkust USA* (West Coast USA), Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (1969-70; traveled to Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, Germany; and Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland); *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, New York (1976); *Ambiente Arte*, 37th Venice Biennale (1976); and *The First Show: Painting and Sculpture from Eight Collections*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (The Temporary Contemporary) (1983-1984), among others.

Wheeler's work was also included in *Sunshine & Noir: Art in L.A. 1960-1997*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark (1997; traveled to Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; and UCLA/The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles, through 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; traveled to Kunsthaus Zürich as *Hot Spots: Rio de Janeiro/Milano/Los Angeles 1956-1969*); and *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface*, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, as part of the Getty Research Institute's *Pacific Standard Time* initiative (2011-2012).

---

<sup>2</sup> Doug Wheeler, quoted in *ibid.*, 29.

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 Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, London, in 2013. The following year, Wheeler presented a new light environment at Palazzo Grassi in Venice in conjunction with the group exhibition *The Illusion of Light*. In 2016, the artist’s 1976 PS1 installation was re-created for the anniversary exhibition *Forty* at MoMA PS1, New York.

In 2017, 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 on view at the Gropius Bau, Berlin, as part of the exhibition *Welt ohne Außen/World without Exterior. Immersive Spaces since the 1960s* (2018). Major works by the artist were also featured in the group exhibition *Light & Space*, Copenhagen Contemporary (2021–2022); and *Light, Space, Surface: Works from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art*, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts (2021; traveled to Frist Art Museum, Nashville, in 2022).

Wheeler has been represented by David Zwirner since 2011. His first solo presentation with the gallery was in New York in 2012, when he exhibited a new “continuum atmospheric environment.” The artist debuted a new “rotational horizon” installation, a culmination of circular works begun in the 1970s, at David Zwirner New York, in 2014; and in 2016, *Doug Wheeler: Encasements* was presented at the gallery’s 20th Street location. In New York in 2020, the gallery presented an installation which coincided with the publication by David Zwirner Books of the first major monograph devoted to Wheeler’s work. The most comprehensive overview of the artist’s career to date, it includes scholarship by the late art historian Germano Celant and features extensive illustrations of Wheeler’s most significant works from the early 1960s to the present, as well as previously unpublished images, drawings, and other archival material.

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

For all press inquiries, contact  
Julia Lukacher [jlukacher@davidzwirner.com](mailto:jlukacher@davidzwirner.com)  
Erin Pinover [epinover@davidzwirner.com](mailto:epinover@davidzwirner.com)