

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Carmen Herrera

3 May – 11 June 2016
504 West 24th Street, New York

An exhibition of recent paintings by Carmen Herrera will inaugurate Lisson Gallery's first permanent exhibition space in New York. Despite only coming to the attention of a wider art world a decade or so ago, Herrera has been painting for almost eighty years and continues to do so from her studio in Manhattan, the same apartment she has lived in since 1954, although her first stay in New York began in 1939. While Herrera's innovative and historic achievements as an artist are being honoured with a survey exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in September 2016, Lisson Gallery is unveiling a new body of work produced over the last two years.

Herrera's work has remained uncompromisingly abstract and minimal throughout her career – although the hard-edge, rectilinear qualities of her paintings are, on closer inspection, belied by their obviously hand-painted expanses of color. This show of recent work also exemplifies Herrera's mastery of larger scale canvases, including subtle incorporations of diptych and triptych configurations. In addition to the inclusion of recurring motifs within her compositions – such as the chevron, the chequerboard reversal and numerous, varying triangular and quadrangular forms – Herrera continues to introduce novel conjunctions of form and line while further exploring the role of color in her work. Herrera's ongoing innovation is illustrated in works like *Alba* (2014) where raw canvas replaces one of the two color planes that characterize the artist's work today. In an essay written for the catalogue which accompanies this exhibition, featuring photographs of Herrera's New York studio and home, American curator and critic Robert Storr states: "In *Alpes* (2015) Herrera sets up what promises to be a pattern of green and white triangles alternating like clenched teeth but leaves out the last green 'tooth' so that the whole sequence dissolves into an open expanse of white that is barely contained by the outer edge of the diptych."

Herrera's command of pictorial space is consistent with her career to date. She is also prone to occasional shifts in perspective, with some of the surfaces apparently tilting, projecting or receding within the frame. Ultimately, each canvas is tautly composed and finely balanced, maintaining pictorial integrity and chromatic intensity at all times. Given her stylistic connections to Latin American and European Constructivism and Concrete Art, as well as Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism and the Abstraction-Création movement in Paris, it is telling that Herrera has never identified with any art historical grouping, even though she lived in Havana, Paris and New York in the 1930s and '40s when many of these artistic associations were being formed. Being neither gender- nor nationality-specific as an artist, Herrera's only true affiliation is with pure Modernism, perhaps reflecting the ethos and underpinnings of the International Style of architecture as much as any era of art production.

About the artist

Formal lucidity and a striking sense of color are at the core of Herrera's practice. "My quest is for the simplest of pictorial resolutions", she stated in 2012. A master of crisp lines and contrasting chromatic planes, Herrera creates symmetry, asymmetry and an infinite variety of movement, rhythm and spatial tension across the canvas with the most unobtrusive

504 West 24th Street
New York NY 10011
USA
T +1 212 505 6431

27 & 52 Bell Street
London NW1 5BU
UK
T +44 (0)20 7724 2739

Via Zenale, 3
20123 Milan
Italy
T +39 02 89050608

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application of paint. Her art, which combines painting with sculptural volume, is allied to Latin American concrete painting, but in developing a pure geometric abstraction Herrera has established a cross-cultural dialogue within the international history of Modernism. In the post-war years in Paris she exhibited alongside Theo van Doesburg, Max Bill and Piet Mondrian and a younger generation of abstract artists; while her work also chimed with painters from the US school such as Ellsworth Kelly and Mark Rothko, as well as Barnett Newman and Leon Polk Smith, both of whom were among her closest friends of the time. Reflecting on this period, she says, "I began a lifelong process of purification, a process of taking away what isn't essential."

Carmen Herrera reached her centennial on Sunday, 31 May 2015 and was born in Havana, Cuba in 1915. After studying architecture at the Universidad de La Habana, Cuba (1938–39), she trained at the Art Students League, New York (1941–43), before moving to Paris between 1949 and 1953, where she exhibited four times at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. She finally settled in New York in 1954, where she continues to live and work, although she lived there previously for a decade after 1939. Herrera's paintings were the subject of a large-scale survey at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK in 2009; she has also had solo exhibitions at Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany (2010), El Museo del Barrio, New York (1998) and The Alternative Museum, New York (1984). In 2016 she was awarded the College Art Association's Award for Distinction.

Herrera's painting *Blanco y Verde* (1959) was on view in 'America is Hard to See', the inaugural exhibition at the new Whitney Museum of American Art as part of their permanent collection and now the Whitney is further spotlighting her work with a solo exhibition in 2016, curated by Dana Miller. Her work is in numerous public and private collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Tate Collection, London; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC; The Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it 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. In its second decade it introduced a generation of significant UK and European artists, including those collectively known as the New British Sculptors, including Anish Kapoor, Richard Deacon, Shirazeh Houshiary, Julian Opie and Tony Cragg. Across two exhibition spaces in London, one in Milan and a fourth to open under the High Line in New York in May 2016, the gallery supports and develops 51 international artists including Marina Abramović, Allora and Calzadilla, Ai Weiwei, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Tatsuo Miyajima, Rashid Rana, Pedro Reyes and Santiago Sierra.

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm.

For press enquiries, please contact:

Noreen Ahmad
Tel: +1 212 202 3402
Email: Noreen@suttonpr.com

i: [@lisson_gallery](https://www.instagram.com/lisson_gallery)
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