



**MARY CORSE (b. 1945)****Untitled**

acrylic and diamond dust on canvas

24 x 24 in.

1975

38594

**PROVENANCE:**

Private Collection, gift of the artist, 1975

Christie's New York: Friday, September 27, 2019, lot 00104

Private Collection

The essential and dramatic declaration “Let there be light” of Genesis is not so far removed from Mary Corse’s recollection of the moment in 1968 when the late afternoon sun electrified the reflective road markings of Malibu as she drove east. In an instant, the glowing asphalt markings provided the oracle she needed to realize she could ‘put light in the painting and not just make a picture of light’. Using the same glass microbeads utilized by road maintenance services, she layers and embeds the prismatic material in bands and geometric configurations creating nuanced glimmering abstract fields which shift as the viewer moves in relationship to the work. Move to one side and dimness brightens to light. Walk back and forth and you might feel a rippling effect from its shimmering, prismatic effects.

A photographic image of a Mary Corse microsphere painting is not only a dull representation, but it also misses the point – it is experience dependent art that requires participation to ‘be’. Of course, “Untitled” (1975) defies that one-point static perspective and instead, depends upon a real time, interactive art experience which heightens awareness of the body in space as the viewer experiences shifts of retinal stimulation, sensation and feeling. It is a rare bird. Unusually petite at two-foot square, its design, geometry and color belie her earlier revelation that led to a devotion to her usual reductive palette. Instead, it is a bold statement in sequined color, its center field bounded at the corners by a sparkling red stepped motif that separates it from its starry night sky corner spandrels. It may not include a star motif, but it has the glamour and presence that belongs along Hollywood’s Walk of Fame.

In keeping with the West Coast’s unique brand of Minimalism, a contrast to its starker East Coast counterpart, Mary Corse adopted light as the primary subject in her exploration of visibility and perception. Like the work of her Southern California contemporaries such as Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, and James Turrell, Corse’s shimmering canvases are experiential pieces that stimulate a heightened sensory awareness. Corse mixes tiny glass microspheres into her paint before brushing it on the canvas, creating luminescent surfaces that capture a range of evanescent light effects. Her compositions seem to shift with different viewing angles and lighting conditions; up close each monochromatic white painting appears flat, but from a distance silvery geometric arrangements of bands come into view. Corse has noted that her paintings are not reflective, but rather “create a prism that brings the surface into view; creating a space that actually isn’t there.”

Born in Berkeley in 1945, Mary Corse earned her BFA from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1963 before receiving her MFA from the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles in 1968. A Los Angeles-based artist aligned with the male-dominated Light and Space movement of the 1960s and 70s, Corse emerged as one of the group's significant names while facing challenges of both geography and gender. Her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions across the country, including shows at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Corse has been the recipient of several prestigious honors and awards throughout her career, most notably a New Talent Award from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1967 and the Theodoran Award from the Guggenheim Museum in 1971.

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