

Artist Resources – Mary Corse (American, b. 1945)

[Corse at Pace Gallery](#)

[Corse at Lehmann Maupin](#)



Corse, 2018
Photography: Carolyn Drake

Corse recorded oral histories for and the [Getty Research Center](#) and the [Smithsonian Archives of American Art](#) in 2011 and 2013, respectively, discussing her childhood and upbringing, her youthful interest in art and the development of her practice. “One thing for me about art, painting, I want to learn from it. I want to learn about myself as a human. To me it’s about the human state,” she reflected in the video interview with Getty. “So I wanted to throw out everything that wasn’t necessary for the human state...you can’t get rid of light and space. Time you can’t get rid of. But as soon as you have perception, it seems you have time. I want art to be about those things....I crave through art, something beyond this finite [day-to-day reality] existence.”

“I think at those times I was trying to make an object with an objective truth. As a painter and as an artist, you are trying to make something that’s true. You are trying to have no lies, no ego, no delusion,” [Corse told *The Brooklyn Rail*](#) in a conversation about early interests in abstraction, light, and materiality on view in the galleries for [her 2015 show at Lehmann Maupin](#). “I realized that there is no objective truth. Subjectivity and perception is a part of reality, and that’s what sent me back to painting, back to the brushstroke, because you can’t get rid of subjectivity. There is no specific object.”

For her [2017 exhibition](#) in Los Angeles’ Kayne Griffin Corcoran Gallery, Corse brought to life a sensorial installation, [The Cold Room, first conceived in 1968](#), in which viewers step into a 12x12-foot room cooled to 40 degrees and containing a floating plane of light powered by tubes filled with argon gas, and a tesla coil: one of many high frequency generators built by the artist throughout her career.

The [Dia Art Foundation](#) in New York mounted a long-term exhibition in 2018, focusing on Corse’s use of geometry and brushwork in her paintings from the 1960s to the present.

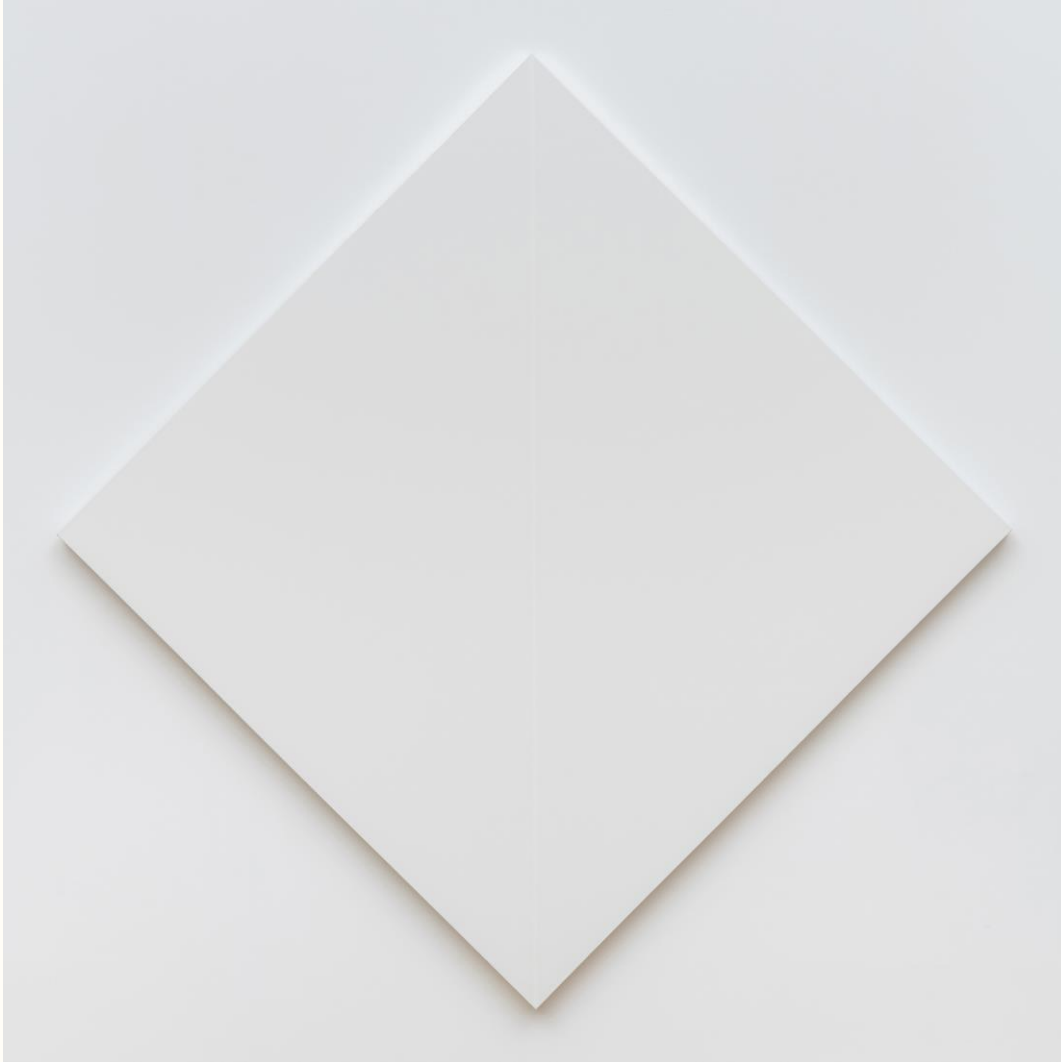
Corse received her first, long overdue, solo museum survey in 2018 and 2019, organized by New York’s [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) and the [LA County Museum of Art](#). *A Survey in Light* traced the breadth of Corse’s career, bringing together for the first time her early shaped canvases, sculptures, light encasements, and paintings from the 1960s and 70s. “I try to bring reality into the painting, I try to bring the reality of our moment here on this ball of mud. It’s not that the painting relates to nature, but it is nature,” [explained Corse in a video](#) filmed in her Topanga Canyon studio for the exhibition. [The Whitney hosted a symposium](#) with scholars, artists, and curators discussing Corse’s career, significance as a painter, and relevance from the 1960s through today. [Artspace contributed a feature profile](#) detailing Corse’s career and recent, much deserved, recognition.

Corse also installed her [first major solo show in the UK](#) in 2018, presented by Lisson Gallery and highlighting historically significant works alongside seven new paintings and a new lightbox. She [returned to Lisson in autumn 2020](#) with work created during the pandemic and exploring a new facet of her interests in material, geographic dimension, and the relationship between light and color (black and white).

[Pace Gallery](#) hosted an exhibition of new work in early 2021 including four paintings and a sculpture from her *Untitled (Beams)* series, which Corse created specifically for the gallery, to be viewed as a cohesive group.



Corse in New York studio, 1968



Mary Corse (American, b. 1945)

Untitled (White Diamond, Positive Stripe), 1965

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2024:101.1

Born and raised in Berkeley, California, Mary Corse moved to Los Angeles to study at Chouinard Art Institute (now CalArts) in the 1960s. She made prolific innovations during her studies, engaging with minimalism, geometric abstraction, and monochrome compositions that play with ideas of perception. **Untitled (White Diamond, Positive Stripe)** was completed during her BFA studies, when she began creating shaped canvases with smooth painted surfaces. Corse also began to incorporate vertical bands at this time, which still appear throughout her work. According to the artist: “The vertical bands relate to you, rather than nature which is the horizon, horizontal.”

On view December 11, 2024 – March 16, 2025

Mary Corse (American, b. 1945)

Untitled (White Grid, Horizontal Strokes), 1969

Glass microspheres in acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:46.1

Born in Berkeley, California, Mary Corse rose to prominence in the 1960s as a significant female voice in the Light and Space movement—a loose association of Los Angeles-based artists interested in the visual, physical, and sensory experiences of light and space, often explored through unusual materials. Corse was particularly attracted to questions of perception in both painting and sculpture, the idea that light could be both tangible and intangible, acting simultaneously as subject and medium. Parallel interests in Quantum physics and industrial materials including plexiglass, fluorescent lights, and paint containing metal flakes or glass microspheres influenced Corse throughout the 1960s. Manufactured for a wide variety of medical, scientific, and industrial uses, including street signs and pavement dividing lines, glass microspheres are tiny refractive beads that create shifting luminescent surfaces. Corse began incorporating this material in her paintings in 1968 to enhance modernist motifs of grids and monochrome palettes. Using microspheres, she created canvases like **Untitled (White Grid, Horizontal Strokes)** that seem to emanate light and alter in appearance depending on the viewer's position and perspective.

On view June 2 – September 5, 2021

Extra Resources

[Corse talks about how she found and why she uses glass microspheres](#)

