

Bending Light II

1F, Pace Gallery Seoul

2022.03.29 – 2022.05.28



Credits: James Turrell, *Circular Glass*, Photo by Flying Studio © James Turrell, Courtesy the artist and Kayne Griffin

Pioneers of the Light and Space movement once again return to Pace Gallery Seoul in an exhibition titled *Bending Light II*. In this second iteration, the exhibition includes works by Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Fred Eversley, and Helen Pashgian. Delving deeper into the discourse, the exhibition features a selection of works that represent the diverse facets of the Light and Space movement. Including recently produced artworks alongside a vintage work by Bell, the exhibition offers an overarching view of the milestone developments in each artist's career. *Bending Light II* will be on view at Pace in Seoul from March 29 to May 28, inaugurating one of two new spaces on the ground floor of the gallery.

Equipped for experiential, immersive, and interactive artworks, a new exhibition space opening at Pace's Seoul gallery in March spans 1,500-square-feet. Featuring blackout curtains, speaker ports near its ceilings, and wired for works produced in the US and some European countries, this space will host a group exhibition of work by local media artists in summer 2022. With the opening of this new exhibition space, Pace will foreground presentations by Korean artists as part of its program in Seoul.

In June, Pace will open a 1,600-square-foot teahouse at the rear of its Seoul gallery. Located behind the courtyard, adjacent to the gallery space, art publications, prints, and editions will be available for sale in this establishment, which will feature curated displays of artworks. Further details about the gallery's new teahouse will be released in the coming months.

Bending Light II reflects Pace's history of supporting boundary-pushing artists who have charted new frontiers in their explorations of human perception. Originating in Southern California in the 1960s, the Light and Space movement is often affiliated with Minimalism, geometric abstraction, and op art. The artists associated with this movement, although each with their own distinct characteristics, shared a tendency to dislodge their practices from the classical ideals of art in favour of an active and multi-sensorial aesthetic experience. While pursuing a variety of aesthetics in their respective mediums, the artists' primarily focused on the viewers' perception and their mode of interaction with the works. The aesthetic and formal ideals of this movement arose from an intersection of new technology and a sense of spirituality. With burgeoning artistic practices at the time of the Space Race, this group of artists embraced the materials afforded to them and technological advancements in the aeronautical industry. This accessibility, along with a desire to extend the modernist dialogue challenging the limits of conventional mediums and expressions, allowed this group of artists to pursue the formal characteristics of art that reflect the zeitgeist of their time.

Turrell was well-immersed in the aeronautics and aviation industry at a very early age and obtained his pilot's license at age sixteen. Flying had an immense influence on his sensorial experience of space, light, colour, and perception. In his work, Turrell sought to dematerialize art as an object, instead, he proposed to create a transcendental experience that is unique to the meditations of each observer of his work. He is prominently quoted: "My art is more about your seeing than it is about my seeing, although it is a product of my seeing". *Bending Light II* incorporates Turrell's *Beneath the Surface*, an etched-glass and LED light installation embedded into the surface of the wall. The enigmatic hues of the installation evoke the works of Colour Field painters. The expansive and seemingly hovering installation with its continual and subtle tonal shifts permeate the field and depth of perception of its viewer – creating an experience of "wordless thought".

Irwin's unbounded imagination and use of unconventional materials resulted in installations that correspond directly to the conditions of the site or the architectural space. Despite the diversity and eccentricity of the materials, Irwin's emphasis remained on the viewer's perceptual experience – reflecting his statement: "seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees". *Sunshine Noir* deploys fluorescent lights in a vertical disposition, creating the iconic visual vocabularies particular to Irwin's practice. Wrapping the fluorescent tubes in layers of theatre gel allowed him to manipulate the intensity of light emanating from the tubes. Such interference with the quality of light makes it possible to achieve tonal variations otherwise unattainable in ordinary reflections of paint on surfaces. Thin strips of black and white tapes on the surface of the tubes produce fissures of chromatic discrepancy, depth, and reflections. Irwin's play with colour, texture, light and shadow transfigures a viewing experience which transcends spatial, pictorial, and semantic constraints.

A student of Irwin, Bell was introduced to the concept of 'Perceptualism' which inevitably influenced his creative practice. In the early 1960s, Bell worked at a framing supplies shop and became increasingly interested in glass and its properties to transmit, absorb, and reflect light. Having already experimented with glass in his geometric abstractions on canvas, Bell was progressing towards what would later become one of his signature works. At first, his canvases took on a three-dimensional form as the artist sought to actualise the illusion of volume. Bell's cube sculptures made of glass are the result of this metamorphosis. A specific treatment of the glass surface enables these cube sculptures to reflect a visual spectrum of colours in a varying wavelength – a phenomenon which becomes visible depending on the position of the viewer. These sculptures, presented on transparent glass pedestal, appear to be suspended in space. Such illusory characteristics of Bell's work employ the central tenets of Perceptualism which focus on the untenable sensory experience as the primary subject of the artwork.

While some artists were fascinated by light and its play on perception, others became drawn to its effect on colour. Captivated by Johannes Vermeer's painting that embody a certain quality of "light being under water" and Mark Rothko's softened edges, Alexander sought to capture a sense of ephemerality in his art. Alexander first noticed this remarkable quality in a pool of hardened, translucent resin while repairing his surfboard. This epiphanic encounter will go on to influence the definitive features of his artworks. Cast out of urethane (a type of resin), *Fresh as a Daisy* refract light rather than emit it. A row of vertical lines of liquid colours seem to have congealed over time – preserving the state of their impermanence. The ununiformed composition of lines in a varying palette of colour with diffused edges maintain a state of flux akin to light travelling in space.

Alexander was not the only one fascinated by the treatment of light in Vermeer's paintings. Trained as an art historical with a focus on the 17th century Dutch Golden Age, Pashgian explores the effects and perception of light portrayed in these paintings in her own experimentation with non-traditional medium. In classical paintings, light may have metaphorical or allegorical association. In Pashgian's practice, light occupies a pivotal position in which it is both the medium and the message. This ideological shift is prominently demonstrated in Pashgian's radical process of casting hot resin with elements of solid acrylic to produce semi-translucent spherical forms. These orbs take on a cosmic appearance in which they seem to contain illumination. The viewer is required to move around the work, a process which gradually reveals multitude layers of light and shade captured within.

A professionally trained engineer, Eversley combined science and art in his approach to art-making. With an instinctual drive towards resin, Eversley realized its captivating ability to augment perceptual experiences. His parabolic lenses embody the paramount result of the artist's experiment with resin. Eversley was drawn to the parabola due to its unique properties as the only shape in nature that focuses energy toward a single point. In a meticulous method, Eversley begins by pouring dyed polyester resin of varying viscosity into a circular mold attached to a motor. Careful manipulation of the motor speed, catalyst added to the resin and the degree to which it blends, determines the interaction between colours, their saturation, opacity, and luminosity. The final result takes the form of a highly polished concave lens that reflects the image of the viewers and their surroundings, collapsing the barrier between art and life.

With works by six pioneering figures of the movement, *Bending Light II* revisits the individual and collective breakthroughs of the Light and Space movement. The diverse selection of artworks embody the intersections of aesthetic and intellectual dialogue between artists, their environment, and the curiosity that propelled their practice beyond the sentiment of their time. The exhibition offers an immersive and introspective experience that elude the limits of mortal language.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century, holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Barbara Hepworth, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko. Pace enjoys a unique U.S. heritage spanning East and West coasts through its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements.

Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy as an artist-first gallery that mounts seminal historical and contemporary exhibitions. Under the current leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace continues to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences worldwide by remaining at the forefront of innovation. Now in its



seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program—comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. Pace has a legacy in art bookmaking and has published over five hundred titles in close collaboration with artists, with a focus on original scholarship and on introducing new voices to the art historical canon.

The gallery has also spearheaded explorations into the intersection of art and technology through its new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists cultivating advanced studio practices. Pace’s presence in Silicon Valley since 2016 has bolstered its longstanding support of experimental practices and digital artmaking. As part of its commitment to innovative, technologically engaged artists within and beyond its program, Pace launched its own dedicated NFT platform, Pace Verso, in November 2021. The gallery’s past NFT projects have spotlighted digital works by Glenn Kaino, DRIFT, Lucas Samaras, Simon Denny, Urs Fischer, John Gerrard, and other artists.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide including London, Geneva, a strong foothold in Palo Alto, and two galleries in New York—its headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, which welcomed almost 120,000 visitors and programmed 20 shows in its first six months, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. Pace was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing. In 2020, Pace opened temporary exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach, with continued programming on a seasonal basis.

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