

1stDibs.com February 2012

Editor's Pick: Mary Corse at Lehmann Maupin

By Ted Loos

Art history is full of "Aha! Moments," but Mary Corse's epiphany stands out for its simplicity. Corse, now 66, was already wrestling with the big issues: how to combine her interest in fondness for the good old-fashioned brushstroke, as well as for the qualities of pure, unadulterated light into paintings, but I needed to find the source," she says now.

Driving on the Pacific Coast Highway near Los Angeles one evening during sunset, it hit her. At highway dividing lines, with their subtly sparkly effect. "They were right in front of me," she says, still marveling. "I thought, 'Wow, that's it!'" Corse figured "highway safety spheres" as the luminous beads that are mixed into the yellow paint *are* the body of work was born. The most recent six examples are on view through March 10 at Lehmann Maupin branch.

Corse's large-scale paintings, with their straight geometries, have an affinity with the work of artists who have explored Minimalist territory. But with qualities all their own - as you move, they soak up and reflect the available light. That perspectival shift was key for her. "The artist had taken a physics class," says Corse, who lives in a less-traveled part of Topanga Canyon, "I knew there was no objective reality."

Her independent personality, physical isolation and stalwart adherence to her own ideas kept her out of the mainstream art world for a while, but the Lehmann Maupin show represents a recent revival. At the Getty Museum's recently closed mega-show - Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in Sculpture, 1950-1970 - her shimmering 1969 untitled work demanded attention (and also coexisted with other works in the show by women who have been underrepresented of late, including Helen Lundin).

The everyday source of the sparkle in the works tickles Corse. "It's Pop art!" she says. Making them requires that she suspend herself on a platform over the canvas, which lies flat. Her assistant moves her around as she paints, and the challenge is that the works change every time she changes position - but then again, that's the whole point. Says Corse, "Art isn't on the wall. It's in your perception."