

## Beginnings

Following an intensive education in abstract painting as a teenager in Berkeley, Corse moved to downtown Los Angeles in 1964 to begin her studies at the Chouinard Art Institute (now California Institute of the Arts). At the time, the art school was host to a new generation of artists largely moving beyond painting into sculpture, performance, and conceptual practices. There Corse left her brushy, gestural style behind in favor of a rigorous, stripped-down approach to painting that examined its fundamental elements: shape, scale, dimensionality, space, and light.

The works on view in this gallery capture the range of Corse's experimentation between 1964 and 1966, as her studio became a laboratory for formal and material investigation. She began to work almost exclusively in white, in progressively simpler geometric shapes—octagons, hexagons, diamonds, and then squares—that at times came off the wall and took on three-dimensional form. She worked independently and inventively, making screenprints on the floor, cutting her own plexiglass and plywood, and sanding her painted surfaces to remove any signs of her brushwork. Corse's foundational explorations from this time set in motion much of what was to come in the subsequent years.

## Painting with Light

In 1966 Corse engineered her first electric light boxes. These “light paintings,” as she has described them, prompted a brief but transformative shift away from the canvas as she replaced painted white fields with radiant fluorescent light. Over the next two years Corse developed a series of argon light boxes that could be suspended from the ceiling and that were powered wirelessly with a Tesla coil, a high-frequency generator that can transmit an electromagnetic field through the wall. Corse began taking physics classes—she needed to pass a proficiency test to procure certain capacitors and wires—which upended her worldview. She interpreted the ideas of quantum physics in relation to her own artistic concerns, recognizing that perception is always subjective and that unpredictability is at play in all systems.

When driving through Malibu one evening, Corse made a serendipitous discovery that inspired her return to painting. She noticed that when light struck the painted highway lines in front of her, they illuminated for an instant as she moved past. Realizing that the same glass microspheres embedded in that road paint could be used to transform her white paintings into light-responsive works, Corse began covering the surfaces of her works with these tiny retroreflective beads. In the resulting White Light series, begun in 1968, Corse embraced the potential for her paintings to exist in ever-changing states, to appear flat and alternately full of brushwork, depending on the positions of the viewer and the light.

## **Black Earth, Black Light**

When Corse left her downtown Los Angeles studio in 1970 for the rocky, remote hills of Topanga Canyon, where she continues to reside today, her new environs invigorated her pioneering spirit and prompted new explorations into materials and processes. She initiated her Black Earth series around 1978 as a grounding strategy, a literal return to the body and to the earth after several years of making ethereal White Light paintings. To make these ceramic “earth paintings,” as she called them, Corse molded clay off a large flat rock near her studio, then fired and painted the resulting large tiles with opaque black glaze. Investing her energy and resources in this series, she built a kiln outside her studio so she could produce the oversized tiles herself.

In the related Black Light series, Corse took an interest in the reflective qualities of metals found in the ground. Ultimately employing commercially available small metallic chips or black plastic squares, Corse described the Black Light works as the “transition between the white light consciousness and the heavy, earth-grounded” clay of the Black Earth series.

## **New Forms in White Light**

Since the 1970s Corse has pushed the formal and perceptual possibilities of her White Light paintings to ever more complex ends. Her compositions possess a structural logic, but she develops them intuitively, inspired by quick sketches rather than geometric formulas. She has worked in increasingly larger formats, integrated new motifs such as arches and bands, and incorporated black and occasionally color alongside her glowing white fields.

Corse's most elusive White Light paintings are her Inner Band series, begun in 1996. These works are defined by an interior band (or multiple bands) that mysteriously shifts in and out of view as we walk alongside them. They have no ideal vantage point and cannot be fixed to a single image, underscoring the subjectivity of perception and acknowledging that everyone experiences visual phenomena differently. With their inconstant surfaces and immersive scale, the Inner Band paintings encourage an active viewing experience that directly engages us as participants.