

# Kayne Griffin Corcoran



## Earth and Light, Black and White: Mary Corsey's Enduring Art Revealed at Frieze Masters



Mary Corsey, Two Triangular Columns, 1965, Almine Rech

Putting light into painting has always been Mary Corsey's goal, not in a representational or Impressionist sense, but literally—capturing light refractions in the surface of the work through radical techniques. Her interest was not so much in pigment, but in the way that we perceive it. Like many artists of the Light and Space movement, which originated in Southern California in the 1960s, Corsey foregrounds the experience of viewing, acknowledging each spectator's individual relation to time and space. Her work demands the viewer's physical presence in order to discern its variations in depth with almost phosphorescent effects. Also in line with the concerns of Light and Space, the site-specific conditions of display are all-important.

This week, Almine Rech brings key pieces from Corse's prime period of production in the 1960s-70s to Frieze Masters, presenting a monumental trio of monochromatic pieces. Large-scale and looming luminously, the iridescent glow of *Two Triangular Columns* (1965) comes from the artist's prismatic technique, which uses tiny glass spheres and beads within acrylic to refract light in many directions, so that as the viewer moves, the surface seems to vacillate. Like a pair of minimal towers, the pure white field gains an unexpected, shifting depth.



*Untitled (Black Earth Series)*, 1978, Almine Rech



*Untitled (Black Earth Series- 16 Tiles)*, 1978 Almine Rech

Two works on show belong to the "Black Earth" series (1978), which continued Corse's fundamental concerns: time, space, and the grounding of the viewer in both dimensions. The modernist black square and columnar rectangle are made from glazed earthenware tiles, fired in a specially designed mega-kiln in her Pasadena studio. Referencing the contours of the rocky Californian landscape, they stand austere, while also beckoning the viewer to gaze closer and longer into their darkness.

Unlike her male peers of the enlightened Californian group, however, Mary Corse has until recently been under-celebrated. While these pieces clearly came out of a certain climate of artistic production in the '60s and '70s, their almost patent or pearlescent surfaces in a directional black-and-white palette make them forcibly contemporary.

— Hannah Gregory