

*LET THERE BE LIGHT  
THE ILLUMINATED EXPERIENCE  
BY RUTH PASTINE*

It is a rare thing to meet an artist, to follow them through a long stretch of time, to see their work develop, evolve, and eventually, bear witness to their dedication culminate in ground-breaking work. I can only speak for myself as an art dealer, but there is no greater joy and excitement than to see the full maturation of an artist presented in a body of work that can only be described as pivotal, career defining, and simply extraordinary.

And so, as an art dealer, long-time admirer, and collector of her work, I am thrilled to be presenting this new exhibition by Ruth Pastine.

I met Ruth over a decade ago, shortly after her move to the West Coast from New York. I was immediately struck by the luminosity of her paintings. Her influence drawn from post-war New York School movements were clear, taking notes from minimal abstraction and color field painting in particular. A keen color theorist, and meticulously skilled, Ruth's canvases seemed to emerge from a bath of pure color, appearing to emit light from within. Her move to the West Coast, specifically to Los Angeles where the "Light and Space" movement spawned in the 1960's, was no coincidence. Her work, already strongly developed by the time she arrived to Los Angeles, immediately found rapport with the works of noted "Light and Space" artists such as James Turrell and Doug Wheeler.

And critics agreed. As noted by Robert Pincus in a review from 1999, Ruth "... seems to have taken a cue from the California 'Light and Space' movement, learning from the effects that artists like James Turrell and Doug Wheeler achieved with installations and bringing them back into painting. And she does it deftly."\*

Living in Los Angeles also influenced the scale of her work. Working within the expansive landscape of Southern California, Ruth's canvases moved to larger sizes, yielding a commanding, almost monolithic presence. At this scale, her exceptional skill with paint and brush is inarguable, even inexplicable, as she barely leaves a trace of a brush stroke on the surface. At this scale the visceral modulations of luminous color resonate within the canvas, and moves beyond its edges to envelope an entire room with perceptual experience. While Turrell and Wheeler create this experience of light using light as the medium, Ruth Pastine achieves the same effect through paint. The result is a different experience than that of walking up to a Doug Wheeler installation, or standing inside of a light filled room constructed by James Turrell. Ruth Pastine's light is, indeed, ethereal. Yet it is also finite. The colors are contained within the edges of the canvas, the surface tactile in ways that only oil paint can be. The perception of light that emits from the surface is exactly that: *Perception*. Her light is simply a viewer's retinal response to what Ruth achieves on her canvases: layers of oil paint meticulously applied by her hands, using a loaded brush.

In this new body of work, which I am proud to present for the first time, Pastine arrives to a new place. One that, it now appears in retrospect, her work has been heading towards all along. While her previous paintings explored color shifting in one direction—either from the center then outward, or from one side to the other—this new body of work achieves a balanced composition. Using vertical bands of color, hues move from one to another, then back again as it moves across the canvas. The full effect is an exalting, harmonious, and meditative experience of color and light. It is an achievement that can only be described as an amalgam of profound dedication, unyielding focus, and deep investigation by a visionary artist.

Congratulations, Ruth. Thank you for allowing us to showcase this exemplary work.

Scott White

Director, Scott White Contemporary Art

\* Pincus, Robert L. "Color Guard- Ruth Pastine Revels In The Art Of The Hue," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, April 1, 1999, p. 48.