POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS

“HELEN PASHGIAN: WORKING IN LIGHT”

AN EXHIBITION OF NEW WORK BY PIONEERING LIGHT AND SPACE ARTIST HELEN PASHGIAN

“Helen Pashgian: Working in Light” will be on view from January 23 through April 11, 2010 at the Pomona College Museum of Art in Claremont. An opening reception for the artist will be held on Saturday, January 23 from 4 – 6: p.m.

Helen Pashgian is a pioneer Light and Space Movement artist, a member of the small group of Southern California artists who coalesced in the 1960s around the use of industrial materials, which offered unique optical and color possibilities through which to explore the phenomenon of perception. Technically innovative, Pashgian continues her rigorous exploration of the spatial qualities of color in light. This exhibition brings together early small sculptures and her current work in large-scale light columns.
“Helen Pashgian: Working in Light” presents a forty-year trajectory of artistic practice. Moving between the early cast resin pieces to the towering light columns completed in the last two years, the exhibition reveals a life’s work that balances the immaterial and the physical, and conjures the palpable presence of light while dissolving geometry in color.

The early cast resin work of 1968 and 1969 introduced Pashgian as a sculptor of light and one of the L.A. Light and Space artists. Artists such as Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, Craig Kauffman, James Turrell, DeWain Valentine, Doug Wheeler, and Helen Pashgian shared an interest in new materials, new industrial processes, and new modes of hypersensitive seeing. In the 1960s this segment of the Southern California art scene was first dubbed the L.A. Glass and Plastic School, and then the Light and Space Movement. Individually they explored the perceptual effects of light in space, testing the limits of luminosity and the possibilities of immateriality with industrial materials such as cast acrylic, resin, and glass.

In this setting, Pashgian created small, intensely potent, cast resin sculptures, worlds of light and color that one might hold in one’s hand. Forty years later, her recent work features large, freestanding columns enclosing nebulous atmospheres of light and color, evincing the same scrupulous attention to minute changes in incident light, reflection, and the sudden appearance of interior forms. An interior element at one moment captures a burst of light, then, as one moves around the sculpture, becomes a solid form that seems to push against the diaphanous surface of the column, only to subside and dissolve into a ghostly presence.

Throughout her career, Pashgian has worked in what once was deemed a distinctly West Coast set of preoccupations—light, color, and the phenomenon of vision—that now are part of a global vocabulary. She continues to make the ineffable somehow present and
apparent. In her work, early and late, colors meld and shift. Simple shapes carried out in hard-edged materials dissolve. To really see this work is as complicated as it is seductive; the demarcation between surface and interior blur, edges and shapes float in and out of focus. Each encounter with a work can be strikingly different as the conditions of looking change. Pashgian’s work asks us to immerse ourselves in the pleasures and mysteries of perception.

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue featuring a foreword by artist James Turrell and essay by Kathleen Stewart Howe, director of the Pomona College Museum of Art and professor of art history.

The Pomona College Museum of Art is located at 330 N. College Avenue, Claremont. The Museum is open to the public free of charge Tuesday through Friday, from noon to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call: (909) 621-8283; email: jessica.wimbley@pomona.edu; or visit: www.pomona.edu/museum.

The Pomona College Museum of Art houses a substantial permanent collection as well as serving as a gallery for the display of temporary exhibitions. Important holdings include the Kress Collection of 15th- and 16th-century Italian panel paintings; more than 5,000 examples of Pre-Columbian to 20th-century American Indian art and artifacts, including basketry, ceramics, and beadwork; and a large collection of American and European prints, drawings, and photographs, including works by Francisco de Goya, José Clemente Orozco, and Rico Lebrun.

ABOUT POMONA COLLEGE
Established in 1887, Pomona College is widely regarded as one of the premier liberal arts colleges in America. The College is located in Claremont, California, 35 miles east of Los Angeles. Pomona is the founding member of The Claremont Colleges, a consortium of seven independent institutions blending the intimate atmosphere of small colleges with the academic and social resources of a university.