



Phenomena Lasting Dawn 1977 acrylic on canvas 78 x 132 inches 198 x 335 cm

PAUL JENKINS IN THE 1960s & 1970s: Space, Color and Light
May 9—July 15, 2009 New York D. Wigmore Fine Art, Inc., New York

On May 9th, D. Wigmore Fine Art, Inc. opens an exhibition of 22 major abstract paintings by Paul Jenkins from the 1960s and 1970s. Selected from the artist's collection, many of these works have not been seen since their debuts in New York, Paris, or London. *Space, Color and Light* builds on D. Wigmore's 2007 exhibition of the 1950s canvases of Paul Jenkins in poured oil and enamel which provided early evidence of his involvement with liquefying his medium.

Seeking to sustain translucency and increase density in the color overlays, Jenkins first worked in the new water-based acrylic in 1960 and it soon became his preferred medium for painting on canvas. As Alfred Frankenstein wrote in a review of the artist's 1971-1972 American retrospective held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: *Paul Jenkins is one of those who were selected by fate to come into their own with the introduction of the acrylic medium. His mature work is inconceivable except in terms of acrylic, with its fluidity, its acquiescence in unconventional techniques, and its special range of luminosity in color.* ("A Unity of Man and Materials," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan.16, 1972)

Contributing to the luminosity of his paintings is the fact that Jenkins primes his canvases, allowing his poured pigments to pool and flow on the surface rather than soak in. Jenkins developed many tools and approaches to paint application, and, in 1958, he acquired an ivory knife and began to use it to guide the flow of paint. A documentary film was made on the artist, titled *The Ivory Knife*, which received the Golden Eagle Award in the 1966 Venice Film Festival.

Since 1959 Jenkins has titled his distinctive abstractions *Phenomena* followed by a terse word or phrase. As the artist stated in an interview with poet and art critic Jean Cassou in 1963: *Titles for me are like names on a map of the artist's world. I try to find the identity word that will secure an attitude toward a painting rather than provoke a visual object that the eye will seek out.*

The current Paul Jenkins exhibition offers the opportunity to see developments and continuations within the artist's work over two decades. *Phenomena Galileo Galilei* represents a unique continuum in Jenkins' 1950s exploration of various forms of the diptych. The artist's placement of the three panels creating "interstices" or what the artist calls "spatial steles" allows the panels to interact not only among themselves but with the wall surface on which they are hung, emphasizing "the independence of the aligned elements." [PJ] Two shaped canvases, *Phenomena Even Goes East Odd Goes West* and *Phenomena Tibetan Falls*, both 1976, reveal the artist's continued involvement with sculpted elements.

Among the works shown are little-known monochrome paintings of the early 60s, as well as a work in *grisaille*, *Phenomena Druid Altar*, 1962. *Phenomena Ramashandra Ramashandra*, 1962 exemplifies the artist's palette of that time and was a key painting in the artist's American retrospective. Gerald Nordland, then director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, wrote about this work in the retrospective's catalogue text as "*three strong elements converging on the upper center with enormous dignity in their regal descent. The artist's means appear to be limited, and yet the range and variety of his formal invention are astonishing.*"

Two monumental canvases, *Phenomena Lasting Dawn*, 1977 and *Phenomena Shooting the Sun*, 1978, are masterful paintings which convey in their force, density, and substance the range of the artist's expression in the late 70s. They evidence on a large scale the granular veil, interpenetration of color, and the artist's distinctive use of light.

Jenkins' work has been consistently shown both in New York and internationally to the present. After having met the artist in Paris in 1954, Martha Jackson held his first solo exhibition in New York in 1956. This began a longstanding relationship with the gallery that continued through 1977. Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer in New York held solo exhibitions of his work from 1973 to 1991. Important exhibitions were held in Paris at the Galerie Karl Flinker from 1961 to 1979 and in London at Arthur Tooth & Sons throughout the 1960s and at Gimpel Fils in the 1970s.

On view until July 2nd, 2009, *Space, Color, and Light* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Sandra H. Olsen, PhD, Director of the University of Buffalo Art Galleries, which holds the Martha Jackson and David Anderson Galleries archives, and an extensive chronology of the years 1960 to 1979. Also on view at the Smithsonian Institution's New York branch of the Archives of American Art is *Sightlines: Recent Acquisitions – The Paul Jenkins Papers*, from April 28th – June 12th, 2009 at 1285 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. On view July 30th, 2009 to October 17th, 2009 at the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center in The Springs, New York is the exhibition *Under Each Other's Spell: The Gutai Group and New York*, featuring work of the Gutai group from the collection of Paul Jenkins, who worked with the Gutai in Osaka in 1964.

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