

JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY

For immediate release

Suzanne Blank Redstone: 1960s Portal Paintings

September 9 – October 29, 2016

Opening reception: September 9th, 6–8pm

Jessica Silverman Gallery is pleased to present “1960s Portal Paintings,” a show of early works by Suzanne Blank Redstone.

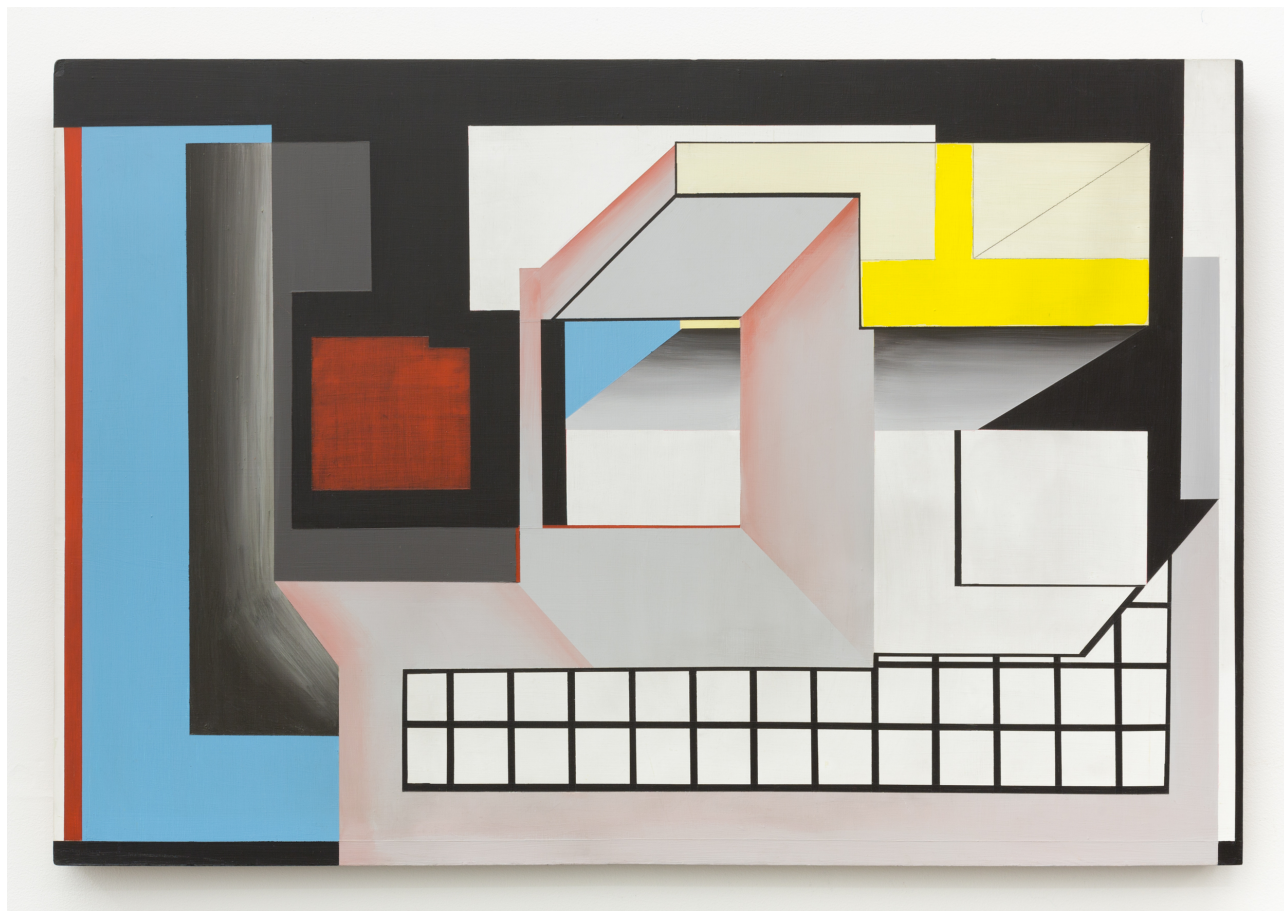
In 1966, Redstone decided that, in order to bring discipline to her work, she would paint only with 90- and 45-degree angles in gray, white and primary color acrylics. “Abstract expressionism was dominant at the time. I wanted to go against my own grain, creating a rule structure that was more austere and more rational than my disposition,” explains the artist. The first of these paintings are hard-edged; in later ones, the lines become softer and more painterly. All the works are alive with three-dimensional movement, in part because they contain a portico or threshold, suggestive of a spiritual dimension. Redstone’s practice fuses a high modernist exploration of abstraction with an engagement in historic experiments of Renaissance perspective.

The “Portal” works, which were made between 1966 and 1969, are the foundation of Redstone’s artistic practice. “This discipline pulled me into a different realm,” she explains. “I come from a family of many scientists – doctors, dentists and physicists – and the structure gave me freedom. It took me to another plane and eventually led me to sculpture.”

“Redstone’s practice,” explains Professor Jenni Sorkin in a text that accompanies the exhibition, “has developed largely abroad, and in semi-isolation, not unlike Maria Nordman (b. 1943), who is the same generation, and Jo Baer (b. 1929), the minimalist painter-turned-public artist. The career trajectories of the twentieth century’s women artists have often been more unwieldy, and less straightforward, than their male peers, with attention arriving much later.”

Suzanne Blank Redstone (b. 1945, Orlando FL) holds a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. For the past fifty years, Redstone has maintained a rigorous artistic practice without the support of dealer representation. In 2009, Redstone won a competition to create an outdoor public sculpture at the Porthcuno Telegraph Museum in Cornwall, England, and, in 2014, Redstone enjoyed her first solo exhibition, a retrospective at Dartington Hall, Devon, curated by Isabel Carlisle. Redstone lives and works in Devon, England. She is represented by Jessica Silverman Gallery.

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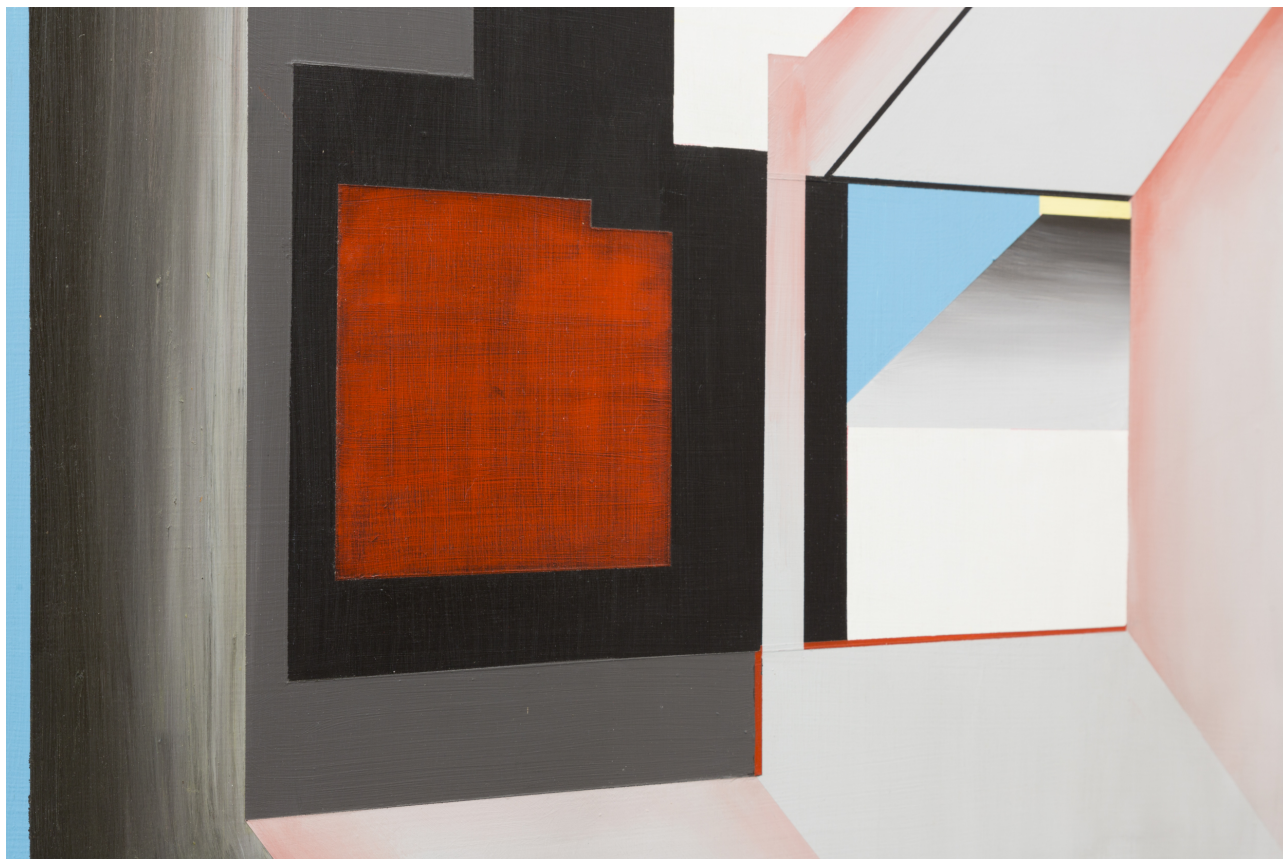
Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal 2, 1967

Acrylic on masonite

29.2 x 35.4 inches / 74 x 90 cm

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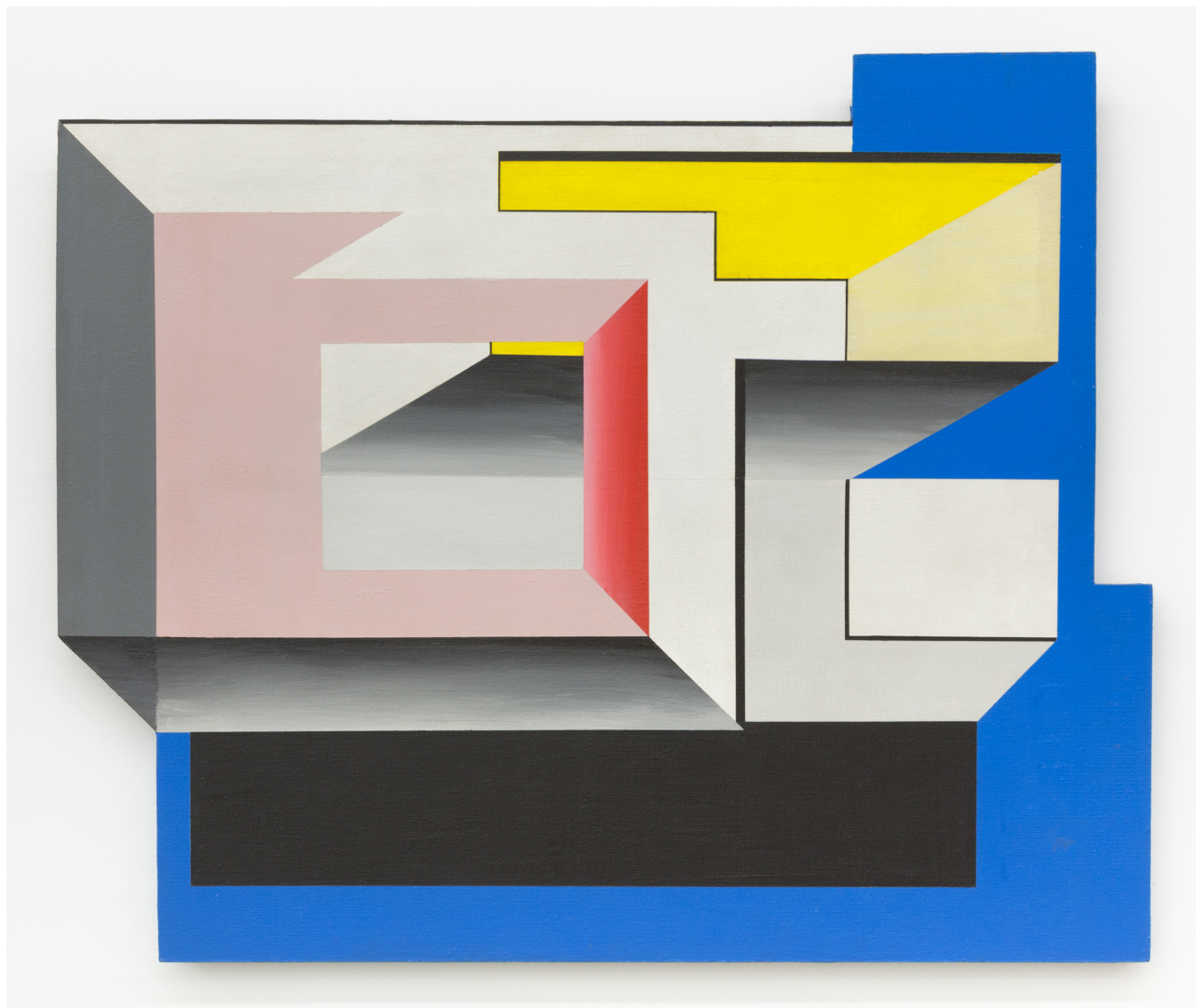


Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal 2, 1967

Detail

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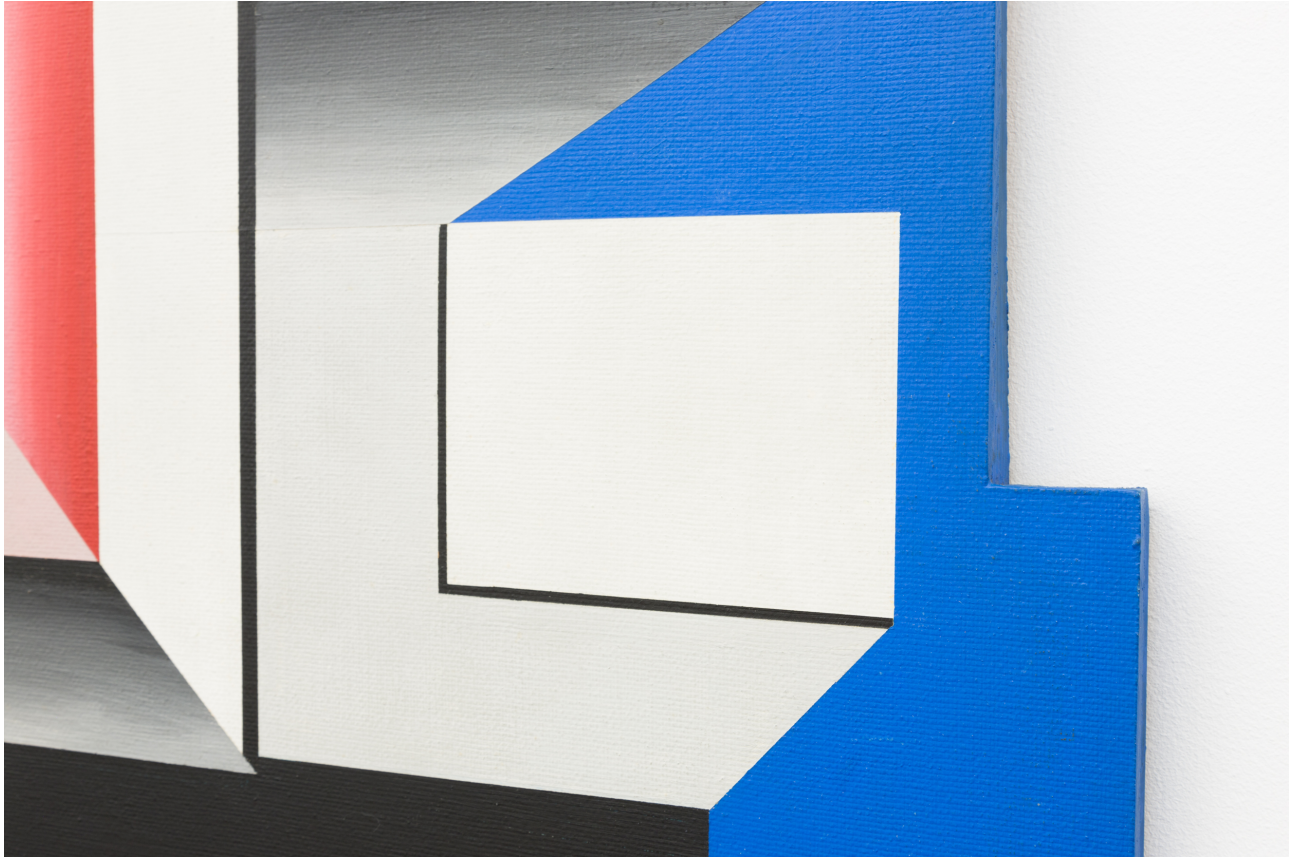
Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal 2A, 1967

Acrylic on shaped masonite

29.2 x 35.4 inches / 74 x 90 cm

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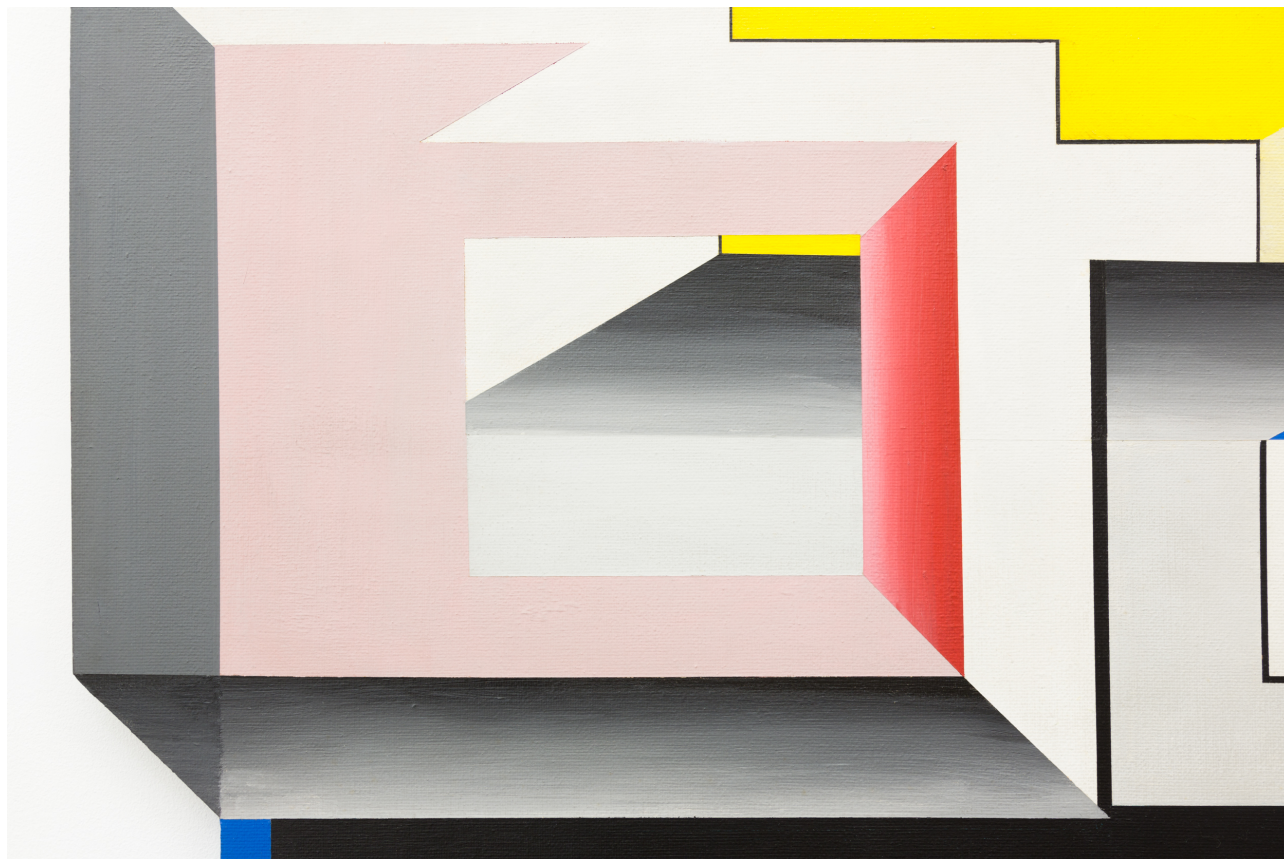


Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal 2A, 1967

Detail

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Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal 2A, 1967

Detail

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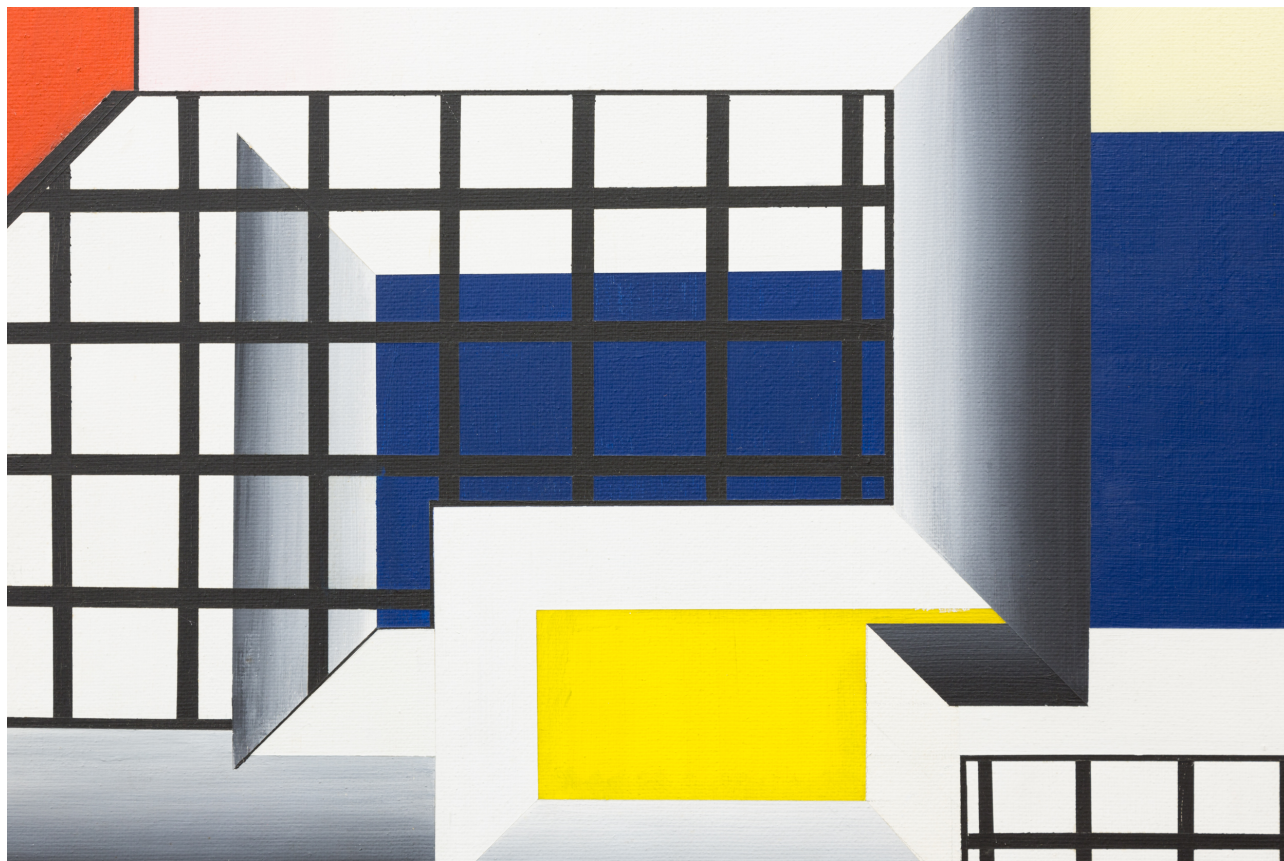
Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal 8, 1968

Acrylic on masonite

27 x 42 inches / 68.6 x 106.7 cm

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Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal 8, 1968

Detail

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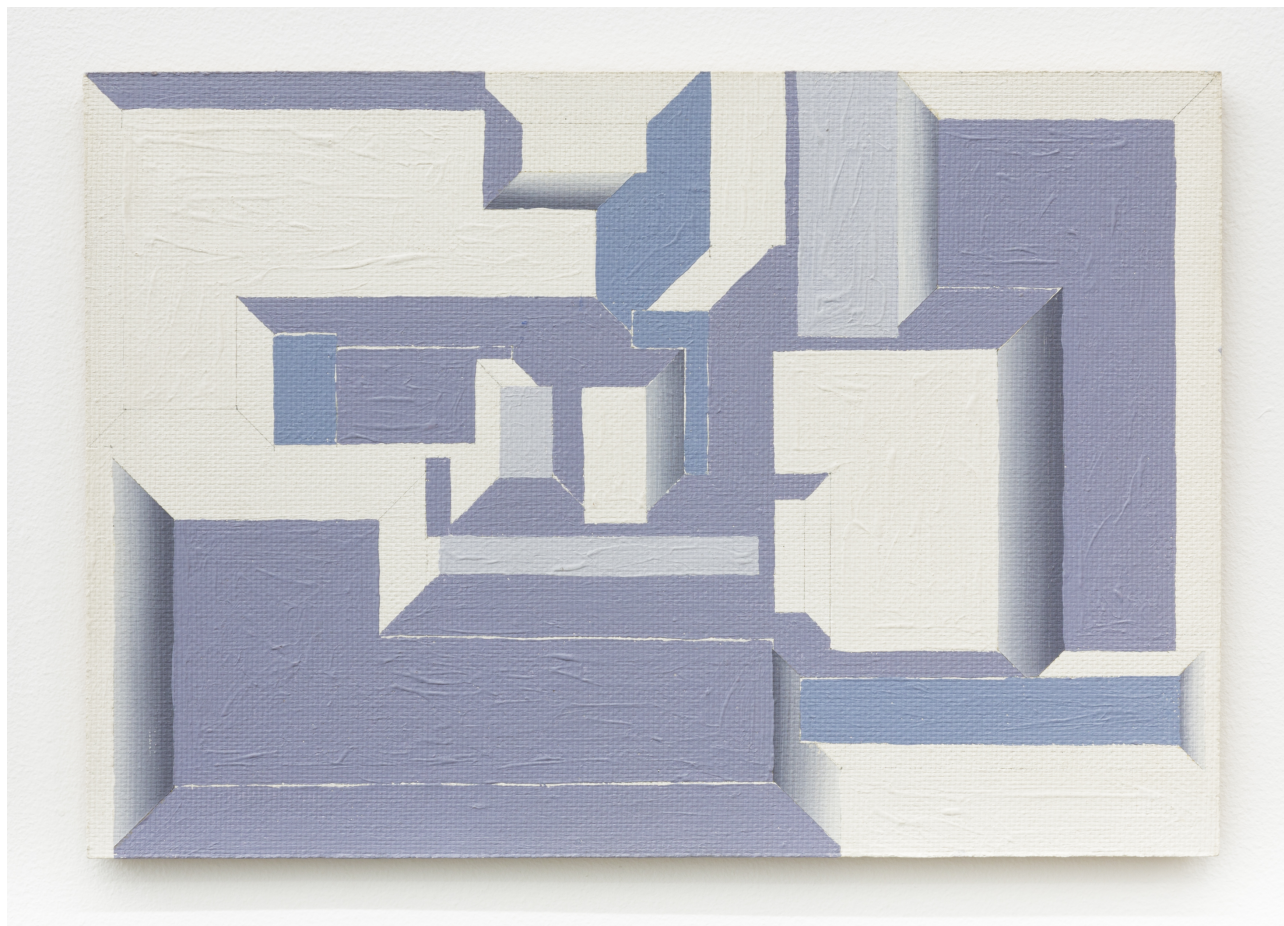
Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal Blues, Greys and Yellow, 1969

Acrylic on masonite

26 x 37 inches / 66 x 94 cm

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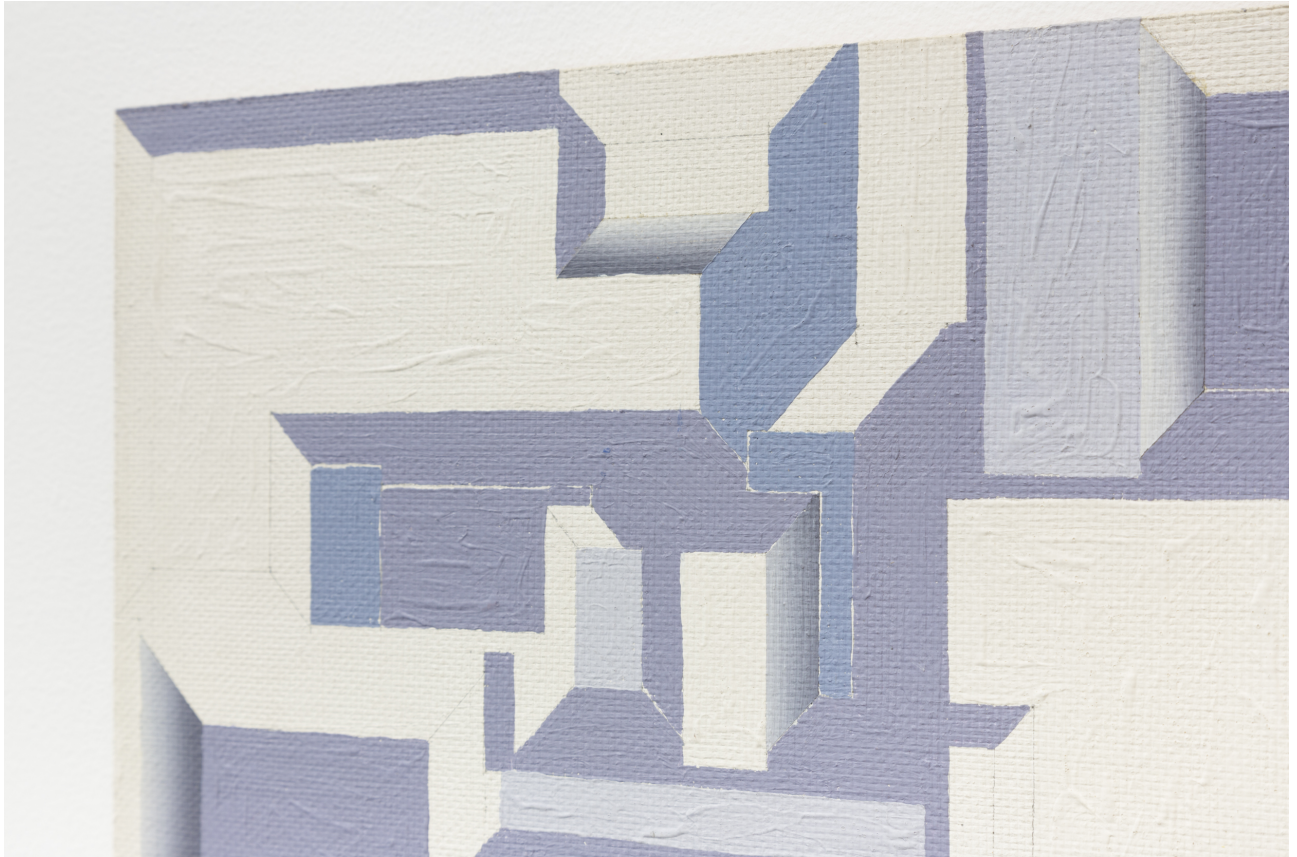
Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal Blues, Greys and White, 1969

Acrylic on masonite

10 x 14.5 inches / 25.4 x 36.8 cm

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Suzanne Blank Redstone

Portal Blues, Greys and White, 1969

Detail

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Suzanne Blank Redstone

Blue and Maroon Portal, 1969

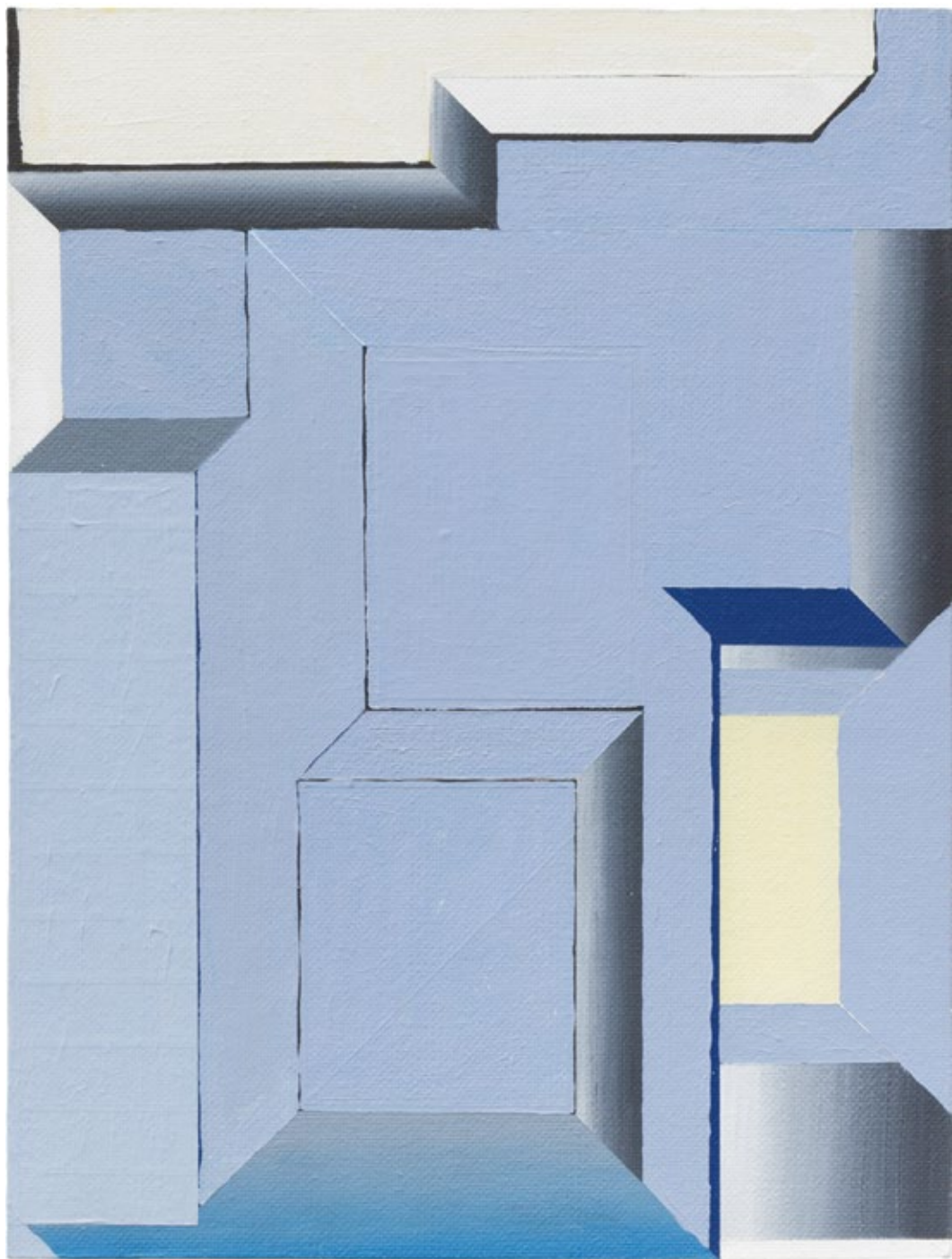
Acrylic on masonite

10 x 14 inches / 25.4 x 35.6 cm

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Suzanne Blank Redstone
Blue and Maroon Portal, 1969
Detail



Suzanne Blank Redstone
1960s Portal Paintings

Suzanne Blank Redstone: Image as Thought

Jenni Sorkin

Suzanne Blank Redstone is a late-career artist in an emerging artist's mode: that is to say, she is in the process of being rediscovered while in her seventies. This is not an uncommon experience for women artists. Louise Nevelson did not achieve major recognition until she was 60 years old. Or consider Louise Bourgeois, who had her first retrospective at age 70 in 1982, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. But women artists never really disappear; they continue working, sometimes out of view, or at the edges of the frame, making art alongside making a life.

Raised in Queens, New York, Redstone holds a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and an MFA from University of Pennsylvania (Penn). As a young artist, she was strongly influenced by the precepts of the Bauhaus, as they were disseminated throughout the United States in the decades after World War II. European émigrés like Josef and Anni Albers and László Moholy-Nagy brought modernism to bear on the curriculum of American art schools, encouraging a pedagogy that was rooted in the specificity of formalism – basic geometry, color, and spatial perception. The exercises taught within the Bauhaus's Foundation course, pioneered by Johannes Itten, included sewing, drawing, perforating, intertwining, folding, and cutting. Redstone recalls being fascinated by Albers's book, *Despite Straight Lines* (1961), which is a poetic meditation on perceptual and pictorial space, conveying its spirited possibilities.

As a RISD student on the senior

year honors program in Rome in 1965–66 (the same program in which Francesca Woodman was enrolled a decade later), Redstone was challenged by the architect Friedrich St. Florian (an Austrian émigré) to apply structure to her work. Over the next four years, working in New York and then in Philadelphia, she decided to adhere to two rules: limiting herself to 90 and 45 degree angles (meaning, no curved lines) and painting using only primary colors, white and Payne's gray (a particular shade of gray). As Redstone comments: "Once I returned to New York, I was simultaneously back in my own world again, surrounded by the familiarity of my Long Island studio, yet changed by what I had experienced abroad. It was like coming back to a book and starting to read it again, excited by re-entering the story. I worked for hours every day to resolve a painting and rarely showed anyone my work."¹

The body of work that came out of this singular effort – the "Portals" series (1966–1969) – is the focus of Redstone's first American exhibition. In "Portals," Redstone uses architectonic compositions that render space in brilliant primary colors and cordons it off in grids and shadows, creating maze-like paintings that bring three-dimensionality to the canvas. Her rejection of curvilinear forms creates solidity and angularity, positing an interesting tension between geometric abstraction, historically construed as perhaps more "male," than the biomorphism of organic, natural forms, often identified as



Figure 1. *Drawing for Floating Portal*, 1968, Paper, tracing paper, pencil, and color pencil, 8 ¼ x 8 ¼ in.

"female." In choosing geometric abstraction, Redstone unconsciously identifies with a lineage of male painters. This is not surprising, given the lack of role models available to young women artists at the dawning of the 1960s.

While working within such purposeful limitations, Redstone continued her studies, obtaining her MFA from Penn in 1971. In combination with her own experiments, the program proved to be a formative experience, studying with Robert Engman, a former Albers student. As she recalls, "In particular, I remember introducing Louis Kahn's graduate architecture students to Albers's practice of learning about structures through paper folding."²

Through an adherence to the partitioning of line, Redstone merges hard-edged forms with the interior presence of space, crystallizing image as thought and thought as image. Her formalist experiments situate her at the tail of a generation of

women artists similarly influenced by American Bauhaus pedagogy, such as Sheila Hicks (b. 1934) and Barbara Kasten (b. 1936), artists who pursued non-traditional techniques in fiber sculpture and staged photography respectively, to create what Susanna Newbury calls, "hypertologies where geometry is continuously deformed through aspect and perspective."³ Initially working in drawing and painting, Redstone has recently won public sculptural commissions in Britain. Yet her work has a continuous affinity with ideas of light, color, and formal attributes of the line.

The earliest "Portals" began as sketches, small-scale works repeated on paper such as *Drawing for Floating Portal* (1968) [Figure 1], which map out blocks of color that contrast boxy interior spaces with a background of clouds, creating the sensation of movement and the effect of shapes untethered. Such illusionism, which generates a deceptive experience of space



Figure 2. *Yellow Filter: Diptych*, 1966, Acrylic on shaped canvas, 45 ¼ x 98 ¾ in.

through the use of perspective, is one of the hallmarks of “Portals.” Through the precise capture of color and light, the artist offers the phenomena of depth and breadth. Though she worked against the Greenbergian flatness of the picture plane, Redstone’s formalism positions her as a modernist working incongruently with her own era: the social and political foment of the late 1960s.

An early work, *Yellow Filter: Diptych* (1966) [Figure 2], experiments with a shaped canvas, stretched into a partial rhombus to create a long diagonal swath of blue sky, complete with clouds. Edged in yellow, the sky is both foreground and background, buttressed by a stark black and white grid, and shot through with a yellow screen, a stripe of which interrupts its momentary realism, sharply contrasting with the blue. *Yellow Filter*, then, is both a color study and

an experiment in *trompe l’oeil*, as the eye is fooled by the tactical layers of distortion. Spread over two canvases, Redstone’s extended sky is simultaneously doubled and truncated, and broken up in three ways: first, as side-by-side paintings; second, by the interjection of an abstract grid and a yellow filter, displacing the realism, and finally, by the sense of the canvases as objects themselves in which the wall on which they hang creates an overwhelming sense of volume, becoming a physical darkness situated between the two canvases. While *trompe l’oeil* is one of the historically important attributes of Western painting, it is not common in American art of the late 1960s and was disparaged as “theatrical” by Michael Fried.⁴ In Redstone’s version, “fool the eye” becomes a form of commentary on media specificity: the idea of a contrasting filter is a nod to color photography

and its saturation of hue. Redstone’s diptych, then, functions as another form of doubling: painting playfully mimicking photography, underscoring its unavoidable influence on the way we experience the world.

But Redstone’s “Portals” are also suggestive of doorways, windows, and hollows that offer an intricacy of light and shadow. “I thought of [them] as openings and places to venture into. These were all discoveries,” she says.⁵ Sometimes she utilized the same forms, but altered the colors, such as in *Portal Blues, Grays, and White* (1969), a lavender, more milky version of *Blue and Maroon Portal* (1969), irrevocably changing dark spaces to light, and light to dark, reminiscent of light moving across architectural surfaces and threshold spaces, such as porticos, or archways.

The paintings can be seen as gateways, or windows, onto Redstone’s

future, twenty-first century practice. They foreshadow much of her later work including her ongoing “Colored Circles” series (2003–2015) [Figure 3], which consist of winsome aluminum sculptures that transform the simple geometries of concentric circles into explorations of color: delicate to full bodied reds, yellows, and blues, with ranges of sleek pinks and matte eggshell in between, made only through the reflection of light creating washes of color as an afterimage. The light gathers on surface, collecting and disappearing, an ephemeral view dependent upon time. These recent sculptures have a California Light & Space sensibility, without having a relationship to either the West Coast, or that movement’s history. Redstone’s practice has developed largely abroad, and in semi-isolation, not unlike Maria Nordman (b. 1943), who is the same generation as Redstone,



After Piero Della Francesca - *The Flagellation of Christ*, 1967, Acrylic on masonite, 30 x 48 in.



Portal 8, 1968, Acrylic on masonite, 27 x 42 in.



Figure 3. *Radiance*, 2003, Aluminum, matte enamel paint on wood board, 48 x 7 7/8 in.

and Jo Baer (b. 1929), the minimalist painter-turned-public artist. The career trajectories of the twentieth century's women artists have often been more unwieldy, and less straightforward, than their male peers, with attention arriving much later. Somewhere between the purity of her expression, and the compelling trajectory of rediscovery, Suzanne Blank Redstone is still at the beginning of a full reveal.

¹ Suzanne Blank Redstone to the author, July 28, 2016, e-mail correspondence.

² Ibid.

³ Susanna Newbury, "Playtime: Review, *Barbara Kasten: Stages*," *X-TRA* v. 18. n. 4 (Summer 2016), 20.

⁴ For more information, please refer to Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

⁵ Redstone, *ibid.*

Jenni Sorkin is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art History, University of California, Santa Barbara. She has written numerous in-depth essays on women artists and issues of gender. Her book *Live Form: Women, Ceramics and Community*, about gender and post-war ceramics at Black Mountain College and other utopian communities, was published this year by The University of Chicago Press.

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Cover

Suzanne Blank Redstone, *Gray and Light Yellow*, 1968, Acrylic on masonite, 19 x 14 ½ in.

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All images by Kristine Eudey

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Space



First light

We create design constellations around Suzanne Redstone's light-catching sculptures and dimension-busting artworks

Photography Thomas Brown Interiors Amy Heffernan



Colour Rings (top right), 2003, by Suzanne Redstone

Left to right, 'Parola' LED suspension lamps, £303, by Gae Aulenti and Piero Castiglioni, from FontanaArte. 'Sam Son' chair, £420, by Konstantin Grcic, for Magis. 'Walala' cushion, £70, by Camille Walala, from Aris. 'TS' table, £690, by GamFratesi, for Gubi, from SCP. Vessel, £410, by Sophie Southgate, from Ditzkron. 'Concept 504' high cut-pile carpet, price on request, by

Carpet Concept. 'Prism Plain' wallpaper, from £90 per roll, by Zoffany. Inset, 'Lift' chair, £950, by Eric Degenhardt, for Böwe. 'Discussion' table, £4,900, by Markus Miessen, for New Tendency, from The Store x Soho House Berlin. 'The Eighth One From One' vase, price on request, by Michaela Tomášková, from Křehký. 'Signature Abstract Spectrum' laminate flooring in Bangkok, £70 per sq m, by Anitico. 'Clunch' Estate Emulsion, £58 per 2.5 litres, by Farrow & Ball





Untitled (on back wall, right), 1969, by Suzanne Redstone

Left to right, 'Déjà-vu' mirror, £818, by Naoko Fukasawa, for Magis, from Twentytwentyone. 'Three Squares' rug, £975, by Sandea Blow, for Editions by Christopher Farr, from CF Editions. 'Ring' chair, by Nanna Ditzel, upholstered in Steelcut Trio 2 #655 by Kvadrat, from £1,634, from Getama. Planter, \$1,350, by

Brook&Lyn. Fern, £21, from Living Props. 'Toio' lamp, from £653, by Achille & Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, for Flos, from Skandium. 'Stanford' sideboard, £999, by Consten by Terence Conran. 'Sphere', from £28, by Francesca Bosa, for Bosa. 'Double Bubble' vase, £850, by Anna Torfs, from William & Son. 'ES Bank' bench, €3,609, by Mathias Hahn, for Zeitraum. 'Illum' table, €3,180, by

Merckx & Maes, for Tribù. 'Lavin' lamp, €249, by Jörg Bonez, for Atelier Pfister. 'Dandy' pitcher, £175, by Nason Moretti, from The Conran Shop. 'CH33' chair, £457, by Hans J Wegner, 1957, from Carl Hansen & Son. 'Signature Abstract Spectrum' laminate flooring in Paris and Bangkok, £70 per sq m, by Amtico. 'Strong White' Estate Emulsion, £18 for 2.5 litres, by Farrow & Ball

Space



Lightcatcher, site-specific installation (top left), by Suzanne Redstone
 Left to right, 'Cana' bathtub, by Patricia Urquiola; 'Tez' freestanding tap, by Benedini Associati, prices on request, both for Agape, from West One Bathrooms. Marble platter, £160, from Darkroom. 1970 eau de parfum, £75 for 50ml, by Bella Freud. Gris Montaigne eau de parfum, £240 for 250ml, Dermo System repairing aftershave lotion, £48 for 100ml, both by Christian Dior. 'Crescent' lamp, £1,185, by Lee Broom. 'Drift' table, £720, by Eric Degenhardt, for Böwer.

'Rim' vessel, £76, by Lindsey Hampton, from Goodhood. Vase, price on request, by Bosa. 'Scent Air', diffuser £150, by Tom Dixon. 'Build' bed and headboard, price on request, by Francesco Rota, for Paola Lenti, from The Modern Garden Company. 'Gutta' pestle and mortar, \$150, by Tahir Mahmood. 'Ginella' bottle with lid, €70, by Ludovica + Roberto Palomba, for Bosa. 'Madonna' chair, £461, by David Ericsson, for Gärsnäs. 'Signature Abstract Spectrum' laminate flooring in Bangkok, £70 per sq m, by Amtico. 'Strong White' Estate Emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, by Farrow & Ball.

Space

Lightcatcher-Concurrence (below), 2013; *Untitled* (on wall), 1966, both by Suzanne Redstone

Left to right, 'Sesann' sofa, €4,415, by Gianfranco Ferré, for Tacchini. Cushion in 'Haakon 2' fabric, colour 1350, £207, by Kvadrat. Cushion in 'Aego' fabric, colour 0752, £18, by Raf Simons, for Kvadrat. Lacquered goatskin-based coffee table, £3,600, by Aldo Tura, from Talisman. *Brio*, \$1,600, by John Hogan. 'Altai' console, \$3,849, by A Jacob Mirks, from Skram. Porcelain

fruit stand, £95, by John Julian Design, from The New Craftsmen. Lacite table lamp, £2,400, by Karl Springer, from Talisman. 'LC9' stool in leather with enamelled steel frame, £516, by Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand, from Cassina. 'Concept 504' high cut-pile carpet, price on request, by Carpet Concept. 'Blue Moon 161' emulsion, £57 for 2.5 litres, by Sanderson. 'Clunch' Estate Emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, by Farrow & Ball





This page, left to right, 'Koya' desk, £1,777, by Marie Christine Dorner, for Ligne Roset. 'Littlebox', \$395, by A Jacob Marks, for Skram. Medium black stripe agenda planner, price on request, by Kate Spade New York, from Liberty. 1960s airmail set, £22, from Present & Correct. Bin, £60, by Pentreath & Hall. 'Solid' Carrara marble pendulum, £197, by Terence Woodgate. Handmade crayons, £35, by From Keena, from Present

& Correct. Coloured artist's journal, \$30, by Fabianus. 'Double Bubble' vase, £80, by Anna Torfs, from Williams & Son. Rochermin pens, £43, by Acme, from The Common Sleep. Tower Block grid notes, £9, by Hny, from Selfridges. 'Twist' attaché, from £490, by MUI Design, for Expozium. 'Concept' 102 high cut-pile carpet, price on request, by Carpet Concept. 'Strong White' Estate Emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, by Farrow & Ball

Opposite, 'Form' 24 (one with fire agent), 1967, by Suzanne Redstone. Left to right, 'Phacee' side table, £10,000, by Christian Ligne. 'Titan' vase, £900, by Olivier Gagnier, for Edition Liméec Paris, from Willer. Folding trolley, from £45, by Kaymet, from Harrods. 'Anastasia' wine glasses, £90 each, by William Yeoward. 'Alba' media unit, £3,150, by Pinch. 'Marilyn' vase,

£335, 'Champs de Mars' vase, £655, both by Olivier Gagnier, for Edition Liméec Paris, from Willer. 'Laser' wallpaper in White, £80 per 10m roll, by Cole & Son. 'Army Opal' floor lamp, £1,670, by CTO Lighting. 'Signature Abstract Spectrum' laminate flooring in Bangkok, £70 per sq m, by Amtico. 'Blue Moon 66' emulsion, £57 for 2.5 litres, by Sanderson. 'Strong White' Estate Emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, by Farrow & Ball



Space

Space

Decent (on wall, far right)
1967, by Suzanne Redstone

Left to right, 'Soen' table,
£5,222, by Gabriele &
Oscar Buratti, for Alias.
'Camoufleur' vase, price on
request, by Richard Hutten,
for Krehky. Race track
planter with bowl and ball,
\$825, by Brook&Lyn. 'Altar'
chair, £1,800; with backrest,
£2,000, both by Lee Broom.
Chrome uplighter floor lamp,
1970s, £2,200, by Casella of
San Francisco, from Talisman.
'Blow' chaise longue, €5,300,
by Emanuele Magini, for
Gufram. Red and white
birch decorative logs, £58
per box, from The Little Log
Company. 'Issima Blu'
ceramic vase, €72, by Sam
Baron, for Bosa. 'Unus' gold
stand, price on request, by
Desalto. 'Signature Abstract
Spectrum' laminate flooring
in Paris, £70 per sq m,
by Amtico. 'Clunch' Estate
Emulsion; 'Strong White'
Estate Emulsion, both
£38 for 2.5 litres, both by
Farrow & Ball

For stockists, see page 184



For more about artist
Suzanne Redstone, see our
Q&A at Wallpaper.com

