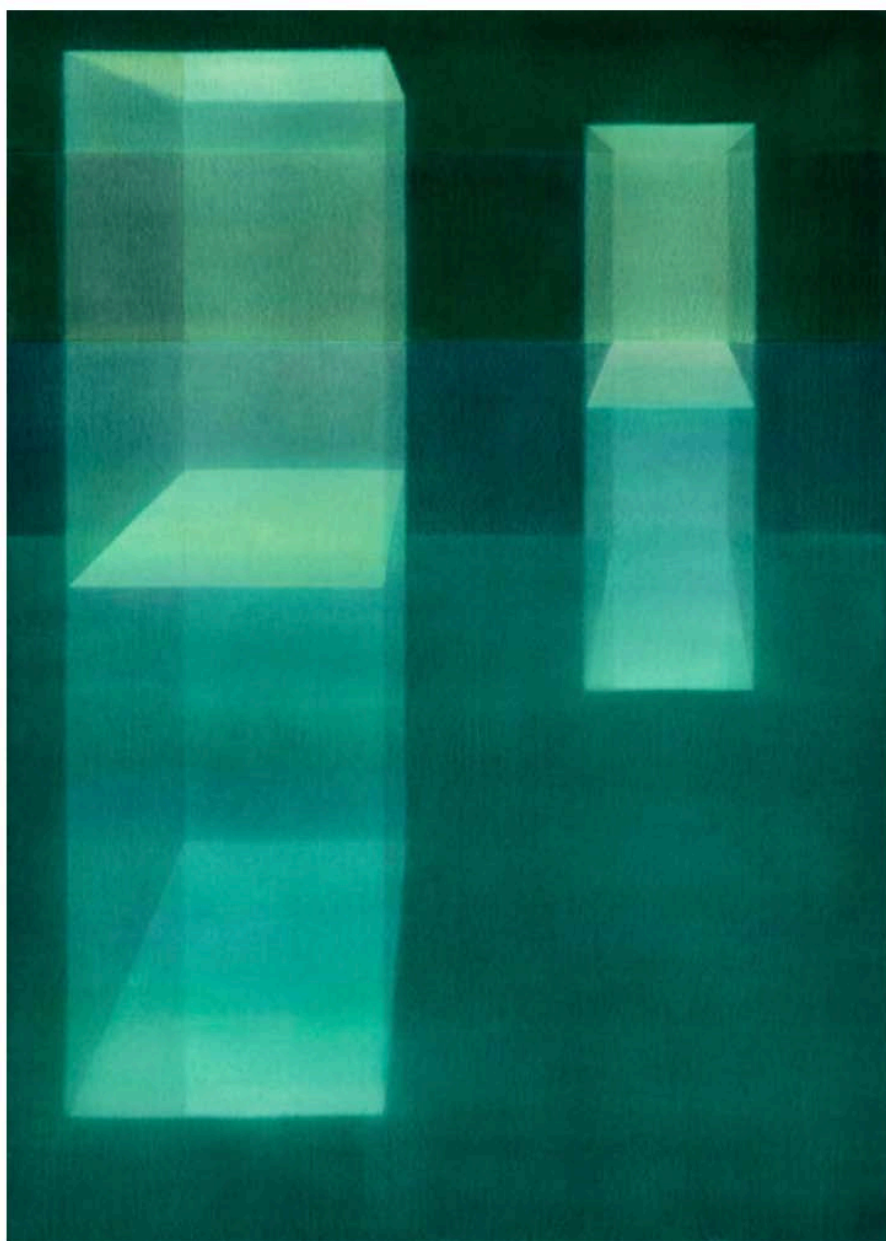


The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

AUG. 11, 2016



“Suspended in Green” by
Laretta Vinciarelli Totah

Lauretta Vinciarelli

'Light Unveiled'

Total

183 Stanton Street

Lower East Side

Through Sept. 18

Architecture and painting have been linked since antiquity, when artists painted frescoes that suggested three-dimensional structures and interiors. Lauretta Vinciarelli (1943-2011) updated this beautifully in her watercolors, depicting and disrupting illusionistic space so skillfully her works look almost like photographs or computer renderings. A selection of these are on view in ["Light Unveiled" at Total](#).

Ms. Vinciarelli was an architect, a teacher in several architecture programs and, coincidentally, the artist Donald Judd's partner for several years. Her profound understanding of light and space are obvious in the "Red Room Study" series from 1990, in which beams of light pass through stark, rectangular interiors reminiscent of Mr. Judd's minimalist sculptures, but also the bright desert light and Pueblo-inspired buildings around Marfa, Tex., where the two lived.

Later works are more abstract or futuristic, a bit like the architect Zaha Hadid's visionary paintings. The "Incandescent Frames" and the series "Suspended in Green" and "Suspended in Red" look like light-box sculptures — the fluorescent light sculptures of Dan Flavin come to mind — hovering in deeply colored space.

Ms. Vinciarelli wrote in the exhibition catalog that she didn't see her watercolors as solutions to architectural problems but rather forms of biography linked to the human body, which is "compact, solid when we touch it, machine-like when we dissect it" and an "empty, lofty, spacious, luminous, receptive-receptacle when considered by the ecstatic." You might say her works dissolve architecture. But her own statement, full of paradoxes and possibilities, is as good as any in describing how light, space and form function in her watercolors.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER