

Art Review: Helen Pashgian, 'Columns and Wall Sculptures' at Ace Gallery



You can count on one hand the number of exhibitions meant to be seen in the gentle dimness of candlelight. That's because most artists and viewers have thrown their lot in with the bright light of reason, preferring the clinical clarity of rationality to the mysterious intrigue of romance.

At Ace Gallery, Helen Pashgian turns the dimmer switch down low and demonstrates that it's irrational to be so narrow-minded. Her two-gallery show reunites bodies and minds by sharpening perceptions and heightening attentiveness while inducing a state of serenity that welcomes unpredictable wonders.

Each of the eight wall sculptures in the first gallery consists of one or two elliptical forms that trap, transform and transmit the ambient light. Space Age Minimalism is evoked by the palette and finish of Pashgian's sci-fi forms. But their mechanics are primal — nearly caveman basic. Turning the opposition between light and shadow inside out, Pashgian folds one into the other by softening their borders.

In the second gallery, six nearly 8-foot-tall sculptures take these dynamics to the next level. Each is a double ellipse, identical in shape, tint and opacity, except for the small cones, cylinders and wedges Pashgian has placed inside one but not the other of her adjoined forms.

Her freestanding sculptures bring the shadowy enchantment of moonlit nights indoors as they suggest high-tech mitosis. The ghost in the machine never looked better, or more poetic.

- David Pagel

Ace Gallery, 9430 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, (310) 858-9090, through March. Closed Sundays and Mondays.