



PHILIP C. PAVELY/PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Jane Haskell, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts' 2006 Artist of the Year, discusses one of her works, "Circling the Globe."

Let there be light

Jane Haskell's work with neon has garnered Artist of the Year honors

BY KURT SHAW
TRIBUNE-REVIEW ART CRITIC

Come Friday night, if you drive by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, you might think something's not right.

For starters, the front lawn will be filled with a cascade of colors that emanates from the basement windows in an unearthly glow.

And if you happen to step inside the yellow mansion, whose first room will be awash in a similar multi-colored glow, you will be further pressed by similar curiosities.

Extraterrestrial aliens will not have taken up residence. The glowing light is the handiwork of Jane Haskell, the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts' 2006 Artist of the Year.

Like one of her heroes, noted American artist Dan Flavin (1933-96), Haskell creates installations and sculptural objects from commercial light fixtures. Unlike Flavin, she focuses on the light that emanates from the fluorescent and neon tubes that she uses.

That's obvious when entering the first room. The visitor likely will notice only the colors that fill the room rather than the variously colored tubes of fluorescent light that hang in the ceiling's coffers.

Haskell has chosen to call this room "Homage to Dan Flavin." It's a subtle nod from a woman who knows all about subtlety.

At 62, she still exudes a sense of quiet grace. It's something of a mask that hides her deep involvement with the Pittsburgh arts scene. Many aren't aware, for example, that she is a longstanding board member of the Carnegie Museum of Art and that she has been a member of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh since 1967, one of the longest-involved members in that organization.

"A lot of people were very surprised that she hadn't received the (Artist of the Year) honor before, because

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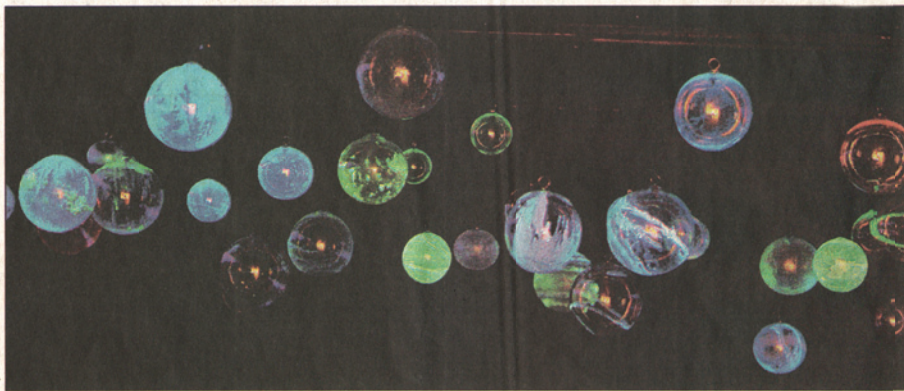
she has been involved in the local art scene for so long," says Laura Domencic, executive director of Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

Haskell grew up on Long Island, N.Y., and attended Skidmore College, where she graduated in 1944 with a degree in fine arts. After a brief stint working in Manhattan for cosmetics magnate Helena Rubinstein creating package designs and window displays, Haskell moved to Pittsburgh in 1949 with her husband and young daughter.

After Haskell's second daughter was born, she attended influential artist and teacher Samuel Rosenberg's (1896-1972) Artists' Workshop at the Young Men's and Women's Hebrew Association and earned her master's in art history at the University of Pittsburgh in 1961. She then taught at Duquesne University for 10 years before resuming a career in painting and sculpture.

In 1979, she "discovered" neon, which she used to produce her first piece in the medium, dubbed "Light Harp." Since then, she has continued to work in light in one way or another — combining it with paintings, as she did in 1981 for an exhibition at Pittsburgh Plan for Art, or using the medium almost exclusively, as she did for the installation in the Steel Plaza Subway Station, Downtown, which she completed in 1985.

The subway station project is one of many major commis-



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Jane Haskell's installation piece "Edge of Time" at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts

'2006 Artist of the Year'

What: New works by 2006

Artist of the Year Jane Haskell and 2006 Emerging Artist of the Year Kim Beck.

When: Friday-Nov. 5.

Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Tuesdays-Saturdays,

noon-5 p.m. Friday

Opening reception:

5:30-8 p.m. Friday

Admission: \$5

Where: Pittsburgh Center

for the Arts, 6300 Fifth

Ave. (Fifth and Shady

avenues), Shadyside

Details: 412-361-0873 or

www.pittsburgharts.org

Related programs

Symposium on Light and Artists'

Talk: A discussion on the

importance, meaning and use of light in

visual arts. The panel includes

Hilary Harp, Ron Donaghe, Jill

Larson, Jane Haskell and Kim Beck,

moderated by Carnegie Museum of

Art chief curator Louise Lippincott.

9 a.m.-noon Oct. 7. \$10; \$2 for

students. Reservations required by

Oct. 4. 412-361-0873, ext. 307.

Gallery Talk and Tour: Jane Haskell

and Kim Beck lead discussions

about their work in the galleries.

6 p.m. Oct. 19. \$5. Reservations

required. 412-361-0873, ext. 307.

sions she has completed in her long career, which includes an installation at Logan Airport in Boston and another in the Fort Lauderdale Airport.

Haskell also has had solo shows at Pittsburgh Plan for Art, the Westmoreland Museum of American Art in Greensburg and the Jewish Community Center Museum in Oakland, as well as at AIR Gallery in New York City and the Vineyard Studio Gallery on Martha's Vineyard, Mass.

Recently, Haskell has taken to working in glass.

"It all started with this one," she says, pointing to a small, round glass globe that she cold-worked at the Pittsburgh Glass Center. "I did this a year ago

last July when I took a class from Czechoslovakian glass artist Frantisek Janak."

Titled "Circling the Globe," the clear-glass sphere carved with bull's-eyes and polished to perfection is encircled at the base with Haskell's signature — a tube of blue neon.

In another gallery, which has been painted completely black, nearly 50 blown-glass globes suspended from the ceiling glow with the help of black light. Titled "Edge of Time," the phosphorescent colors of green, blue, purple and yellow give the globes an eerie glow, as if the whole group represents an undiscovered solar system far off in space.

On the second floor of the

center, Haskell shows nearly two dozen digital photographs she has taken on her travels to Martha's Vineyard; Marfa, Texas; and China's Silk Road. Also included are three sculptures titled "Fire and Ice" that are composed of plexiglass boxes filled with chunks of clear glass rock that Haskell has lit underneath with variously colored tubes of neon.

Beyond Haskell's pieces, the rear galleries hold the work of Kim Beck, 2006 Emerging Artist of the Year. Beck, 35, is an assistant professor at Carnegie Mellon University. Her work, which focuses on peripheral or overlooked spaces, includes drawing, painting, video installation and printmaking.

For this exhibition, she has chosen to take the everyday architectonics of street signs and given them a language all their own. Void of words and symbols, Beck has clustered laser-cut cardboard and Styrofoam silhouettes of the signs in various groupings on the walls of one gallery. In another, she displays drawings of the same signs drawn in silhouette and completely blackened with charcoal.

For now, those interested can get a preview of Beck's work on her Web site (www.idealcities.com). But, come Friday, when the exhibition opens, be prepared for an onslaught of shapes that, in her own words, "bring the banal and everyday into focus."

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