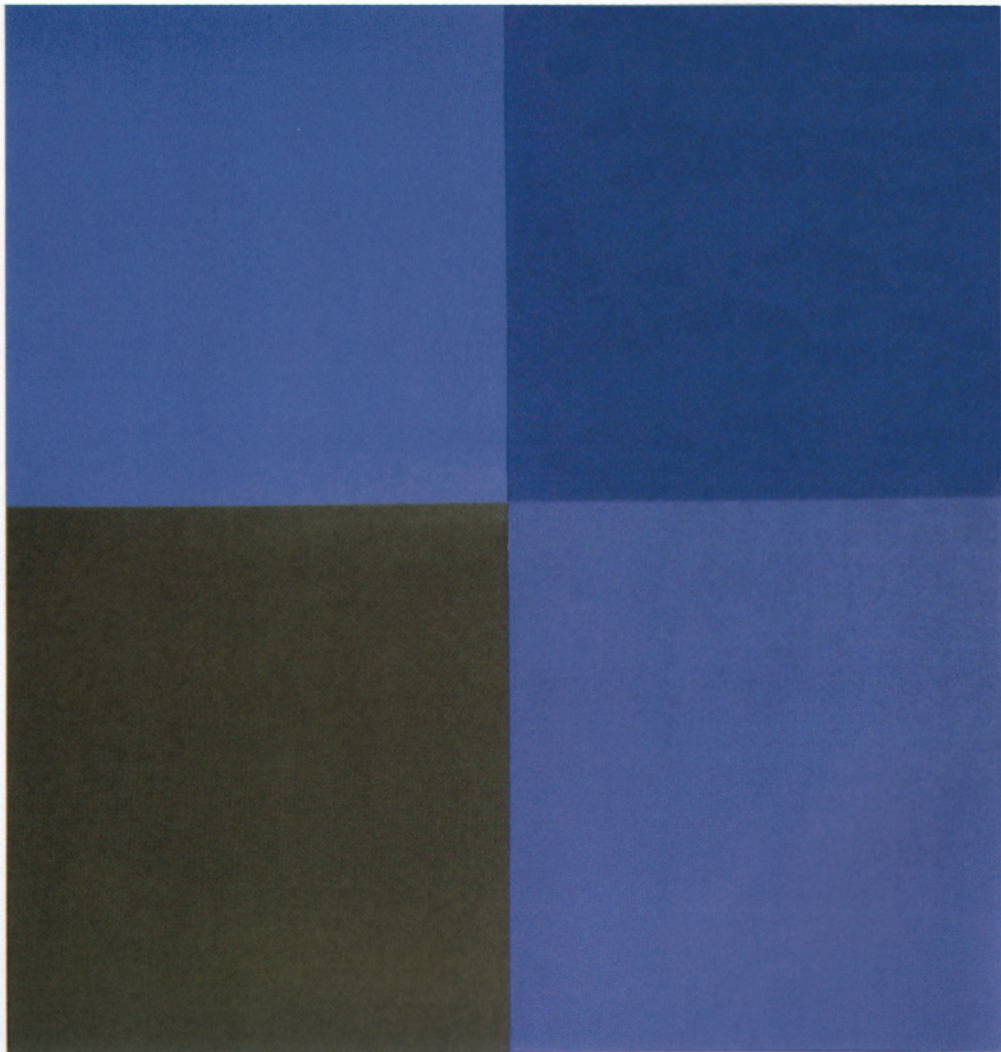


A large, clear glass sphere is the central focus of the image. It sits on a white, circular, ring-like base. The sphere is transparent, showing internal reflections and refractions of light. The background is a solid, dark blue color. The lighting creates a bright highlight on the rim of the white base and on the surface of the sphere.

**Jane Haskell**

2006 Artist of the Year  
Pittsburgh Center for the Arts



## Let There Be Light

Simple words that speak volumes. Words that have become universal despite their origin in the Bible. As written in “Genesis,” God created light so that the heavens and earth could emerge out of a formless darkness into the light (actually two lights: a greater to rule the day and a lesser to rule the night). This physical light enables vision but also hints at philosophical and spiritual properties. This illumination has become embedded in our language connoting enlightenment, awareness, insight, understanding, and brilliance.

Jane Haskell’s work engages light in its multiple forms by making it both her palette and her source of inspiration. As the light in “Genesis” is the source of all life, the light in her work is the source of both form and content. Light has, in fact, become her obsession. Because she usually combines it with color, her work can be seen as a contemporary version of impressionism’s painters of light and color. While the impressionists were influenced by lighting developments and the science of perception more than a century ago, Haskell uses actual light, incorporating neon and fluorescent lights and fiber optics.

OPPOSITE:  
Jane Haskell  
*Tones of the Flute*,  
Acrylic on canvas  
6’3” x 6’  
1981  
PHOTO: Lockwood Hoehl

FRONT:  
Jane Haskell  
*Circling the Globe*,  
glass with neon  
8” x 14” x 14”  
2005, private collection  
PHOTO: Tim Burak





Jane Haskell  
*Through the Window*,  
 Acrylic on canvas  
 6'3" x 3' each  
 1991  
 PHOTO: Lockwood Hoehl

The ephemeral effects in the shifting relationship between light and color remain a constant in Haskell's work, though her investigation has taken different forms through the years. The first work I saw, back in the 1980s, was a series of paintings, drawings, and prints called *Window Series*. Recalling qualities of light seen in places from Pittsburgh to Jerusalem, she deftly suggested changing light conditions in richly colored compositions structured in a grid. The window has resurfaced several times including her *Windows of Light* (p. 18-19), a modern riff in neon on medieval stained glass windows installed in a parking garage at Boston's airport and a recent drawing based on the light entering a window in a NYC apartment. While her Pittsburgh subway piece, *Rivers of Light* (p. 22-23), recreates the reflection of light on the flowing waters of the three rivers at dawn and dusk, it too features colored light placed behind a gridded, glass block wall.

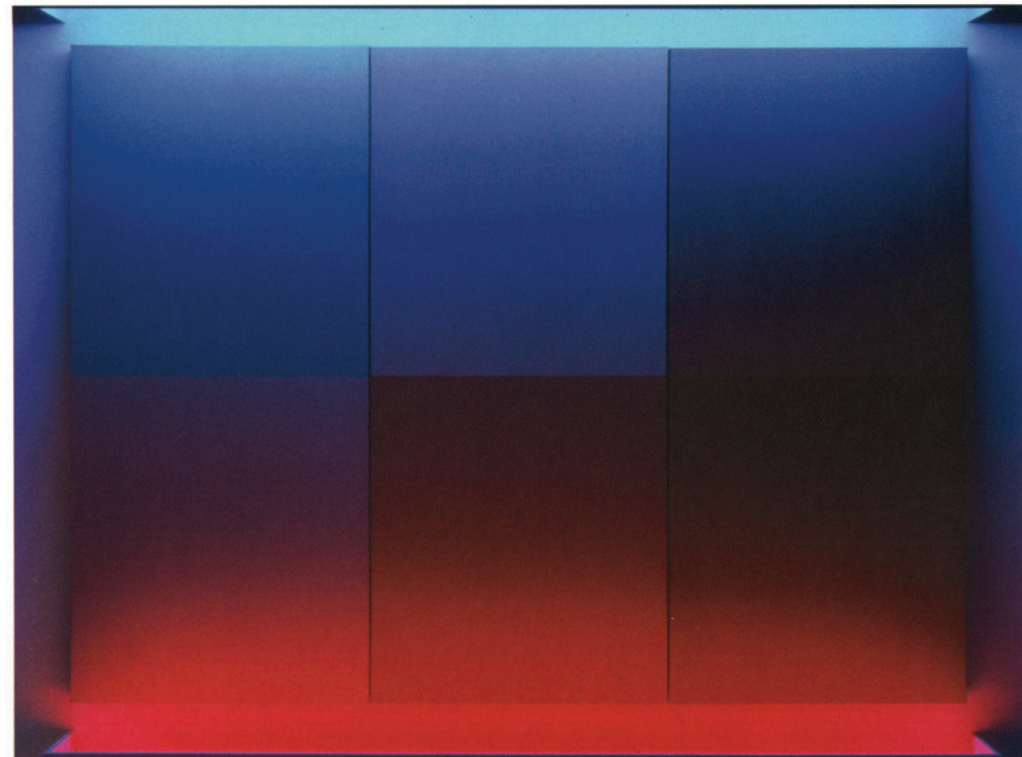
Not long after the *Window Series*, light became her medium of choice as she arranged tubes of neon and florescent light to create similar perceptual relationships. These individual pieces—her first light sculpture appeared in 1979—quickly became installations, many of them in public places where they affected the larger environment. In two exhibitions at the Pittsburgh Plan for Art in 1981 and 1985 (p. 2 and 7), she mixed light with painted two- and three-dimensional surfaces, crafting intricate balancing acts dictated by the placement of the lights and the choice of colors. She mixed the colors in both traditional and novel ways, on the palette and in space. In the 2000 *Pittsburgh Biennial* (p. 10-11), she transformed a room with simple tubes of light, creating a “walk-in Mark Rothko.” The colored lights mixed in the physical space to dematerialize the structure of the room and add a magical effect reminiscent of light-filled gothic cathedrals. It was as if she painted the air itself, a desire expressed by the painter Jules Olitski.



Haskell's work follows in the tradition of Joseph Albers' and Mark Rothko's hard and soft geometric fields of color and light in form, content, and obsessive process. Dan Flavin and James Turrell, with their investigations of natural and manufactured light, are natural influences and interests, but she also talks about Robert Ryman, Bridget Riley, Sol LeWitt, and Richard Tuttle. When we talked recently, she remembered the quality of light within the contemporary home of the architect, Luis Barragon, in Mexico captured in the photographs of Luisa Lambri. Obviously perception and memory fuel her work.

Haskell's fixation on light and color, filtered through perception and memory, informs her *Artist of the Year* exhibition where she presents new work in a variety of mediums. A gallery of digital images from Martha's Vineyard, the Silk Road in China and Marfa, Texas (p. 16) as well as the cactus room at Phipps Conservatory, continues her interest in photography. Speaking to each other in hushed tones, their subtle effects are enhanced by the fragility of the rice paper on which they are printed. Moving beyond the expected clarity of photographs, these images stimulate personal memories of similar places in our pasts, allowing us to perceive patterns, both planned and serendipitous, that many of us miss.

These patterns are also part of her *Windborne* (p. 17) series, an installation of drawings made with string and light. Colored light animates the geometric string shapes, casting patterns of light and shadow onto the wall. The control inherent in the string forms is loosened by the amorphous quality of the light, as the two elements conjure associations embedded in the contrast between light and shadow.

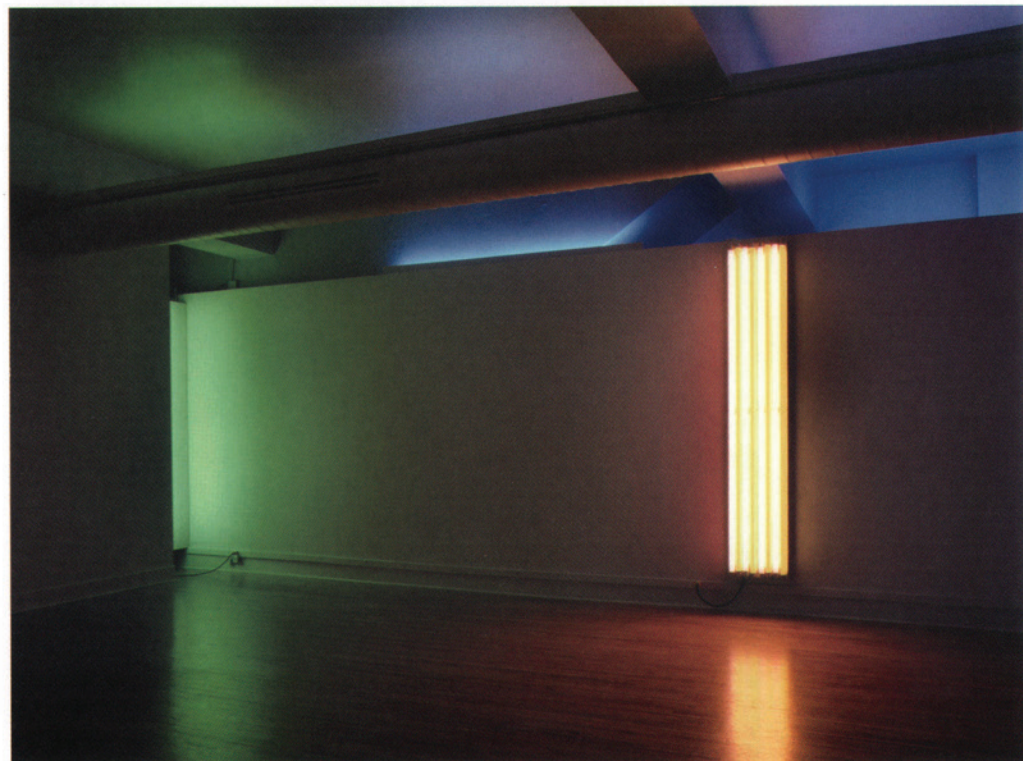


Jane Haskell  
*Counterpoint*,  
 Acrylic on canvas with neon  
 6'3" x 9'  
 1981  
 PHOTO: Lockwood Hoehl



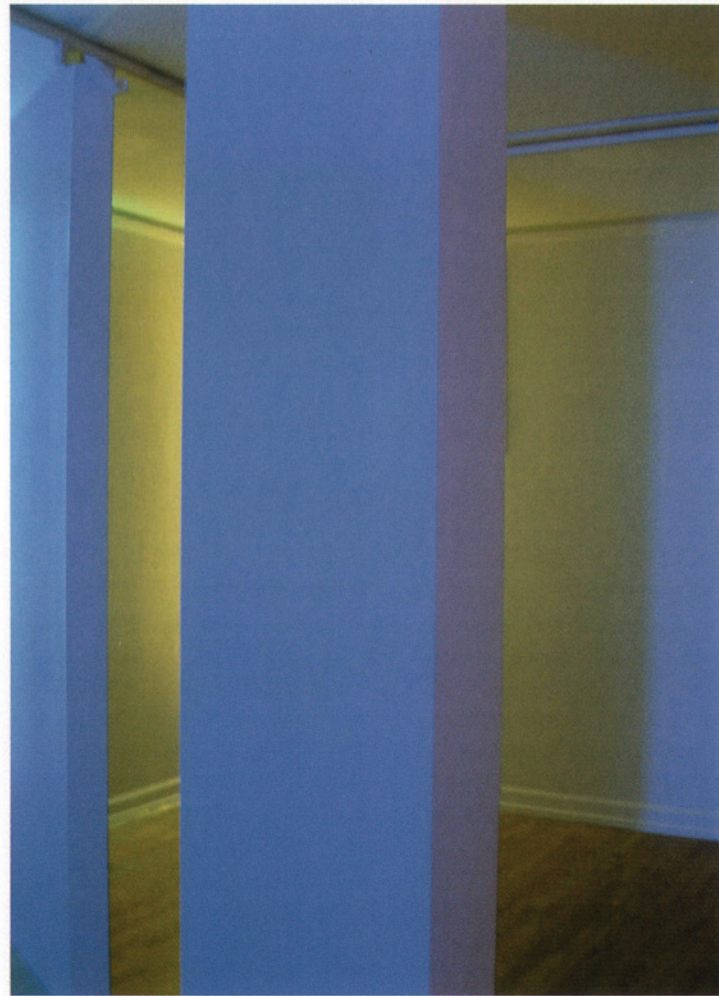


Jane Haskell and Sean Salstrom  
*Light Installation*,  
 Fluorescent light and glass installation, detail  
 8" diameter  
 2005  
 PHOTO: Alex Smith



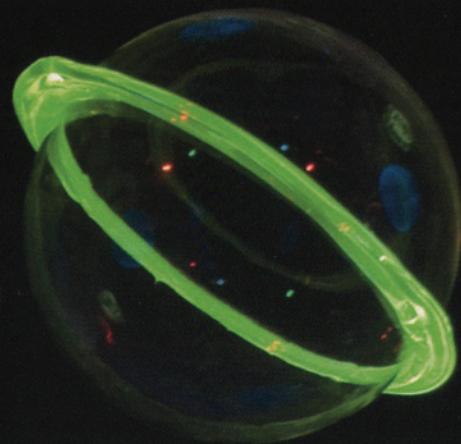
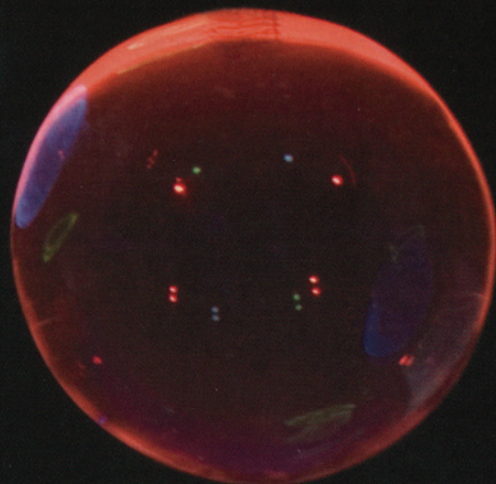
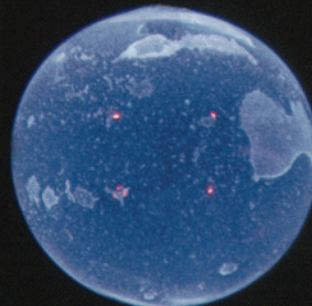
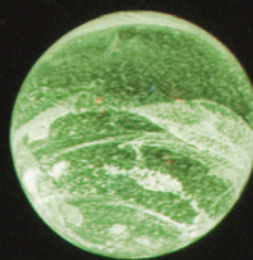
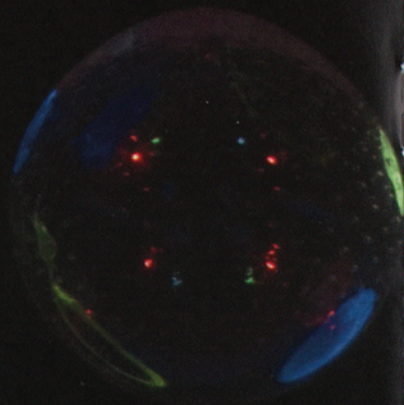
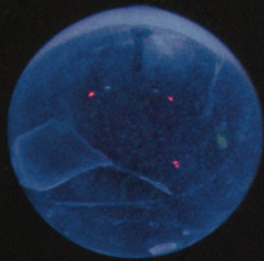
Jane Haskell  
*Drawings in Light*,  
 Fluorescent light installation,  
 Associated Artists of Pittsburgh Gallery  
 12' x 28' x 32'  
 1998-99  
 PHOTO: Lockwood Hoehl





Jane Haskell  
*Light Installation*  
 Fluorescent light,  
 Pittsburgh Biennial  
 8' x 25' x 16'8"  
 2000  
 PHOTO: Richard Stoner

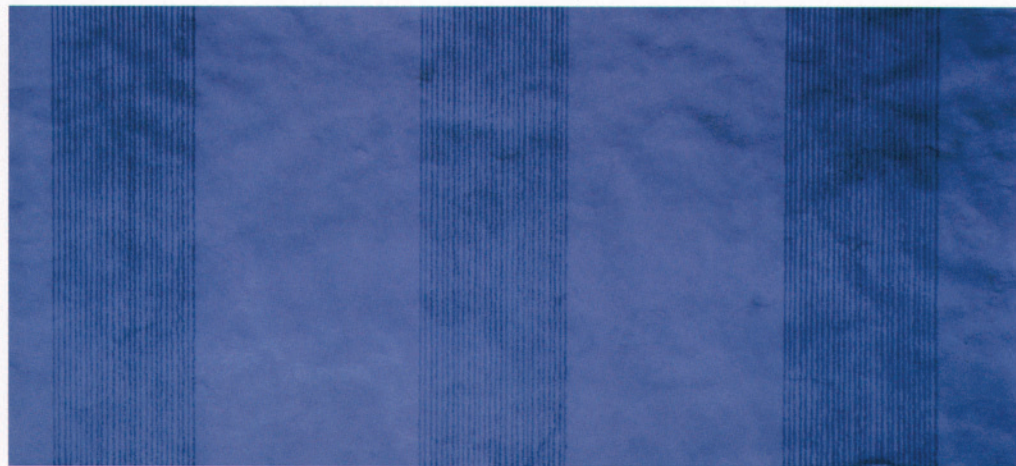






Pattern appears again in *Obsessive/Compulsive Progression* (p. 15). Like the grid and geometric shapes that structure and control much of her work, here is pattern constructed according to mathematical progressions. Each component of this long scroll measures  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11 inches. Starting one inch into this space, Haskell draws one vertical line. At the next one-inch mark, she draws two lines and then continues the progression until the sheet is filled in with vertical lines. The simple process of counting becomes an obsession with markmaking, control, and pattern, elements from Haskell's other work. Illuminated by black light, this scroll drawing assumes an eerie quality, again raising issues about the construction and interpretation of meaning, from the separation of light and dark to allow visual understanding to ways of organizing information and recognizing patterns that help us to understand ourselves and our world. Counting forms a minimalist surface yet hints at the passage of time, which informs the ephemeral effects of perception and is associated with the measuring of a lifespan.

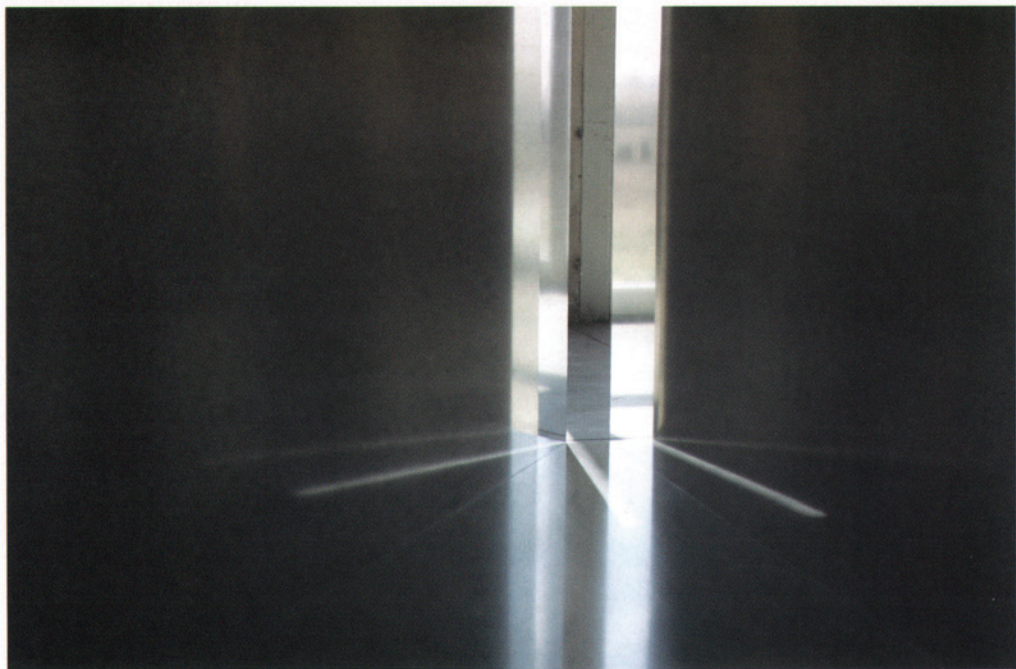
Mystery, which has played a more important role in Haskell's recent work, is center stage in *Edge of Time* (center spread p. 12-13, detail p. 20). A constellation of glass globes in various sizes hangs in a darkened room lit by black light. Light on the transparent vessels allows us to see into and through them, a motif reminiscent of her earlier works where her "windows" revealed both interior and exterior views. In a recent collaborative installation, Haskell helped to create a magical room with lights that illuminated Sean Salstrom's water-filled glass vessels (p. 8). Now making her own glass forms, she adds phosphorescence to the molten glass to create color that seems to free float in the air. The resulting installation creates a model of the night sky littered with stars and planets, referencing astronomy and Hubble photographs. Science furthers our understanding of space but cannot stop our imaginations which imbue these celestial bodies with mystical and religious meanings. Haskell plays in the interstices between seemingly contradictory ideas and disciplines. It makes perfect sense that she has long been interested in black holes.



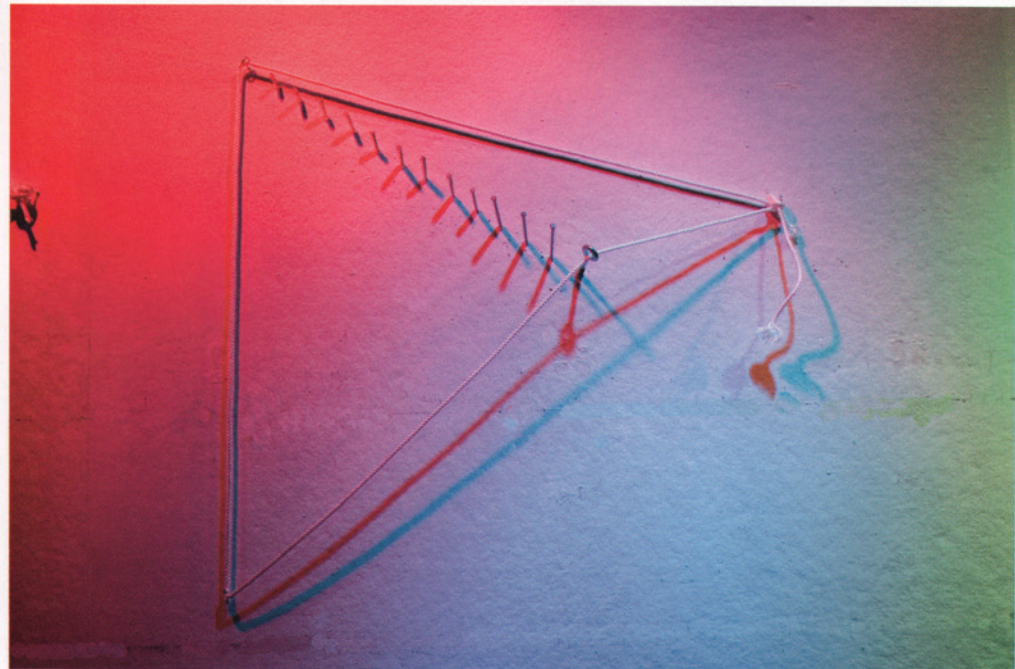
CENTER SPREAD:  
Jane Haskell  
*Edge of Time*,  
Glass globes installation  
10' x 18' x 24'10"  
2006  
PHOTO: Tim Burak

ABOVE:  
Jane Haskell  
*Obsessive/Compulsive Progression*,  
Pencil on rice paper  
11" x variable dimensions  
2006



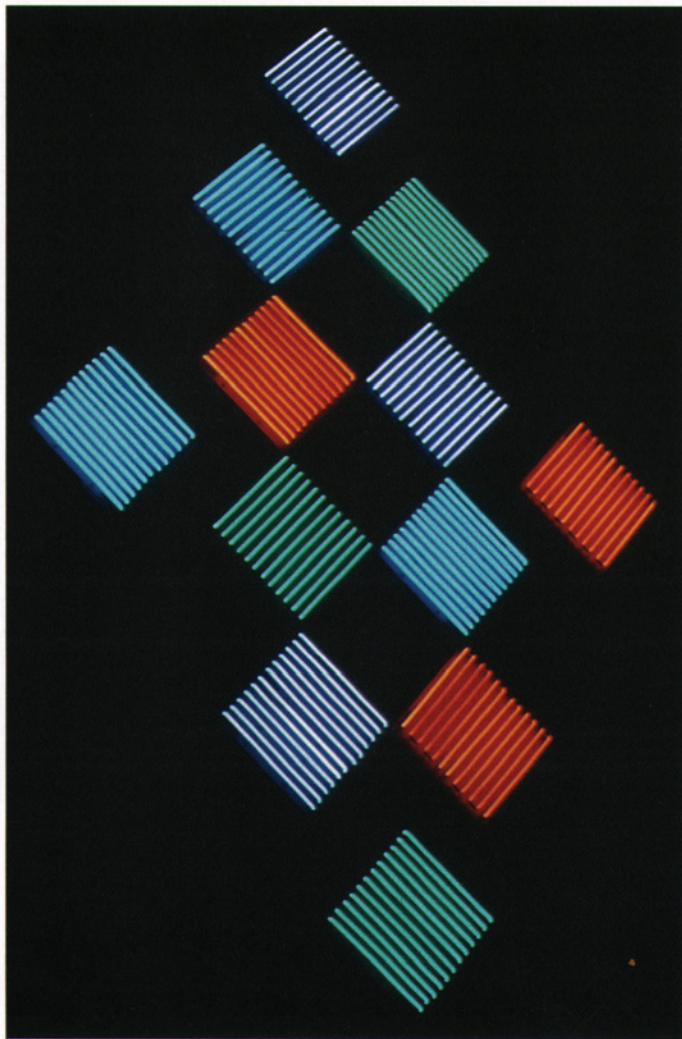
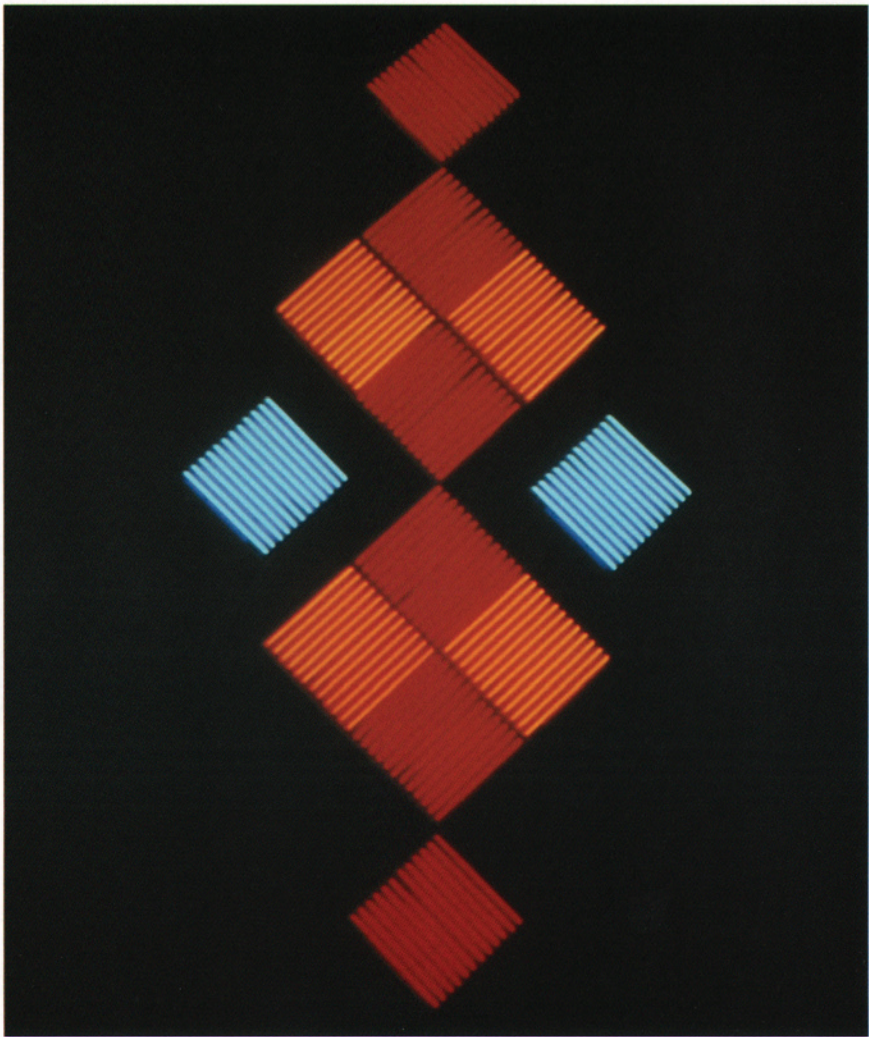


Jane Haskell  
*Peering into Donald Judd,*  
 Photograph of sculpture by Donald Judd  
 Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas  
 13" x 19"  
 2004



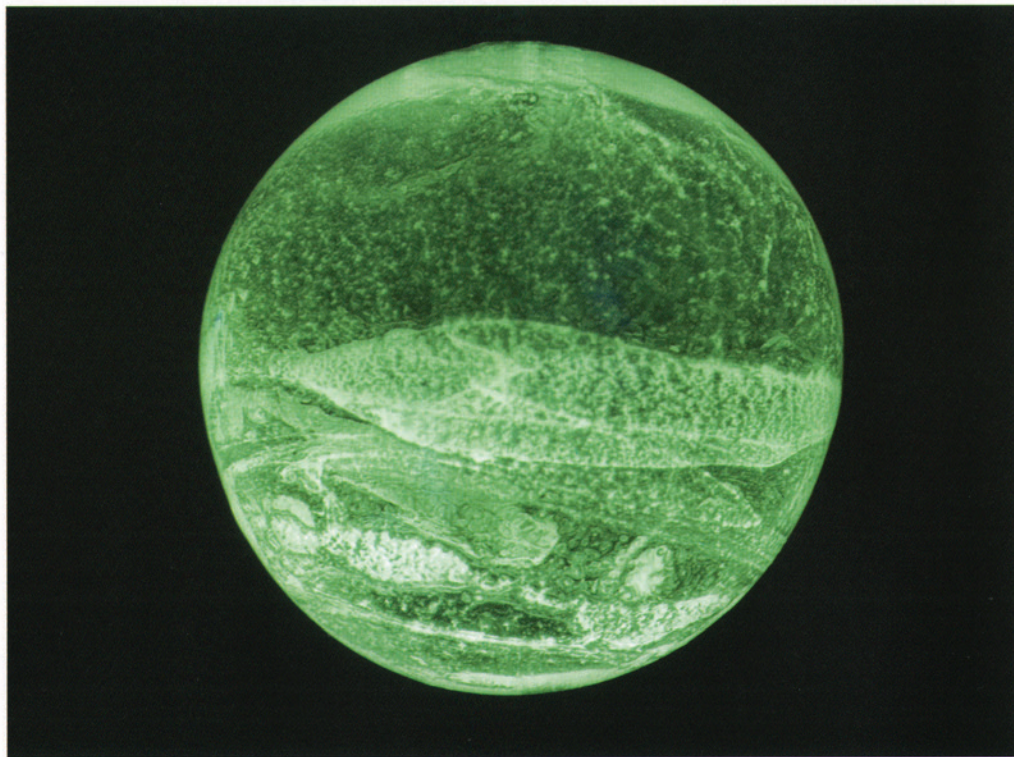
Jane Haskell  
*Windborne,*  
 Installation with rope, light and nails, detail  
 9' x 42' x 22'  
 2006  
 PHOTO: Tim Burak





Jane Haskell  
*Windows of Light,*  
 Neon  
 Logan Airport, Boston, MA  
 17' x 8' x 6" (p. 6)  
 17' x 11' x 6" (p. 7)  
 1991





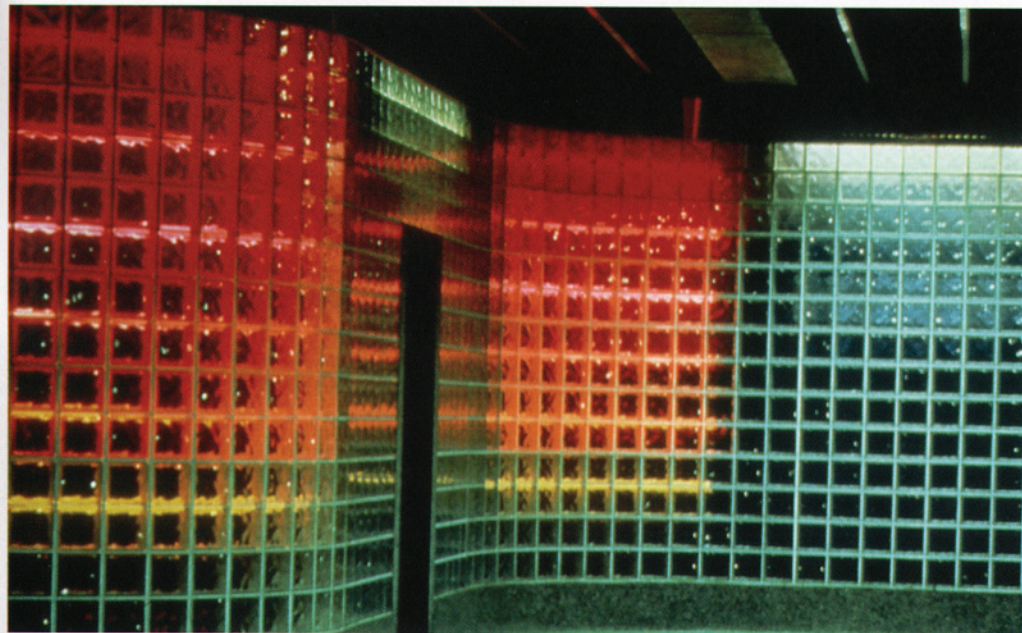
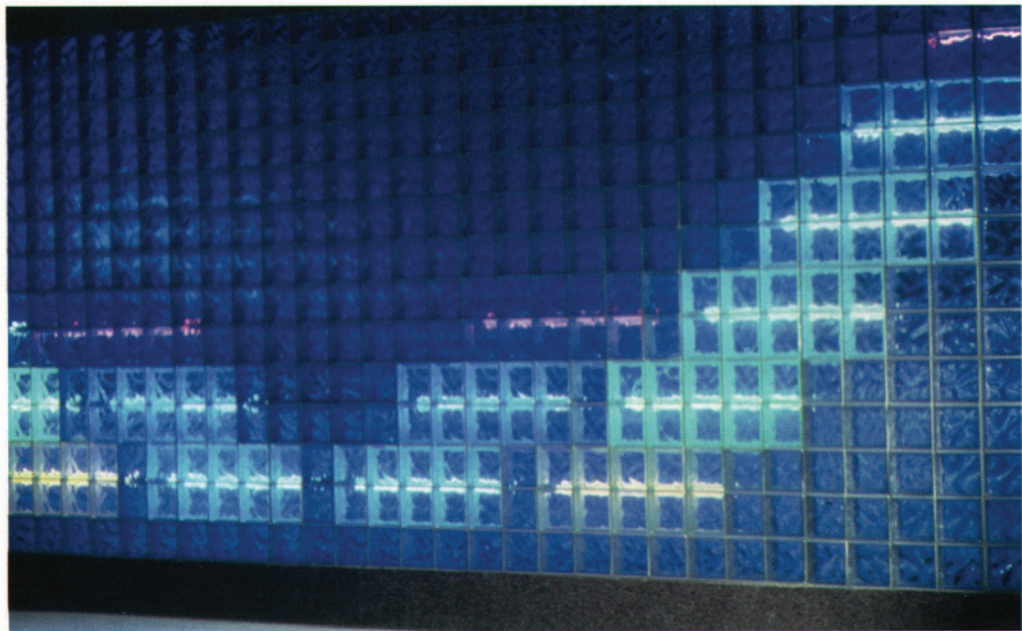
Jane Haskell  
*Edge of Time*,  
 Glass globes installation detail  
 10' x 18' x 24'10"  
 2006  
 PHOTO: Tim Burak

Space takes on a double meaning in this work as her fantasy globes transform the gallery itself. Light appears magically suspended, seemingly out of nowhere, in contrast to previous work where her tubes of light became architectural elements that restructured their setting. This architectural play transforms the first gallery in this exhibition, which is lit with strategically placed fluorescent lamps. This considered placement reminds me of a model included in the modernism exhibition at the Victoria and Albert. Near the beginning of the twentieth century, Bruno Taut, relying on the writings of Paul Scheerbart, combined glass and color in a pavilion to construct a "spiritual utopia" or "earthly paradise" and "orchestrate" human emotions. This progressive thinking came to my mind when I read a passage in Joan Didion's new book *The Year of Magical Thinking*, a moving memoir of how her life and thoughts shifted after the death of her husband. Near the end of the book, she visits St John the Divine where his ashes reside. As she walks toward the exit, she "kept my eyes on the window [the rose window], half blinded by its brilliance but determined to keep my gaze fixed until I caught the moment in which the window as approached seems to explode with light, fill the entire field of vision with blue." This vision is not only perceptual, it is laden with memories for she and Dunne had proposed filling the movie screen with that blue as the end of one of their scripts, a device also found at the end of Derek Jarman's video about his eminent death.

These simultaneously contradictory and complementary examples of light dissolve into a place where light and color become more than just physical qualities, where they become part of the psychic or spiritual illumination hinted at in the words of "Genesis." Jane Haskell's work belongs in that place as well, mixing the scientific with the magical, the spiritual with the concrete, and the present with the past and the future, leaving the viewer freedom to explore any and all of the above.

*Vicky A Clark* is an independent curator in Pittsburgh whose latest exhibition *Figures of Thinking: Convergences in Contemporary Cultures* is currently traveling throughout the US.





Jane Haskell  
*Rivers of Light*,  
 Neon, glass block, aluminium  
 Steel Plaza, Pittsburgh, PA  
 5000 sq ft  
 1985  
 PHOTOS: Clyde Hare



## JANE HASKELL

Jane Haskell grew up close to NYC where the cultural and artistic environment left its indelible mark. She is a graduate of Skidmore College with a degree in Fine Arts. After moving to Pittsburgh in 1949 she attended Samuel Rosenberg's Artists' Workshop and earned her MA in Art History at the University of Pittsburgh. She then taught at Duquesne University for 10 years before resuming a career in painting and sculpture. In 1979 she "discovered" neon, and has continued to work in light over the past three decades.

She has had numerous commissions including The Steel Plaza Subway Station in downtown Pittsburgh, Logan Airport in Boston, MA, and the Fort Lauderdale Airport, FL. Her one-woman exhibitions include AIR Gallery, New York, The Vineyard Studio Gallery, Martha's Vineyard, MA, Concept Gallery, Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Plan for Art, the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, the Westmoreland Museum of American Art in Greensburg, PA and the Jewish Community Center Museum, Pittsburgh.

In 2002 she was invited to create an installation for "Gestures" at the Mattress Factory.

For many years she has exhibited as a member of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh and the Society of Sculptors, winning numerous awards in painting, sculpture and light.

Jane Haskell's work is handled through Concept Art Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA.

### from Jane Haskell

My thanks to Vicky Clark for her catalog essay and consistent interest in my work; to Tim Burak for his tireless efforts to photograph "light"; to Lois and David Fowler for the titles they helped me to pick; to Laura Domenic, George Davis, Daniel Shapiro and Loretta Stanish at the PCA for their prodding and cooperation every step of the way; to Heather McElwee, Chris Clarke and Bryan Frus for their invaluable support at the Pittsburgh Glass Center; to Gern Roberts, graphic designer and Charlie Humphrey, executive director of PF/PCA; to my interns, Jena Robbins and Sun-Young Lee, as well as my assistant, Elizabeth Witzke-Baum; to AAP and SOS, who have given me time and space to expand my vision over many years; to my faithful friends and editors, Jane Arkus and Joan Gordon; and most particularly to my daughters, Patti and Judi, and my grandson Micah, for their continuing love and encouragement; and finally to so many more friends and associates, too numerous to mention here.

Uncredited photos by Jane Haskell



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