

*Despina**Moriana*

ALLISON PASCHKE'S STUDIO OVERLOOKS THE TANGLE OF PLUNGING ASPHALT WHERE ROUTES 195 AND 95 SKIRT THE PROVIDENCE RIVER, WINDING SOUTH TO NARRAGANSETT BAY. A PANORAMIC VIEW TAKES IN A SWATH OF SKY, BRICK, STEEL AND THE WINK OF EVER-MOVING WATER. I ASK WHETHER THE SCENE INFLUENCES HER NEW WORK, A SERIES OF SQUARE COMPOSITIONS BUILT UP OVER TIME IN LAYERS OF PIGMENTED RESIN OVER MYLAR AND MIRRORED ACRYLIC SHEET. SHE ADMITS TO AVOIDING TIME SPENT ADMIRING THE SPECTACULAR VIEW SO THAT SHE CAN BETTER FOCUS ON THE QUIET VOIDS, REFLECTIVE COLOR AND SUBTLE SPACES OF THESE PAINTINGS, WHICH REQUIRE A MEDITATIVE FOCUS TO FULLY ENTER.

## ALLISON PASCHKE

Regardless of her focused will, a hint of the glittering, peripheral realm of reality permeates the paintings' glossy surfaces. Each abstract square composition contains an echo of its surroundings: the eggshell to violet hues of whitewashed wall and ceiling, the amber of well-worn floorboards, the cerulean and slate of coastal Rhode Island's ever changing sky and sea. It's a pleasant revelation. As Paschke noted, "When subtleties are fine, you become more sensitized to your environment."

In the down-to-earth surroundings of 5 Traverse Gallery, Paschke's Minimalist work can exist with less visual noise, a condition that lends itself to the quiet introspection her compositions inspire. As gallery director Jesse Smith observed, "Time flows through Allison's latest work in abundance, giving the viewer a chance to slow down and wonder."

Paschke, formerly a commercial photographer and graphic designer, has folded the physics and precision of her prior disciplines into a formal exploration of light and perceived space through works in ceramics and mixed media. She is known for creating "Portable Pieces," small-scale, box-shaped sculptures that invite handling and exploration. This manipulation is a key to open the realms insinuated within their light-shifting components; as diverse as porcelain, rice paper, mirrored glass and cast resin.

"Silver Light Box" captures and holds ambient light in an enclosure made of cast resin sheets, joined and fitted over a 10"x10" tile of mirrored glass. Wall-mountable, but just as easily freestanding, the piece mimics a light source by virtue of its material properties.

Delicate "Despina," named after an imaginary city in author Italo Calvino's 1972 novel, "Invisible Cities," offers the viewer a window into its interior, split down the center. Constructed simply of rice paper, varnish and pigment, each side of the window, one open, the other closed, trades value with the other from light to dark depending on the direction of the light source. It is this

5 Traverse Gallery  
5 Traverse Street  
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interplay of light, tonal value and space that stills the mind of the viewer.

Paschke's newest work, less physical but similarly proportioned and investigative of spatial shifts, incorporates similar materials, but is focused on what Paschke dubbed the "second-and-a-half dimension...where the work is pictorial, but the process gives it a material presence; pushing [the work further] towards the third dimension."

Influenced in part by Persian miniature paintings, with their invented perspective and ambiguous points of view, Paschke strives to maintain a void in each composition, offering the viewer an opening with which to first enter into the image. Once the mind quiets, subtle line work and edge details emerge, suggesting a room or box rather than a flat, mirrored object.

Where the "Portable Pieces" manipulated light in spaces defined by a neutral palette, this new work pushes the physical properties of color on a different tier of the spectrum. Paschke strives to incorporate brilliant color through the use of gouache and ink mixed with resin, but, true to form, any leading hue is taken back in an effort to maintain the quiet, luminous stillness that is a signature of her artistic intention.

*Meredith Cutler*



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