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GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Richard Wright at Gagosian Gallery

Richard Wright exhibition at Gagosian Gallery in Rome from September 29 to December 18, 2015.



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Wright is best known for his site-specific yet transient works that unite painting with graphic and typographic elements, charging architectural spaces with a fourth dimension of subtle yet extreme optical complexity, and subverting the traditionally static dynamic between painting and viewer. Made directly on the interior surfaces of buildings—at greatly varying scales, in overlooked, interstitial areas as well as on walls and ceilings—his paintings and applied metal-leaf schemes often last only as long as the exhibition.

Wright's paintings are rhythmic structures extracted from things, experiences, artworks, and artifacts. Oscillating between illusion and abstraction, they evince associations with both pure and applied art: from Minimal Art, Renaissance painting, the Russian avant-garde, De Stijl, Abstract Expressionism, and Op Art; to clothing, record covers, commercial art, and porcelain.

Recently, Wright has begun working in leaded glass, exploring both its material and non-material qualities, such as its natural tendency to capture light and lose it again. Echoing the fleeting nature of his wall paintings, the new glass works generate unique drawings and patterns that shift through space according to the passage of light and time.

Working with the York Glaziers Trust, one of the oldest stained-glass conservation studios in Europe, Wright began to experiment with leaded-glass technique in response to a permanent commission for the Tate Britain renovation, The Millbank Project (2011–13). His large arched window with its complex geometric panels in clear glass is now a prominent feature at the Millbank entrance. In a subsequent project at The Modern Institute, Glasgow, intricately figured leaded-glass panels were inserted into the skylights of the otherwise empty space, drawing the eye upward. Throughout the day, the sun traversed the skylights, giving rise to dazzling and ethereal light shows that projected shafts and skeins of pure and palpable energy into the space below.

The new glass works for Gagosian Rome are Wright's most elaborate to date. In the elliptical gallery, he has replaced each of three five-meter-tall, south-facing windows with twelve evenly sized leaded-glass panels. Two of the windows are clear, colorless glass, while in the third he has experimented with color for the first time. Generated from an intensive preparatory process of physical composition that involves drawing and folding on a 1:1 scale, each panel comprises hundreds of handmade geometric glass elements that vary in transparency and texture. Each angled section is framed in lead, building into a field of staggeringly complex rhythms. And through these rhythmic matrices, daylight streams, filling the gallery with its celestial and ephemeral presence.