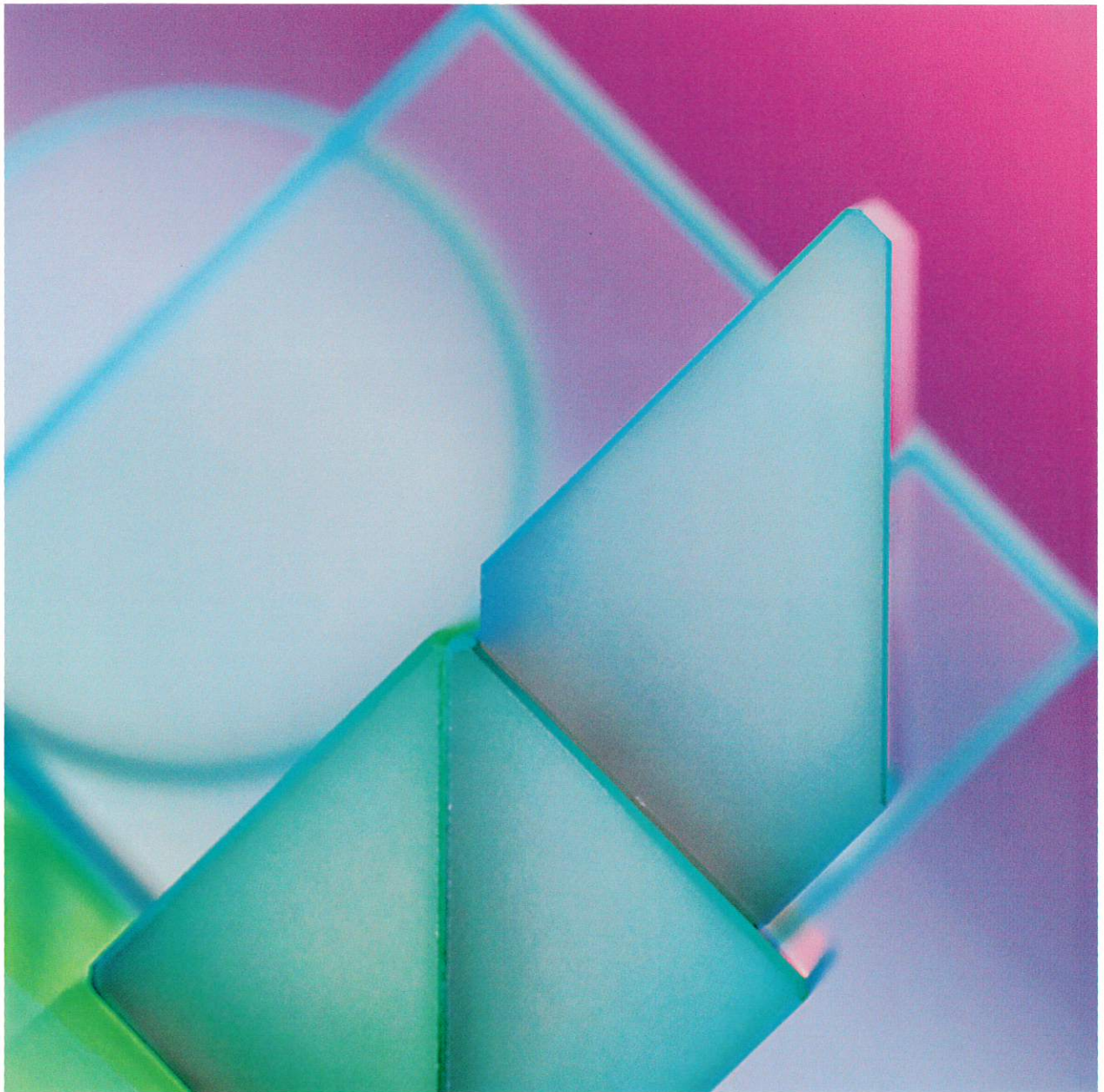


DEBORAH BAY



LIGHT FORMS

FOTO RELEVANCE HOUSTON TEXAS

MARCH 29-MAY 11, 2019

FROM DIRECT LIGHT

TRACY XAVIA KARNER

"The aim is to produce pictorial space from the elemental material of optical creation, from direct light."

— Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision*, 1947

Light Forms is a stunning culmination of artist Deborah Bay's ongoing experiments with light, color and perceptual illusions. In this series, Bay creates a visual realm that has both beauty and intellectual gravitas as she explores the nature of light and its elemental role in human vision as well as photography. Artfully, and playfully, Bay invites viewers to suspend disbelief as they visually enter her saturated pictorial spaces full of sensory delight. Drawing on her studies of vision science and various perceptual devices, Bay deftly constructs seemingly tangible forms in camera. On her work table, she arranges color gels, optical lenses, prisms and other pieces of glass that are less than a few inches in size, and would be hardly worthy of notice on their own. Yet through Bay's macro lens she forms them into mesmerizing vignettes of angles and planes. She juxtaposes various components, using light and perspective to achieve chromatic geometries of substance. In the resulting images, unabashedly joyous colors align into shapes and forms that jokingly pose visual riddles of geometry, probabilities, and other accepted ways of understanding space and time.

The sheer scale of the work is compelling. In *Reflections on the Square*, various sized rectangles appear to both melt into and stand apart from each other. Hard edges contrast with blurred within a striated color palette. *Angles of Pi*, like *The Geometry Lesson*, poses monochrome questions about the relationship between shapes as triangles intersect circles creating depth and shadows. Then, in *Triangle Theorem*, Bay seems to extrapolate on this theme in a resplendent multicolor array of accentuated planes and soft contours. Exploring further, Bay introduces dots that add an intense vibrancy in *Circular Thinking I* and *Circular Thinking II* where

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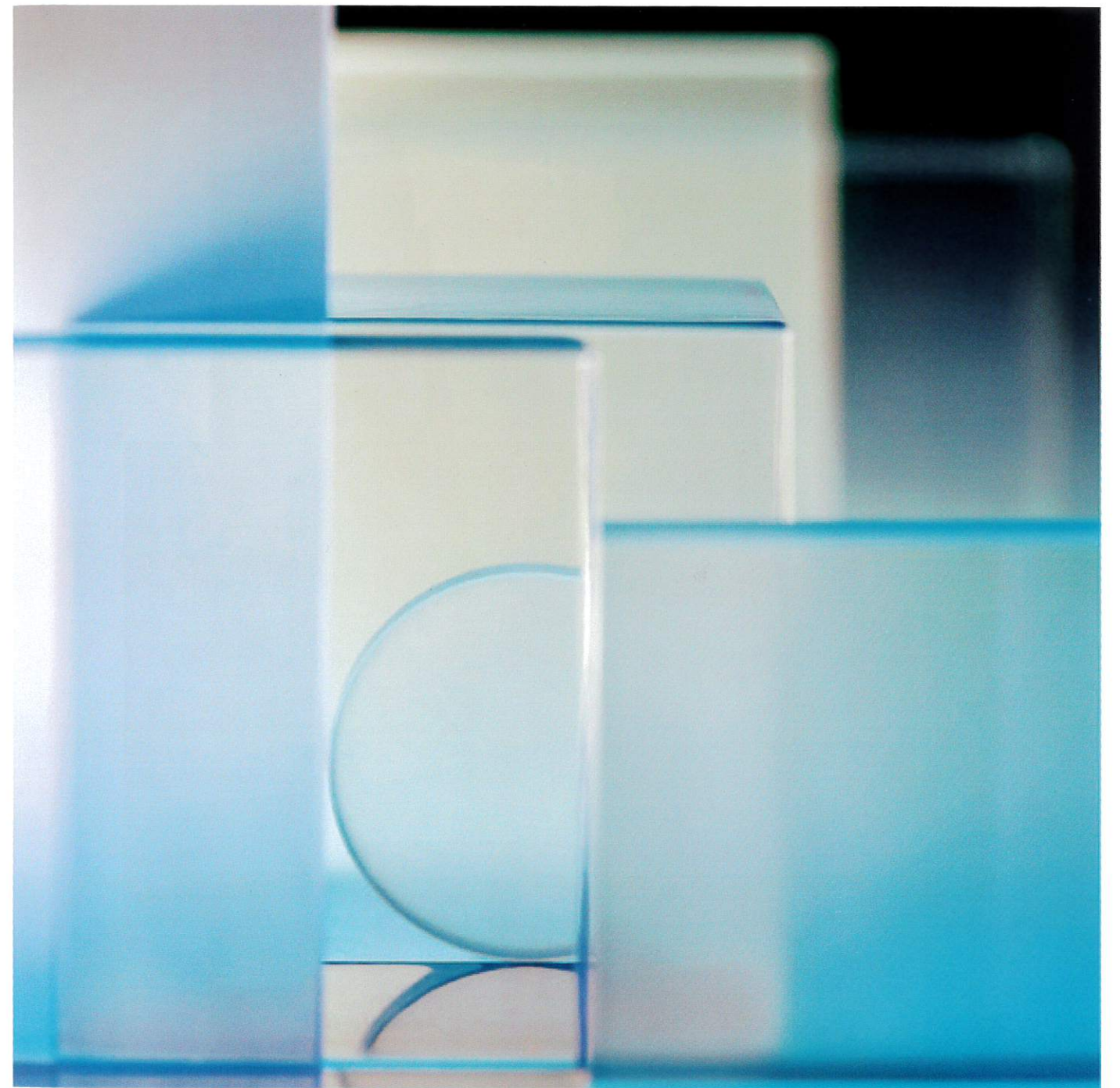
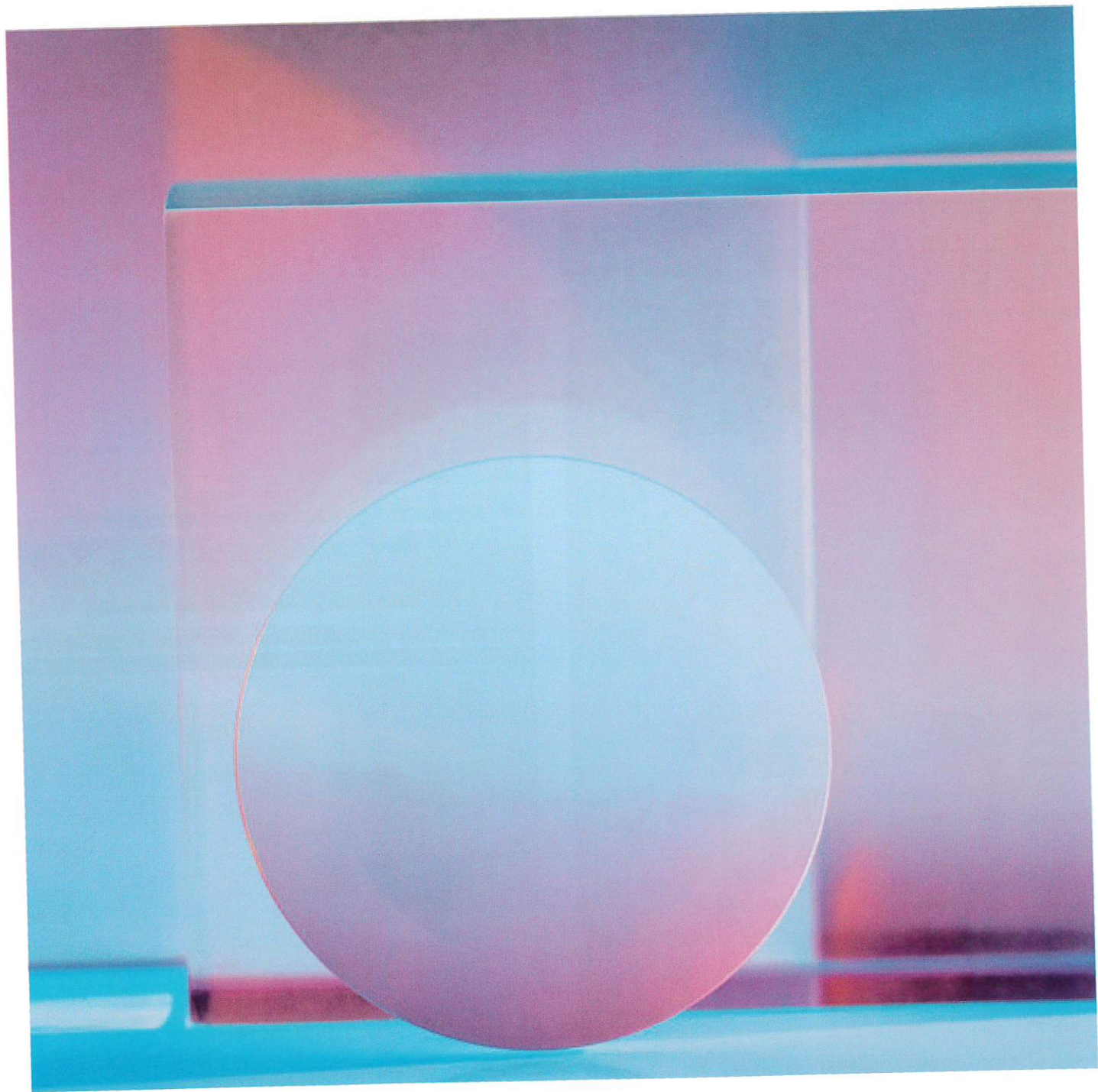
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spheres appear to be emerging from the image. With her diptychs, Bay offers a strong sense of motion as one's eye travels along lines that move from one image to the other. *Linear2Circular* has a landscape feel that harkens back to Bay's early series, *Adagio*, whereas in *Line of Beauty* waves and particles ebb and flow. With each piece, Bay demonstrates her skill in optical illusions and visual perception resulting in a jubilant play of *Light Forms* (2015-18).

In her early work, *Cyberia* (2005-06/2016), Bay joins her interests in metaphor and abstraction together. These images present the dystopic aspects of the digital world in dark hued scenes constructed on various internal computer parts. Arranging figures on memory chips and motherboards, Bay warps perception to pose humorous, yet insightful, commentary about virtual realities. In *Cyberia*, we see the foundations of Bay's process evolving as she arranges miniature elements that both fool and enlighten the viewer. Then, with *Metaphysics 10101* (2007-09), Bay turns her focus to the representational limits of photography by fashioning "warped concepts of time and distance, juxtapositions of scale and abstract geographies charted out of ether." A series of fantasy images, this series shows further development of Bay's interests in constructed worlds as metaphors for larger societal shifts. She follows this with *Adagio* (2010-11), where she uses movement to abstract time and space, creating "a personal interpretation of rural and urban geography." With *Adagio*, Bay employs the mechanics of the camera to reveal patterns of motion across the landscape as a reference to the complexity of human vision.

For her next series, *The Big Bang* (2011-14), Bay leaves her studio to explore a very different process for creating abstractions. Collaborating with law enforcement professionals, Bay asks them fire various types of bullets into bullet-proof Plexiglas. Photographing the resulting Plexiglas panels against a black background, allows Bay to "hint at the creation of new galaxies and stars in the nether reaches of the universe" from the destructive force of the shots fired. Again, Bay is giving the viewer an 'optical creation' that is far beyond a sum of its parts. By adjusting scale and light, key elements of Bay's artistic practice, the stunningly gorgeous images evoke starbursts, diamonds and gemstones floating in deep space.

Throughout her artistic explorations, Bay has skillfully developed ingenious ways of using color, light and scale to create novel pictorial spaces from direct light. In contemplating larger social ideas of sight, movement, space, reality and destruction, Bay creates captivating and insightful visual fictions. In *Light Forms*, we see Bay's propensity to tease, delight and question fully developed. Deborah Bay shows herself to be a master of constructed abstractions, producing 'new vision' like her Bauhaus predecessors; her images sever the real from the visible providing both pleasure and enchantment.



Plane Perspectives

Diptych
15 x 30, edition of 10
24 x 48, edition of 7
40 x 80, edition of 3