



475 Park Avenue at 57th Street, New York, New York 10022
Tel: (212) 355-4545 Fax: (212) 355-4547 www.forumgallery.com

Robert Fishko, *Director*

IRENE RICE PEREIRA

(1907 - 1971)

Three-Dimensional Composition in Blue, c.1940

painted glass and board construction

11 1/2 x 9 1/2 x 1 1/8 inches

artist's shadow box frame:

17 1/8 x 15 7/8 x 1 5/8 inches

signed lower right: "PEREIRA"

signed and dedicated lower right on the board

"To BERENICE with love, I. RICE PEREIRA"



Provenance

The Artist

Berenice Abbott, New York, NY [gift of the artist]

Collection of Bella Fishko, New York, NY [acquired
from the above, 1981]

Forum Gallery, New York, NY

Exhibited

Structure, Forum Gallery, New York, NY, December 8, 2005 – January 14, 2006

The Aesthetic of Change, Forum Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, February – April, 2006, no. 62

Landmarks of 20th Century American Art, Forum Gallery, New York, NY
November 8, 2018 – January 5, 2019

Literature

Brooker, Niccolo. *Landmarks of 20th Century American Art*, Forum Gallery, New York, NY, 2018, pp. 94-97 and p. 95, Illustrated.

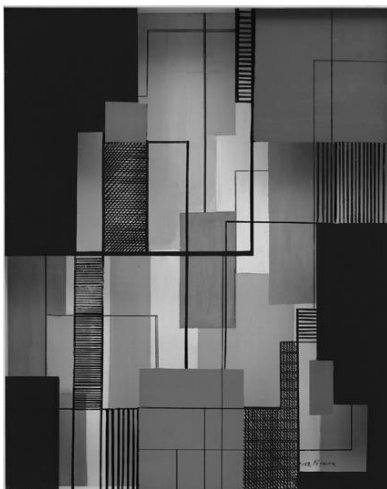
Note

Irene Rice Pereira gifted this work of art to photographer Berenice Abbott, whom she knew from the Artists Union and its magazine *Art Front*, to which Abbott contributed articles and of which Pereira was an avid reader. Other *Art Front* essayists included Meyer Shapiro, Isamu Noguchi, and the art critic Elizabeth McCausland who after 1935 became Abbott's life partner.

Essay

The 1939 World's Fair was held in Flushing Meadows, Queens. The vast complex centered around an enormous three-sided obelisk known as the *Trylon* and a giant hollow globe called the *Perisphere*. The latter symbolized the "infinite," especially in relation to the possibilities which new factory-made materials could offer an American workforce ten years into the Great Depression. On view in the nearby Glass Center were elaborate exhibits featuring the history of glassmaking, all financed by the companies Corning Glass Works, Owens-Illinois Glass Co., and Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co. One fair publication described the setting as "An enchanted palace." Writing in the brochure *Science for the World of Tomorrow*, Gerald Wendt, director of the Fair's Science Department, stressed that glass architecture was healthful for both the individual and society at large. Hence, in what aspired to be a new industrial age, the medium of glass was introduced on the world stage as the 20th Century's romantic emblem for progress. It was during the 1939 World's Fair that Irene Rice Pereira made her first painting on glass.

Pereira was born in the Northern suburbs of Boston, spent her early childhood in Massachusetts, then moved to Brooklyn when she was sixteen years old. She studied literature, wrote poetry, took art classes, and briefly pursued a career in fashion all the while working as a stenographer. She became engrossed in the alternative lifestyle of Greenwich Village and was briefly the girlfriend of its "bohemian king," the novelist Maxwell Bodenheim. In 1927, Pereira enrolled at the Art Students League under the professorship of Jan Matulka, whose undulant nautical motifs she emulated in her paintings of the early 1930s. After visiting Europe in 1931, it was the Purism of Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, the Constructivism of the De Stijl movement, and particularly the values of the Bauhaus School which most influenced Pereira. When she returned to New York her new acquaintances included Burgoyne Diller, Dorothy Dehner, Hilla Rebay and, most notably, the inventive designer/architect and industrial glass enthusiast Frederick Kiesler.



Pereira, *Shadow with Painting*, 1940
(coll Museum of Modern Art, New York)



László Moholy-Nagy, *Light-Room-Modulator*, 1922–30
(1970 replica; Bauhaus-Archives, Berlin)

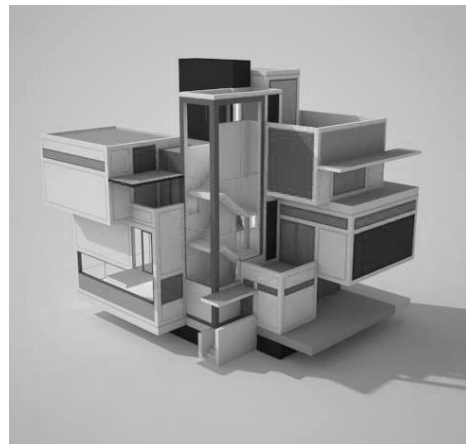
Kiesler had long conceived of a Bauhaus analogous school in New York which would offer coordinated instruction in architecture, painting, sculpture, and the industrial arts. In large part his vision was realized by Pereira in 1935 when, under the sponsorship of the Works Progress Administration, she founded the Design Laboratory, later known as the Laboratory School of Industrial Design. There, unity was stressed between painter and architect, between artist and industrialist, and personal ambition was subordinated to the greater whole.

Thus, by the time Pereira attended the World's Fair and executed her first glass painting (*Untitled*, 1939) she had fully embraced Bauhaus principles. Not only did *Untitled* display her trademark grid-pattern but, equally significant, it was fully colored. In fact, Pereira conceived it for a stained-glass design probably inspired by Josef Albers' nearly monochromatic painting *Colored Window in Red* which was exhibited at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1923 and illustrated in the exhibition's catalogue, a copy of which Pereira owned. Her innovative career in glass had begun.

Pereira painted her glass on the reverse side, as did Bauhaus instructors Kandinsky and Klee in their own experimental efforts with glass. In her initial pieces she was most influenced by the "space modulators" of yet another Bauhaus professor, László Moholy-Nagy. Even in *Shadow with Painting* (1940; only her third glass work) one may already detect her painted rectilinear forms on the recessed cardboard behind the lattice-like surface. The shadows cast by her network of shapes are often only visible by examining the structures at oblique angles. These shadows became more variable and the internal reflections more interlaced as the complexity of her arrangements grew. Soon Pereira worked with layered glass and, always in search of reflective qualities, began incorporating marble dust and painted parchment in her ensembles.



The Glass Center, 1939 World's Fair, Queens, New York



De Stijl design: *Le Maison d'Artiste* by Cornelis van Esteren & Theo van Doesburg, 1923 (reconstructed maquette; coll. The New Institute, Rotterdam)

Pereira transcended everyone in the sophistication of her glass projects, through which she ensured a continuity of light and space.

"Pereira was justly proud of her early, singular accomplishments in art. She felt she had made original contributions to concepts of space, light and optics, particularly in her experimentation with layered glass painting. In her own writings she tried to express these insights through new approaches to philosophical inquiry. {...} Pereira read, studied and absorbed a plethora of facts and ideas, elaborating them over a lifetime into a personal aesthetic and philosophical system. In her search for unity she was both absorbed and plagued by her attempts to reconcile the contrary nature of mind and matter."

(Hill, Martha. *Irene Rice Pereira's Library: A Metaphysical Journey*, exhibition catalogue, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 11)