

Arlene Shechet *Together*

August 22 – 30, 2020
68 Park Place
East Hampton, New York

Left: Arlene Shechet, *Together: 4 a.m.*, 2020 © Arlene Shechet, courtesy Pace Gallery; Right: Arlene Shechet, *Together: Midnight*, 2020 © Arlene Shechet, courtesy Pace Gallery



Pace Gallery is pleased to present *Together*, an exhibition of twelve new ceramic and steel sculptures by New York-based artist Arlene Shechet at the gallery's temporary location in East Hampton. Completed at the artist's home and studio in Woodstock, New York, during the global coronavirus pandemic, *Together* offers a window into the artist's work during these past months of quarantine, exploring how art might continue to serve as a source of visual and spiritual nourishment. The beguiling forms and jewel-toned surfaces of Shechet's sculptures register her ongoing search for the continued possibility of joy, even in times of extraordinary upheaval. The works, on view August 22 – 30, are titled after the hours of the day. Collectively, they allude to the medieval Book of Hours, offering the artist a way of marking time while inventing a new sculptural lexicon of chromatic and textural richness.

Together evolved out of a conscious decision by Shechet to resist the urge to make work that reflected her own darkening mood during the early days of the pandemic. In the artist's words, "Instead of making things that reflected how I felt, I decided to make things that reflected what I needed: color therapy." On a more intimate scale than previous recent works, she marries form with seductively textured applications of saturated color, creating works that allow viewers to access the radiant pleasures of their own bodies—of simply being present in the moment. Activating a visceral response, Shechet's works resemble that of a portrait bust, yet unlike classical sculpture, they have no front or back. The liveliness involved in any encounter with Shechet's sculptures suggests the sense of hope she finds in the continued possibilities and pleasures of communicating through art.

The sculptures in the exhibition build on some of the same technical and aesthetic breakthroughs seen in *Skirts*, her recent debut show with Pace Gallery in New York. *Deep Dive* (2020), a work featured in *Skirts*, employed a unique glazing technique that the artist invented over long hours of trial and error, and which she described as a “once in a lifetime” discovery. The works in *Together* attempt to build upon the lessons learned through this technically-demanding method of glazing, which produces a thickly layered, densely textured surface with a wide spectrum of coloristic possibilities. Color is an integral part of Arlene’s work; her new show hones into this particular aspect with intensity, as each piece is a consolidation of colors that burst with life. Through striking glazes, Shechet combines bold and effusive color combinations with a complex language of sculptural forms that she has been gradually developing over a long period of time.

The way Shechet’s ceramic bodies exist in space is completed through their cantilevered postures on colored steel supports. These painted and powder-coated supports are essential to the works, expanding beyond a structural role and serving as a further reflection of Shechet’s merging of color and form through their intentional hues and finishes. Each supporting surface is as carefully considered as the artist’s glazed surfaces, and in all cases some part of the ceramic form is harnessed by the structural support, while another part is set free from the colored steel.

Highlights from the series include *Together: 7.a.m.* (2020), the first work that Shechet completed, whose thick layer of neon orange glaze is gilded with an iridescent sheen of chartreuse, suggesting the colors from the artist’s moss garden in Woodstock. Similarly vibrant, *Together: 5.p.m.* (2020) resembles an organ excised from an unknown or alien body, its electric yellow glaze resembling pollen flocking, while a series of orifices display the unknown darkness in the work’s interior. All of Shechet’s works are hollow, possessing one or more internal spaces and visible cavities, which contrast with their velvet exteriors.

In the past, Shechet has resisted thinking about her sculptures as belonging to a series or body of work. The cohesive qualities of the works in *Together* emerged organically through the course of her experimentation in the studio following a long, fallow period of inactivity during the early months of the pandemic. The titles are evocative, having suggested themselves only after the works’ completion, and as such do not represent any kind of chronology for their making. Like time itself, the artworks in *Together* are at once abstract and concrete. While they came into a coherent series over the course of recent months, they remain anchored within a longer arc of artistic development that runs through the whole of Shechet’s practice as an ongoing process of discovery and invention.

On view until 2021 is the Whitney Museum’s exhibition *Making Knowing: Craft in Art*, which also features sculptural works by Shechet and was closed temporarily due to COVID-19. Exact dates for *Making Knowing* are to be confirmed.

Arlene Shechet (b. New York) is a multidisciplinary sculptor living and working in New York City and the Hudson Valley. A major, critically acclaimed survey of her work, *All At Once*, took place at The Institute of

Contemporary Art, Boston, in 2015. Her work also includes historical museum installations, such as *Porcelain, No Simple Matter: Arlene Shechet and the Arnhold Collection* at The Frick Collection, New York (2016) and *From Here On Now* at The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., (2016). She has additionally created ambitious, large-scale public projects such as *Full Steam Ahead* (2018) at Madison Square Park in New York and received numerous awards, including a John S. Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship Award (2004), the Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant (2010), and the 2016 CAA Artist Award for Distinguished Body of Work. Her work is held in many distinguished public collections, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; CCS Bard Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; The Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Jewish Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

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