

JENE HIGHSTEIN

American, 1942–2013

Black Sphere

1976

Painted cement over steel

Donated to the University by Betsy and Andy Rosenfield in honor of Lindy and Edwin Bergman (former Chairman of the Board of Trustees)

Jene Highstein's *Black Sphere* is a lesson in perception. We see it as a perfect geometrical globe, even though the sculpture's base actually flattens the bottom—and even though we know that nothing, especially hand-sculpted form, is an ideal sphere. At a glance, we perceive the sphere as all black. But the sphere is Orwellian, with some parts more black than other parts. When bright light bounces off the surface, we perceive a silvery white color. Rounding out our perceptual experience is the smoothness of the sphere. This too crumbles under close examination. No part of the sphere is as smooth as a freshly laid road or plaster wall. Running our hand over the surface, we feel the unevenness that our vision smooths over. Altogether, the sphere reminds us that we are not sensory automatons. We are biological beings with perceptual systems just good enough to allow us to survive through evolutionary time. With *Black Sphere*, Highstein hit our perceptual sweet spots to render a smooth-black-orb experience that exists only in our minds.

Peggy Mason
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monochrome multitudes

Smart Museum of Art

