

Martha Jungwirth

Fergus McCaffrey Tokyo

April 4 – June 13, 2020

Fergus McCaffrey is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of paintings by Viennese artist Martha Jungwirth (b. 1940), on view at the gallery's Tokyo location. The presentation focuses on Jungwirth's most recent series of oil paintings, exemplifying her singular exploration of color, movement, and abstraction.

Over her six decade career, Jungwirth has drawn upon what she terms conceptual "pretexts"—personal encounters with manifold external sources and models that inform her works at the outset. Impressions from her travels, Greek mythology, the appearances of friends and companions, as well as contemporary political events mingle and merge together with mythical or universal subject matter. Many of the works in this exhibition are drawn from her *Delos* series, based on her summers spent in Greece. A selection of the artist's works on board take influence from a recent trip to Taiwan—a portrait of a 12th century emperor from the Song Dynasty hangs in her studio, his red robes clearly inspiring her choice of color palette. In others, particular references are clarified in titles such as *Head* and *Mountain*, although these forms only subtly, partially seem to emerge from the composition in their apparent state of continual transformation. Jungwirth's palette is difficult to name, touched by rich flashes of color and form, and suffused with the evident tactility of her gestural movements. Filled with her quintessentially vibrant brushstrokes, smudges, drags, and lines, this body of work lives in Jungwirth's ever-morphing zone of pure invention. At once between speech and before speech, her work lingers beyond the reducible or interpretable.



Jungwirth has held a singular role in postwar Austrian art history since the beginning of her career. While the Austrian art of the 1960s and '70s was constrained by the dominant rationalism of Minimal and Conceptual frameworks, at the same time as the shocking, hyper-masculine performances of the Viennese Actionists gained adherence, Jungwirth set out on her own extraordinary path. Pursuing and questioning the perceptual zone that exists before the formation of a recognizable image, Jungwirth's visceral use of color and gesture on paper directly countered the intellectual context of her



contemporaries, and challenged the expectations of women artists prevalent in Vienna's conventional culture during this time. Jungwirth entered into a highly independent process, arriving at a method that she describes as "senso-motoric," in her own words seeking to return to a mode of art-making "before spoken language" and "before memory," even "before Euclid where the straight lines meet at the vanishing point."¹

Jungwirth's process is a direct rhythm involving the body. Recognizing the double illusions of an artist's control and a viewer's interpretation, she wishes to precede the possibility of possession that visual consumption poses. Jungwirth employs watercolor and oil paint on paper, knowing that her transparent

¹ Martha Jungwirth, "the ape in me," originally published in *Protokolle: Zeitschrift für Literatur und Kunst*, 1988.



mediums and absorbent surfaces remove any ability to subtract or correct marks once they are made. Oscillating between the apparently accidental and deliberate, she remains close to the pure states of constant flux and random occurrence in her works, moving beyond the commodified forms of representation and abstraction. The sensual intensity of color in her recent work recalls deeply emotional associations to nature, blood, love, glimmering light, decaying shadow, or time, and yet this palette seeps well beyond its physical appearance into a presence behind the eyes and before thought, much like a flash of memory in the chest.

Despite early acclaim for the artist's gestural abstract-figurative paintings, Jungwirth only recently came to international recognition in 2010 through a collection presentation at the Essl Museum curated by Albert Oehlen. In 2014, a retrospective of her work was held at the Kunsthalle Krems, and in 2018, she received the Oskar Kokoschka Prize—the highest distinction for an Austrian artist—accompanied by an extensive solo exhibition at the Albertina in Vienna. This will be Jungwirth's third exhibition with the gallery, and her first in Tokyo.

About Fergus McCaffrey

Founded in 2006, Fergus McCaffrey is internationally recognized for its groundbreaking role in promoting the work of postwar Japanese artists such as Sadamasa Motonaga, Kazuo Shiraga and Jiro Takamatsu. The gallery also exhibits the work of emerging and seminal Western artists including Marcia Hafif, Birgit Jürgenssen, Richard Nonas, Sigmar Polke, and Carol Rama. In keeping with the gallery's commitment to Japanese art and culture, McCaffrey opened its Tokyo outpost in March 2018 with an exhibition of paintings by Robert Ryman. The gallery's 2020 program features solo exhibitions by Sadamasa Motonaga, Martha Jungwirth, and Richard Serra, among others.

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Note to Visitors

In compliance with the government's health guidelines regarding social distancing, and to promote and protect the safety and well-being of our staff, artists, and community, visitors are asked to wear masks and sanitize hands before entering the gallery, contact-less temperature will be taken upon entrance, and a capacity of four visitors will be allowed at one time. We request that you please refrain from visiting the gallery if you have symptoms such as a fever or cough.

Images:

1. Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled (from the series 'Delos')*, 2019. Oil on paperboard, 17 1/4 x 14 7/8 inches (43.8 x 37.8 cm) © Martha Jungwirth
2. Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2019. Oil on paperboard, 9 7/8 x 15 inches (25 x 38.2 cm) © Martha Jungwirth
3. Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2018–19. Oil on paperboard mounted to canvas, 39 3/8 x 27 1/2 inches (100 x 70 cm) © Martha Jungwirth

Map (Omotesando station A3 exit):

