

**Martha Jungwirth**  
**Fergus McCaffrey St. Barth**

**November 29, 2019 – February 22, 2020**

Fergus McCaffrey is pleased to announce the reopening of the gallery's St. Barth location with a solo exhibition of works by Viennese artist Martha Jungwirth (b. 1940), on view from November 29, 2019 through February 22, 2020. Marking the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery since her North American debut earlier in 2019, the presentation features eight watercolors from the artist's 1995 *Cyclades* series, spotlighting the distinct approach to coloration, abstraction, and resistance to interpretation that is characteristic of her practice.

Since the onset of her career six decades ago, Jungwirth has held a singular role in postwar Austrian art history. During a time when the neat, constrained rationalism of Minimal and Conceptual art dominated the Austrian art scene of the 1960s and '70s, and as the shocking, hyper-masculine performances of the Viennese Actionists gained adherence, Jungwirth began her own extraordinary path. As she found her own way through a deep, ongoing questioning of what constitutes an image, Jungwirth's visceral use of color and gesture on paper directly countered her context and challenged expectations of women artists prevalent in Vienna's conservative culture at the time. Through this highly independent process, Jungwirth came to a method that she describes as "senso-motoric," seeking to return to a mode of art making that is, in her own words: "before spoken language" and "before Euclid where the straight lines meet at the vanishing point"—"not thinking while painting."<sup>1</sup>



Recognizing that control is an illusion, Jungwirth employed watercolor and oil paint on paper, knowing that her transparent mediums and absorbent surfaces would remove the ability to subtract or correct marks made. Oscillating between gesturally abstract and formal compositions, she sought to stay true to a state of constant flux and random occurrence, moving beyond the commodified forms of representation and abstraction. Jungwirth's is a direct action involving the body, occasioning tactile gestures that might appear purely accidental, and yet elsewhere deliberate—remaining in a persistently impossible state *between* so as to extend the viewer's own exploration of her work, beyond naming or possession.



Encounters with external sources, patterns, or models inform each of Jungwirth's works at the outset—what she calls a conceptual "pretext." Jungwirth derives these moments from manifold sources: impressions from her travels, the figures of friends and companions, the work of other artists, Greek mythology, and contemporary political events. These pretexts are not singular. Rather, Jungwirth's mythical or universal subject matter mingle and merge together, suffused with personal, emotional experience. Her *Cyclades* series are inspired by the summers Jungwirth spent in Greece—as reflected in the titles of works *Paros* and *Naxos*—with their

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

quintessentially vibrant brushstrokes, splatters, drags, scribbles, and scrapes made on lined turn-of-the-century accounting ledgers that she collected over the years. In the ever-morphing zone of pure invention, at once between speech and before speech, her work is never easily reducible.

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 exhibition is the first to inaugurate the gallery's new St. Barth outpost, which closed temporarily due to effects from the 2016 hurricanes.

#### **About Fergus McCaffrey**

Founded in 2006, Fergus McCaffrey represents an increasingly global group of post-war and contemporary artists from the United States, Europe, and Japan. For over a decade, the gallery has developed a multifaceted program, representing over 24 artists and estates worldwide. Internationally recognized for its promotion of postwar Japanese and seminal western artists, Fergus McCaffrey has locations in New York, Tokyo, and St. Barth.

Located along the island's southeastern Route de Grand Fond, Fergus McCaffrey St. Barth will resume showcasing both innovative, historical exhibitions and new works from the gallery's growing stable of international artists. The re-opening of its third outpost will further the gallery's commitment to promoting the work of post-war Japanese, and established and emerging Western artists.

#### **For press inquiries, please contact:**

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#### **Hours:**

10:00 – 13:00; closed Wednesday and Saturday

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#### **Images:**

1. Martha Jungwirth, *Naxos (from the series 'Cyclades')*, 1995. Watercolor on antique ledger paper, 24 1/8 x 18 inches (61.3 x 45.5 cm) © Martha Jungwirth
2. Martha Jungwirth, *Paros (from the series 'Cyclades')*, 1995. Watercolor on antique ledger paper 24 1/8 x 36 inches (61.3 x 91.3 cm) © Martha Jungwirth