

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Julie Mehretu: “*About the space of half an hour*”
Monday, November 2 - Wednesday, December 23, 2020

“*We clamor for the right of opacity for everyone.*” --Edouard Glissant

Marian Goodman Gallery is delighted to announce *about the space of half an hour*, a solo exhibition of new work by Julie Mehretu that will open on Monday, November 2nd and be on view through Wednesday, December 23rd, 2020. This will be the third solo exhibition of the artist at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. The show coincides with her ongoing retrospective survey from 1996 to the present, which was shown first at LACMA, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, and is currently on view at The High Museum in Atlanta, prior to traveling to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and to The Walker Museum of Art in Minneapolis.

Referencing the book of Revelation and presaging the threshold of foreboding silence in heaven after the breaking of the seventh seal, *about the space of half an hour* will include new paintings completed over the past year. Comprised of two distinct bodies of work, the first cycle of works was initiated prior to the pandemic, and the second cycle was made during the shutdown, in quarantine in upstate New York at Denniston Hill – an artist collective and residency program founded by Mehretu, Paul Pfeiffer and Lawrence Chua as a site for interdisciplinary creation, interrogation and debate.

Mehretu’s new works reimagine abstraction and her language of gestural marks in an epic theater of saturated color. Providing vistas of clarity and opacity, transparency and impenetrability, Mehretu builds her compositions with blurs of light and contour. Navigating disruption and cohesion through motion and gravity – swirls, marks, streaks, halftone patterns, and glitchy computer shapes – Mehretu punctuates her paintings with vibrant color, indenting recesses’ and opaque intervals of space and time below.

Presented in the North Gallery, the suite of seven paintings created during the Covid shutdown is embodied by emergent images whose traces are both metaphoric and visible. Translucent remains hover near the surface, as if a residue of this moment, a remnant of what is submerged within. The latter, the underlying source materials that initiate the works, are furtive and dynamic, metamorphosing into vulnerable but prophetic forms that activate the canvas’s ground to surface layers through time. In her intuitive calibration of these escalating strata, Mehretu employs multiple techniques to conjure ephemeral areas of imagination, liberation, haunting, mourning and rest, inviting the viewer to merge and interact in the experience.

Beginning with a photographic image as a point of departure, whose original is blurred and erased, Mehretu adds layer upon layer in a temporal process of screen print, ink, acrylic, and drawing, using paint, airbrush, sandpaper and erasure to realize and respond to the potential of an image. Implicit is our invitation to participate as witnesses to evidence and catastrophes of our time, to conceive of new possibilities. Alluding to the mediation of reality that mutates in and perpetrates our collective consciousness, each canvas resonates with subjects, from a flickering of events moving across our psychological screens, to migration, dispossession, and global phenomena. These volatile truths channel the imagination, revealing a piercing engagement through digital abstraction, which provides a space for investigation, autonomy, and invention. Other images abound, portals to memory and history, as well as potentialities of other paths forward.

The group of monumental paintings on view in the North Gallery Viewing Room, which continue into the South Gallery, was created over the past two years and coincided with the most recent work in Mehretu’s

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current retrospective. Sweeping in scale, they contain a dynamic choreography of movement and swaths of pulsating color, evoking arenas of cataclysmic events. Subliminal subjects subconsciously call to mind a present trauma. Proliferating below the surface, they erupt in a riot of hues that are both exuberant and menacing. From the migration crisis, to global warming and California wildfires; ecological havoc and Hurricane Irma; from Charlottesville and the rise of the right in international politics, to incongruous celebrations of fascism and cultural ruin, Mehretu's work is fueled by social concerns of our moment. Reaching beyond the present, her references range from the historic and literary to the biblical, as in the systemic maelstrom of mechanized urban space and uprising in *Orient (after D Cherry, post Irma and summer)*; the summoning of light against sutured black shadows in *A Mercy (after T.Morrison)*; or the dystopian flames of *Hineni II*, a reference to the book of Genesis and to prayers of sacrifice and humility.

In the Third Floor Viewing Room, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, a suite of four new etchings from 2020, will be shown for the first time. Ambitious in scale beyond the confines of traditional printmaking, they display the visual complexity of her recent practice, containing gestures, marks, glyphs and depth of color reminiscent of her paintings. Published by Niels Borch Jensen, these works reiterate the parity between drawing, painting and print making as of the utmost importance to the artist.

Mehretu's touring retrospective which has recently opened at The High Museum, Atlanta, is in its second venue following the inaugural exhibition at LACMA, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, which opened in November 2019. It will remain on view in Atlanta through January 31, 2021. A major catalogue was published by Prestel in 2019 to accompany the exhibition. The retrospective will also travel to The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, opening in March 2021, and to The Walker Museum of Art, Minneapolis. Julie Mehretu's work has been exhibited extensively in museums and biennials including at the Carnegie International (2004–05), Sydney Biennial (2006), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2010), dOCUMENTA (13) (2012), Sharjah Biennial (2015), Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto, Portugal (2017), Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge, UK (2019); and the 58th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia (2019).

Named recently as one of the 100 most influential people of 2020 by Time Magazine, Julie Mehretu, (b. 1970, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) lives and works in New York City. She received a B.A. from Kalamazoo College, Michigan, studied at the University Cheik Anta Diop, Dakar Senegal, and received a Master's of Fine Art with honors from The Rhode Island School of Design in 1997. She has since received many prestigious awards including the MacArthur Fellowship in 2005, the U.S. Department of State Medal of Arts Award in 2015, and the Liberty Award for Artistic Leadership, New York in 2018. In 2017, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Letters.

We invite you to visit the exhibition *about the space of half an hour* which will be on view from November 2 onwards. Visitors are able to view the exhibition by appointment, which can be scheduled on our website. For further information, please refer to our website at mariangoodman.com or call the Gallery at 212 977 7160.

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