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Press Release

Mark Bradford Masses and Movements

19 July – 31 October

Inaugural exhibition at Hauser & Wirth Menorca



Mark Bradford's forthcoming exhibition, 'Masses and Movements', inaugurates the gallery's newest location on Isla del Rey in the port of Mahon in Menorca. For his first exhibition in Spain the artist will present an installation of globe sculptures, two site-specific wall paintings, and a suite of new canvases based on a sixteenth-century map of the world thought to feature the first use of the name 'America' in print. Opening 19 July, 'Masses and Movements' will extend across seven gallery spaces. Integral to the exhibition is a new social engagement project that Bradford is collaborating on to bring arts education to immigrant communities and a display that highlights the global immigration crisis. Continuing his career-long exploration of the systems that oppress marginalised populations, Bradford's newest exhibition features work rich in both formal and allegorical complexity, reasserting the importance of abstraction to understand the world we live in and confirming his place among the most important artists working today.

Mark Bradford says: 'As businesses and schools closed and as countries shut their borders in 2020, everyone began to understand the power embedded in the lines on our maps. We think maps are there to give us a sense of security with regard to place, but it's amazing how fast that changed.'

Throughout his career, Bradford has employed his signature style of archaeological abstraction to explore maps of the world of all different kinds, unpacking social and political systems that objectify and marginalise

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vulnerable populations. Using maps of cities, neighbourhoods, public housing developments, and trade routes, the artist has unpacked the embedded biases that define the barriers and boundaries we inhabit, revealing a world predetermined by power structures. For 'Masses and Movements', Bradford inverts this, instead reaching for a source image many times removed from a realistic representation of the world.

In the original image, the Waldseemüller map from 1507, Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, the northern coast of Africa, and the Middle East are well-defined and recognisable to the modern eye. Approaching the edges, angular shapes represent masses of land without definition, unexplored regions yet to be drawn and divided by European colonial powers. Latin texts, illustrations of human figures, and angelic personifications of trade winds fill the margins lending fantastical overtones to the depiction of the world. Across the Atlantic Ocean, 'America' is printed over what would later become known as Brazil.

Beginning with fragments of this map, Bradford applied caulk in expressive gestures that drip and run across the surface. Various types of paper add layers of colour, and bleach transforms the materials into a nuance of shades and textures. The artist then processed the surfaces using his signature techniques of sanding, scraping, tearing, and gouging through the accumulated layers of materials, excavating fossilised mythologies that feel familiar yet unrecognisable. Markings reminiscent of scrimshawed bones, vast interconnected lines, and half-recognisable shapes and figures repeat across the canvases in various placements and orientations.

The visual language evokes multiple narratives that conjure images of a world in motion: continental drift, animal migrations, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, or the displacement of indigenous peoples. Below the layers of accumulated material, Bradford uncovers unstable narratives of European exploration rooted in myth. Neglected on the surface of this map are the stories of those adversely impacted by the legacy of these colonial histories.

Suspended from the ceiling in a straight line in the centre of an adjacent gallery, seven globe sculptures of increasing sizes occupy the space, pushing visitors to the periphery. Black paper oceans surround crumpled masses of oxidised paper in the shapes of continents, harkening back to ancient fears of the sea as an unknowable and untameable 'other'. Differing in sizes, the globes represent divergent experiences of a planet prearranged by inequitable access to power and privilege.

Mark Bradford says: 'Maps have always been shady. So much of what we understand about landmasses comes from cartographers and their relationships to power, and the need to always keep a place for Europe at the centre of history. I'm interested in the potential for abstraction to pull the stories from the margins onto the pages of that history.'

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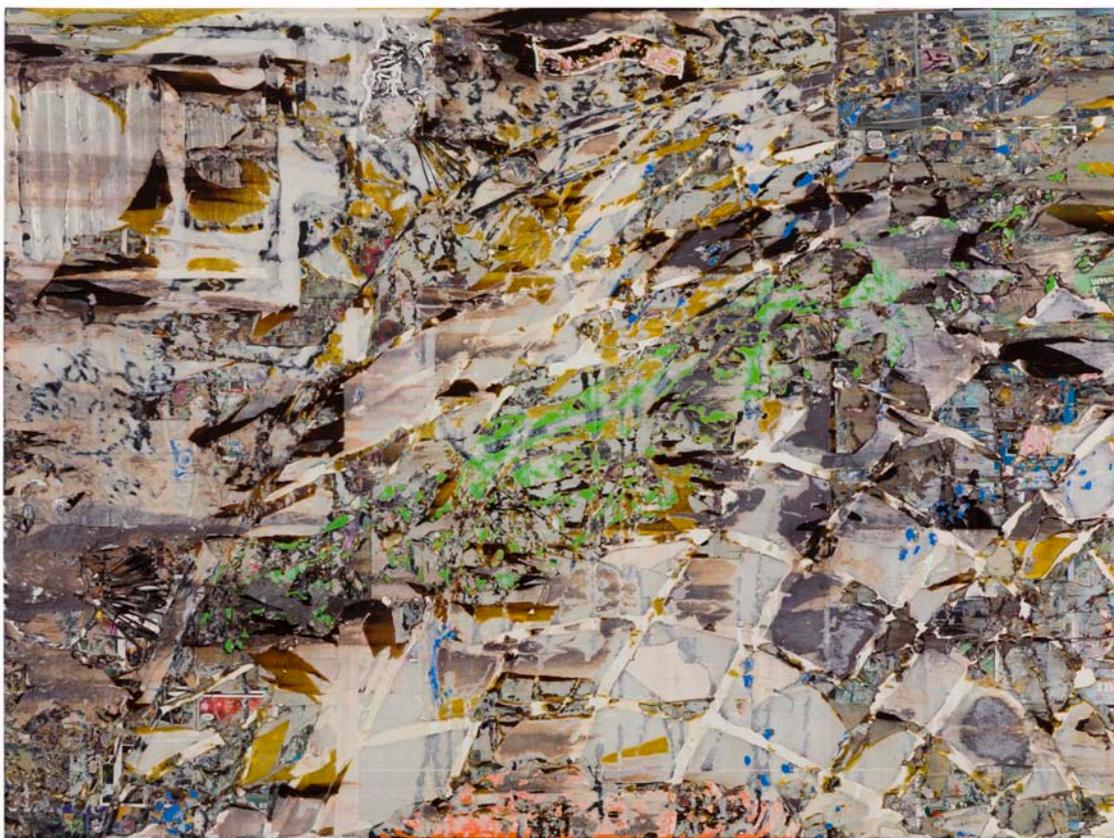
The final room in 'Masses and Movements' is dedicated to a display of art's kinetic potential to centre marginalised stories, created in collaboration with student volunteers from Escola d'Art de Menorca. Stacks of posters that visitors are invited to take feature advertisements for low interest home loans, foreclosure abeyance services, or cash for homes that Bradford collected around Los Angeles superimposed over images of deserts, oceans, border walls, and coastlines. In reference to Felix Gonzalez-Torres's 'Untitled (Death by Gun)' from 1990, the installation of posters presents motivations for migration in the form of the financial stress represented by the merchant poster, alongside images of landscapes familiar to those seeking to cross borders by land or by sea. Four site-specific wall drawings of maps, on the other hand, turn attention to the broader context and highlight the vast, overwhelming and interconnected nature of today's global immigration crisis, and the history of the movement of masses of people around the globe.

About the artist

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Mark Bradford (b. 1961) is best known for his large-scale paintings that explore the socio-political potential of abstraction through a rigorous approach to painting. Bradford's ongoing practice examines political and environmental conditions that continue to disproportionately affect the most marginalised populations. Within both historical and contemporary frameworks, Bradford has created a significant body of work that elucidates these issues, such as the AIDS epidemic, the misrepresentation and fear of queer identity, and systemic, institutionalised racism in America.

Bradford has been widely exhibited internationally and is the recipient of numerous awards including the U.S. Department of State's Medal of Arts in 2014, his appointment as a National Academician in 2013, and a MacArthur Fellowship Award in 2009. In 2017, Bradford represented the US at the 57th Venice Biennale with 'Tomorrow Is Another Day.' Public commissions of his work include 'Pickett's Charge,' a monumental, site-specific installation for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, and 'We The People,' a site-specific work for the new US Embassy in London that comprises 32 panels featuring select text from the United States Constitution.

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Hauser & Wirth Menorca

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www.hauserwirth.com

Caption and courtesy information:

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Mark Bradford, 2021
Photo: Brandon Hicks

Mark Bradford
The Bottom of the Revolution
2021
Mixed media on canvas
137 x 335 cm / 54 x 132 in.
Photo: Joshua White / JWPictures

Mark Bradford
Queen's Dragon
2021
Mixed media on canvas
152 x 122 cm / 60 x 48 inches
Photo: Joshua White / JWPictures

Mark Bradford
Sugar Factory
2021
Mixed media on canvas
183 x 244 cm / 72 x 96 in.
Photo: Joshua White / JWPictures