

GAGOSIAN

Gagosian to Present Paintings by Helen Marden in Athens

Agape/Αγάπη Opens on September 21, 2023



Helen Marden, *Hydra Viper*, 2019, resin, powdered paint, twigs, and shells on linen, 50 × 32 inches (127 × 81.3 cm) © 2023 Helen Marden/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Rob McKeever

[Download Press Images](#)

ATHENS, September 14, 2023—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Agape/Αγάπη*, an exhibition of paintings by Helen Marden opening on September 21, 2023. Marden's third solo exhibition with the gallery and her first in Athens, it features early works painted in her studio in Hydra, Greece, alongside a new series of paintings that reaffirms her commitment to bold gesture and color.

To make her new paintings, Marden begins by applying a liquid resin to the canvas. As the medium hardens, she adds powdered pigments, working with improvisational immediacy to paint with pure, saturated hues. Defying the lingering conception that color is a frivolous or secondary concern for artists—women artists in particular—Marden's daring palette is central to her work. Her vivid compositions are linked by flowing skeins, their sinuous overlapping shapes defined by both clear contours and delicately feathered edges. Incorporated within the surface of selected paintings are objects such as feathers, shells, twigs, and pieces of sea glass—elements from nature that are fragile and tough, vital and transformative.

Marden's paintings are informed by her engagement with contemporary abstraction, her immersion in nature, and her fascination with Greek and other cultural traditions. Since 1971, she has maintained a home on the Aegean island of Hydra, and it was here that she resumed painting in earnest following

a hiatus in her art making, making a body of work represented in *Agape/Αγάπη* by two paintings from 1980. These early works reveal a transformation in her approach, from an abstraction of the rugged and pastoral nature of the Grecian landscape to a distillation of its topography into biomorphic shapes.

Though Marden's new works were produced in her studio in Tivoli, New York, their oceanic blues and wine-red hues recall the seascapes and landscapes of Greece. Their dramatic spontaneity reflects the artist's affinity for the existential approaches to art making adopted by figures such as Henri Michaux and Lucio Fontana, who explored the radical possibilities of abstraction. With bright colors emerging from dark grounds, Marden's new paintings prompt an intensity of engagement with the senses, while their underlying expressions are of enduring creativity and love in the face of life's pleasures and travails.

Fundamentally nonobjective in their emphasis on abstract form and color, these works imply figurative presence both in their size, which approaches human scale, and in their compositions, which suggest the poise and balance of bodies. The *Sanuk* series (2023) is a group of circular paintings affixed with feathers and adorned with drips of ink, evoking the glow of the sun and the waxen wings of Icarus. A selection of watercolors in brilliant hues and varied gestural application complements the larger paintings.

The title of *Agape/Αγάπη* signifies love that endures unconditionally, expressing the commitment that Helen Marden brought to her relationship with Brice Marden, her husband of fifty-five years, who recently passed away. The spirit of their creative life together is conveyed by his statement: "The beauty thing . . . I mean, yeah, you make a painting that you want to look at. I like to look at paintings; I like to look at a lot of other people's paintings. But, you know, I keep thinking I'm making these things I really want to see."

Helen Marden was born in 1941 in Pittsburgh and lives and works in New York City; Tivoli, New York; Marrakech, Morocco; and Nevis, St. Kitts and Nevis. Group exhibitions include *Who Chooses Who*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1994); *Selections Summer '96*, Drawing Center, New York (1996); *Couples Discourse* (2006) and *Uncanny Congruences* (2013), Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University, University Park. She participated in the Whitney Biennial, New York (1995), and *The Last Brucennial*, Bruce High Quality Foundation, New York (2014).

#HelenMarden

HELEN MARDEN

Agape/Αγάπη

Opening reception: Thursday, September 21, 6–8pm

September 21–October 21, 2023

22 Anapiron Polemou Street, Athens

Press

Gagosian

press@gagosian.com

Toby Kidd

tkidd@gagosian.com

+44 20 7495 1500

Vasso Papagiannakopoulou

vassopap@gagosian.com

+30 693 748 5660