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Gagosian Presents *Abstract Explorations: 100 Years on Paper*

Opening in Gstaad on December 20, 2023



Wassily Kandinsky, *Réciproque*, 1935, gouache, pen, ink, and pencil on paper, 19 3/4 × 25 5/8 inches (50 × 65 cm).
Photo: Philipp Rupp

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GSTAAD, December 8, 2023—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Abstract Explorations: 100 Years on Paper*, an exhibition of modern and contemporary works on paper opening on December 20, 2023, at the gallery in Gstaad.

Abstract Explorations charts a century of abstraction from its revolutionary beginnings through the diverse exploratory approaches of artists today. With artworks in various mediums and scales, it highlights visual and conceptual correspondences within a range of painting and drawing practices specific to working on paper.

The development of abstraction in the first decades of the twentieth century was one of modernism's most radical breaks with convention, birthing entirely new modes of art making. A painting in oil and gouache from Fernand Léger's radically innovative *Contrastes des formes séries* (c. 1913) comprises a dense array of overlapping cylindrical, cubic, and planar elements, its highlights and shadows complicating what might have been considered an image of three-dimensional form; extending the spatial inventions of Analytic Cubism, Léger entirely abandons the depiction of the external world. Wassily Kandinsky, a pioneer of abstract art, painted *Réciproque* (1935) in Paris, where he relocated in 1933 after the dissolution of the Bauhaus. In a dance of precisely defined geometric and biomorphic components, Kandinsky envisions a dynamic synthesis of suspended forms and reciprocal forces.

Mid-century works in the exhibition trace the advancement of new visions in keeping with the innovations of their era. An untitled 1957 work in pencil by Cy Twombly radically extends the possibilities of gestural abstraction through allusions to—and negations of—acts of writing and drawing, achieving an expressive balance of order and chaos. Helen Frankenthaler's vigorous oil-on-paper painting *Shore Figure* (1959) employs a palette and brushwork that evoke sea and sand while avoiding their literal representation.

Works by contemporary artists disclose new possibilities for abstraction, extending a century-long conversation. The transformative quality of Brice Marden's approach to painterly and calligraphic form is apparent in *Drawing for Lois* (1992–93), *Rockery* (2002), and *Stele Drawing 3* (2007), demonstrating the centrality of drawing to his practice. In an untitled work from 1997, Rudolf Stingel applies a vivid scarlet oil pigment to black paper through a tulle screen, the resultant variations in tone and texture evoking elemental transformation. Composed with a cardboard box, papier mâché, acrylic paint, and steel, an untitled 2012 work by Franz West conjoins attributes of paper, painting, and sculpture. Made with paintstick, etching ink, and silica on two sheets of handmade paper, Richard Serra's richly textured *Diptych #9* (2019) resonates with the material and performative nature of his oeuvre.

The power of color remains a key component for abstractionists today. The harmonies of brushwork and color in an untitled 2019 gouache painting by Stanley Whitney are structured by a call-and-response interplay between the systematic nature of the artist's compositional approach and the expressive freedom of its realization. Made during the 2020 pandemic, Rachel Whiteread's vibrantly hued ink drawings iterate geometric forms to create spatially complex networks. In a work from 2021, Katharina Grosse uses a spray gun to apply acrylic paint in layered, diffused, and gestural modes. The bands of green, red, yellow, blue, and ochre are interrupted by botanical matter, with ribbonlike tendrils forming stencils that alternately reveal the white of the paper and shifting traces of varied pigments.

A selection of works from 2022 by Albert Oehlen emphasizes heterogeneity of line and structure, juxtaposing freely improvised linear vectors and washes of ink, pencil, and watercolor in restricted palettes. Collaging fragments of the resulting passages into new compositions, Oehlen challenges the viewer to evaluate their disjunctions and continuities. The vigorous graphite marks in a 2023 drawing by Sterling Ruby converge at the work's center, channeling centripetal and centrifugal energies. Rick Lowe's *Untitled (Domino Studies)* (2023) is modeled in part after games of dominoes, their imbricated, directional paths and nodes suggesting the organization of urban maps. In this way, Lowe employs abstraction to meditate on the social nature of his practice.

#AbstractExplorations

ABSTRACT EXPLORATIONS: 100 YEARS ON PAPER

Opening reception: Wednesday, December 20, 2–8pm

December 20, 2023–January 25, 2024

Promenade 79, Gstaad

Press

Gagosian

press@gagosian.com

Toby Kidd

tkidd@gagosian.com

+44 20 7495 1500