

GAGOSIAN



MARK GROTJAHN

New Capri, Capri, Free Capri

Opening reception: Tuesday, October 30, 6–8pm
October 30–December 22, 2018
555 West 24th Street, New York

Mark Grotjahn, *Untitled (New Capri XIX 47.19)*, 2016, oil on cardboard, 20 × 17 inches (50.8 × 43.2 cm)

October 19, 2018

Instead of coming up with a different motif each time, I'd rather just have one motif and within that motif get experimental. But there are always exceptions to my rules.

—Mark Grotjahn

Gagosian is pleased to present *New Capri, Capri, Free Capri*, three interconnected series of paintings by Mark Grotjahn and his largest exhibition of new work to date. Stemming from a body of work that he created for a private presentation at Casa Malaparte on the isle of Capri, Italy, in 2016, these paintings signal an entirely new direction in Grotjahn's practice, as he breaks away from the *Face* paintings in favor of a more experimental, spontaneous working process.

In his paintings, drawings, and sculptures, Grotjahn interweaves and revitalizes various historical modes of abstraction, probing the limits between gesture and geometry, impulse and exactitude. His works unfold according to precise yet mutating rubrics, resulting in an expansive vocabulary of visual motifs that migrate from one series to the next in compulsive, self-referential permutations. Like sedimentary cross sections or horizonless landscapes, the *Capri* series contrast the all-over quality of Abstract Expressionism with moments of controlled, almost minimalist, logic.

Grotjahn began *New Capri* in 2016, inspired by the legendary home of writer Curzio Malaparte perched on a cliff in Capri. Painted on cardboard and framed behind glass, the *New Capri* works appear as small, jewel-like objects, echoing the geological and botanical patterns of the Mediterranean setting (itself framed by the house's windows). Seeking to abandon the representational qualities of his *Face* paintings (2003–)—in which almond-shaped eyes form focal points within kaleidoscopic abstractions—Grotjahn zoomed in on their multicolored arcs, then explored variations of certain sections on a larger, more enveloping scale. Thus, in the *Capri* works (2016–), painted on canvas, he alternates between vertical and horizontal structures, obfuscating any remnants of the *Face* paintings by making use of the infinite mutability of paint itself: spreading it; creating rolls, balls, and splatters; writing his name and various dates. The *Capri* paintings challenge the viewer to determine the chronology of Grotjahn's marks and strokes, which are raised from the picture plane like impenetrable, thorny brush, trapping the gaze in their puzzling matrices. In the red, black, and white *Star Capri* paintings (2017–), the tips of the almond-shapes from the *Faces* form rhythmic geometries, like graphic stars or flowers.

In *Free Capri* (2018–), the last of the three series, Grotjahn seems to have fully abandoned the *Faces*. Many of the canvases feature parallel rows of “slugs,” grids of squirming tally marks, which accumulate on Grotjahn's palette knife as he smears into the dense impasto while it is still wet. Literally pulling the background into the foreground, Grotjahn attaches the slugs to the surface of the painting by tracing a thin line through them, reuniting the painted surface with its own waste products. Tapering at either end, the slugs seem alive, wriggling their way into the compositions and picking up streaks of color along the way.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

Mark Grotjahn was born in 1968 in Pasadena, California, and lives and works in Los Angeles. Collections include the Broad, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Des Moines Art Center, IA; Cleveland Museum of Art; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Pinault Collection, Venice; Tate Modern, London; Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens; and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Solo exhibitions include *Drawings*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2005); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006); Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland (2007); Portland Art Museum, OR (2010); Aspen Art Museum, CO (2012); *Circus*, Circus, Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany (2014); *Mark Grotjahn Sculpture*, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2014); and *50 Kitchens*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2018).

#MarkGrotjahn

Press

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