

GAGOSIAN



CONTINUING ABSTRACTION

Opening reception: Monday, June 10, 6–9pm

June 10–16, 10am–9pm

Rheinsprung 1, Basel

Jackson Pollock, *Moon Vibrations*, c. 1953–55, oil on canvas, mounted on masonite, 43 × 34 inches (109.2 × 86.4 cm) © 2019 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

June 4, 2019

Gagosian is pleased to announce the opening of *Continuing Abstraction*, a group exhibition to inaugurate the new gallery in Basel. The new space is located at Rheinsprung 1, and opens on the occasion of Art Basel 2019.

The exhibition explores the trajectory of abstraction in the United States and Europe from the immediate postwar period to the present, tracing artists' diverse approaches to materiality and gesture—from the dripped and poured paint of Abstract Expressionism to the multireferential innovations at the forefront of painting today.

The earliest works included are by Willem de Kooning: *January* (1947–48) and *Untitled* (1948). These paintings serve as a fulcrum between the observation-based abstraction set in motion by Cubism and Expressionism and the nonobjectivity that characterized much of postwar American abstraction. In de Kooning's paintings, biomorphic forms appear as fragments that transform into thick painterly strokes; while in Jackson Pollock's *Moon Vibrations* (c. 1953–55), the figure disappears entirely, and the canvas becomes a record of an event—the act of painting itself. In Helen Frankenthaler's *With Blue* from the same year, the events unfold more slowly, with areas of semitransparent paint soaked

into the canvas over time; and in works by Cy Twombly and Robert Ryman from the late 1950s and early '60s, gesture teeters between legibility and obfuscation, pattern and chaos. Mark Grotjahn's *Untitled (Capri 50.85)* (2018) takes repetitive gesture to a new extreme, with its arcs of thick paint evoking sedimentary cross sections or horizonless landscapes.

For Mark Rothko and Brice Marden, the materiality of paint and the evocative nature of color are key, pulling the viewer into seemingly immeasurable voids. The meditative power of color in these works is countered by the measured seriality of Donald Judd's aluminum wall sculptures and by the delicate and imperfect geometries of Agnes Martin's untitled canvas completed around 1999, wherein carefully rendered graphite lines create horizontal bands of luminous, pale blue space. In Mary Weatherford's *Ruby, Ruby* (2019), a red neon light casts an artificial glow across the canvas, combining the industrial coolness of Minimalism with the unique tactility of Flashe paint, applied in thin transparent layers.

Roy Lichtenstein plays off of the Minimalist trope of the grid in *Plus and Minus VI* (1988), using the visual idiom of Benday dot printing, hand-painted, to evoke Piet Mondrian's geometric compositions. This spirit of art historical reference and translation continues in works by Joe Bradley and Albert Oehlen, who combine prior modes of abstraction in order to reconsider the distinctions between genre and media, spontaneity and calculation.

More than just a demonstration of formal possibilities, this exhibition attests to the ways in which abstraction has allowed artists to charge even the most basic compositional structures with new meaning. The vertical bands in Theaster Gates's *Civic Study in Yellow* (2017) echo the thick, columnar strokes of black etching ink in Richard Serra's works on paper. However Gates's assemblage derives its color and form not from art but from reality: utilizing decommissioned fire hoses as a pointed reference to use of brutal force by authorities to subdue Black Americans in civil rights demonstrations. In this way, Gates returns us to the question of objectivity that de Kooning's corporeal abstractions seem to grapple with: can abstraction ever be detached from lived experience?

The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue, with an essay by art historian Sydney Stutterheim.

#ContinuingAbstraction

Press

Bolton & Quinn

+44 20 7221 5000

Erica Bolton

erica@boltonquinn.com

Daisy Taylor

daisy@boltonquinn.com

Gagosian

+44 20 7495 1500

presslondon@gagosian.com