

BETWEEN PAINT AND POSSIBILITY

Artist Jason Martin merges painting and sculpture, crafting immersive artworks that explore materiality, movement, and depth.

Words By: Chelsea Hardin



Brasileiro 2007, Oil on aluminium, 290x250x16cm

Jason Martin's artistic journey is a compelling testament to the transformative power of material and color, pushing the boundaries between painting and sculpture into new and uncharted territories. His latest exhibition, "REDUX," curated by Annalisa Lombardo at Galerie Forsblom in Helsinki, serves as a vivid exploration of his evolving artistry, showcasing a meticulous balance of form, color, and texture that defines his unique visual language. Born in 1970 and educated at the Chelsea School of Art and Goldsmith College in London, Martin has carved out a niche that defies the conventional constraints of canvas, inviting viewers into a space where art becomes an immersive experience.

Central to Martin's work is a profound inquiry into the essence of painting, exploring the medium's potential through a self-reflective lens. His renowned monochromatic, three-dimensional pigment pieces exemplify this exploration, transcending the two-dimensional plane to engage directly with the viewer's space. These sculptural

paintings, together with his dynamic oil paintings marked by intense, sweeping brushstrokes, create a compelling illusion of depth and movement, drawing us into a realm where the line between observer and observed blurs.

The "REDUX" exhibition is a narrative journey, juxtaposing older works with new to highlight Martin's relentless pursuit of innovation. It is an affirmation of his ability to harmonize color, form, and structure, with a palette that combines saturated pure pigments and nuanced shades to sculpt forms that possess both optical and physical presence. This intricate dance of elements culminates in an experience that is both visual and tactile, challenging our perceptions and inviting us to explore the interplay of light, texture, and space.

Martin's influence extends far beyond the confines of any single gallery or exhibition space. His work has been celebrated internationally, from the Museum gegenstandsfreier Kunst and the Schauwerk Sindelfingen Museum in Germany to the Peggy

Guggenheim Collection in Venice and the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Malaga. With a highly anticipated solo exhibition at the He Art Museum (HEM) in Guangdong, China, set for the fall of 2024, Martin continues to captivate global audiences, solidifying his position within the art world. His artworks are cherished components of both private and public collections worldwide, including those of the Denver Art Museum, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and the Hirshhorn Museum.

Living and working between London and Lisbon, Jason Martin's contributions to contemporary art are a celebration of the creative process itself. Through his hands, paint and pigment transcend their material form, becoming conduits for a deeper exploration of beauty and existence. His work stands as a powerful reminder of art's capacity to innovate and inspire, challenging us to see beyond the surface and engage with the world in new and profound ways. ✈

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G A L E R I E F O R S B L O M

Jason Martin: REDUX

Galerie Forsblom March 22–April 21, 2024

Jason Martin is a painter whose practice is steeped in materiality and self-reflexive questioning of painting as an art form. His work gives a visible form to the processes by which both painting and sculpture come into being. This visualization of the process is epitomized by his monochromatic, three-dimensional pigment pieces, which hover somewhere between painting and sculpture. These sculptural paintings protrude beguilingly from the wall, bursting out of the two-dimensional world of painting and into the surrounding space. Martin's works come alive through a combination of materiality, movement and a masterfully conjured illusion of depth. His pigment pieces are accompanied by oil paintings executed in intense, sweeping brushstrokes that endow the oil paint with a vivid quality that draws us in and makes us part of the painting's reality. The experience he evokes is not a static one, but an interactive and immersive encounter. His paintings evoke moments of calm meditateness clashing with haptic chaos and unpredictability.

Martin's new exhibition brings together older and new paintings that demonstrate the wide spectrum of materials used by the artist. Martin has a readily recognizable visual style that is distinguished by his distinctive treatment of color, form and structure, all woven together in perfect balance without any single element dominating the others. Martin's palette is a highly unusual combination of saturated pure pigments and a delicately nuanced mix of inflected and blended shades. He sculpts form so compellingly that it not only possesses a powerful optical presence but also a physical one. His vocabulary of form is inseparable from the dynamic movement and texture created by his colors. All these elements come together in a fusion of visual components that is experienced holistically.

Jason Martin studied at the Chelsea School of Art and Goldsmith College in London. His work has been exhibited widely in the United States and Europe at venues including the Museum gegenstandsfreier Kunst and the Schauwerk Sindelfingen museum in Germany, the Peggy Guggenheim collections in Venice and the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Malaga, and in the fall of 2024, he will have a solo exhibition at the He Art Museum (HEM) in Guangdong, China. His work is represented in numerous private and public collections worldwide, including those of the Denver Art Museum, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and the Hirshhorn Museum. The artist lives and works in London and Lisbon.

Curated by Annalisa Lombardo.

GALLERIA CHRISTIAN STEIN
JASON MARTIN
REMINISCENCE



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JASON MARTIN

Reminiscence

Galleria Christian Stein
Corso Monforte 23, Milano

25 May - 30 September 2023

The Galleria Christian Stein is presenting for the first time the works of Jason Martin (1970), a British artist known to the public for his pictures laden with pigment, created in a head-on, physical and emotional encounter with the paint. Martin executes his extraordinary works through actions that modify the surface of the painting. While such a thick coat of pigment turns these pictures into sculptures, almost in high relief, the action carried out on the surface takes us into the field of performance. Each of these works is the result of a clash between two dimensions, one characterized by the choreography of the artist's gestures and movements, the other by the nature, density and color of the pigment. The surface also has a role to play because it influences the end result, at the level both of the reflection of light and of the thickness, the physical consistency of the paint. Under the force of gravity, this tends inexorably to move, to sag, to fall from the top to the bottom, sliding vertically or resisting, dragging ample horizontal patches with it and solidifying them. The interdependence of action and material generates an image of a nonfigurative nature that expresses itself through a formless language, in an eloquent stratification of prearranged and fortuitous gestures, of control and spontaneity. An image that looks finished and at the same time dynamic, as if it were in the process of evolving and changing. The operation is a perfect and always unexpected combination of elements conceptually arranged in advance and psychologically liberated forces, the result of actions and reactions between language and impulse.

The title given by the artist to the exhibition, *Reminiscence*, alludes to the fact that his work is imbued with memories, and so can also tell us something about what happened during its birth, or even before that. The work is what we see, the sensual surface that makes us want to touch it, but at the same time it is something else, a layering and mixing of reminiscences, more or less remote, distant in time and space, in which we recognize what emerges from our unconscious.

Reminiscence refers to the possibility of discovering something that pertains to the nature of the world, to the resurfaced depths, to the most sublime things of the imagination, in a coming and going of sensations and perceptions that one moment reveal, the next delude, one moment illuminate, the next cloud. Plato spoke of reminiscence (a term corresponding to the Greek ἀνάμνησις, which is different from μνήμη, "memory"), referring to the moment at which ideas, present in the memory because the spirit has known them before descending into the body, can emerge and be reawakened, in a process of purification by sensibility. In other words, the recollection of a preceding life. And so in the case of this exhibition *Reminiscence* signifies the resurfacing of vague and distant memories of earlier moments and situations, as well as of real and imaginary landscapes and places, traversed or contemplated at certain hours of the day, in the light and colors of a season. And with the reminiscences special frames of mind seem to come up again, moods that we discover to be unforgettable, places associated with the presence of someone or something that has been important in our life. Thus Martin's series of new pictures—some of them monochrome while others are based on a mixture of different colors, beautiful shades of blue, purple and moss green—is charged with these sensations, which the thick, overflowing paint seems to have memorized and caught in its substantial density. Out of this come landscapes that, far

from being representations in a figurative sense, produce natural forms, events that can evoke sea floors or mudflats, walls of rock or stone surfaces that we can describe as geological and chemical in nature.

For many years monochrome was the main focus of Jason Martin's interest. Today, however, the sum of several colors enriches the surface of his paintings with a different and new expressivity. For Martin the picture is a specific object, in line with a modernist tradition that has characterized it since the beginning of the 20th century. So the reminiscences to which he alludes are also formal ones, harking back to earlier works of his own as well as by other artists. Jason Martin experiments with oil paint, constructing each picture with dense layers of pigment, which is worked with special implements to create lines and circular movements, ripples and wrinkles, sometimes sliding over the surface, at others sinking into it, almost raking it, so that at one moment it looks tidily combed, at another ruffled. Worked in this way, the paint presents an ever shifting series of images, abstract and at the same time evoking natural landscapes. Looking at the works in the exhibition the frothy and morose landscapes of Courbet, the turbulent and stormy skies of Turner and the windswept meadows and woods of Constable spring to mind, as if we had found new delight in recognizing something already seen and contemplated, while we are carried away by the Dionysian energy of this formless painting born once again out of the experience of the sublime.

On display in the gallery on Corso Monforte are works with the rippling and choppy surface of a rough sea, to such an extent that the painting spills over its two-dimensional limits and presents itself to the world in a way that can recall Gothic works in high-relief like those of Giovanni Pisano, where the movement of masses and the dramatic contrast of light and shade result in dissolution of the figurative composition, giving way to an autonomous eloquence of the sculptural relief, transformed by its own, disruptive expressive energy. The picture does not represent but lives, and holds a dialogue with the world through its own language. For a century and more it has been painting that makes the world, roaming beyond the visible, liberating color and material, patterns and textures in a stubborn and unsatisfied aspiration to overcome limits, to explore new and unprecedented working possibilities. "In my works color is essentially structure and not decoration, the material becomes visceral, erotic, experimental [...]. The balanced and measured transparency is essentially consumed by the saturation of spinel black, the only transparent black pigment. It is the chiaroscuro of contemporary art."

At the same time Martin's works have a vigorous geometric construction, a conceptual rigor that lays down the rules of a hand-to-hand combat between the artist and his material; a combat on whose outcome depends the success of the work. If the image is sustained by horizontal and vertical grids, by circular and spiral courses, by stratified but controlled planes, something else occurs in the paint. The work expresses a dynamic vitality, an energy, that bursts out and stirs the surface. The artist's action—a sort of dance and struggle for life—excites and animates the impasto with sensuality and uncontrollable pathos, so that here it spreads out in placid undulations, there seems to yield to gravity, slipping and sliding, or seething, erupting, fermenting like a primordial expanse of land or sea in the process of giving birth to new life, new landscapes and horizons. In the last analysis we are still caught up in and swept away by the mystery of the painting in an alternation of sensations and ideas, of memories and suggestions, of vague and colored forms and impressions thanks to which we are able to immerse ourselves again in nature, in order to find some kind of empathy with the world outside us and far away from society.

Sergio Risaliti

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Recensioni

Jason Martin "Reminescence" Galleria Christian Stein, Milano di [Federica Boragina](#) / Lydia Ourahmane "Polvere" Ordet, Milano di [Giovanna Manzotti](#) / Giuliana Rosso "Bored Bones" The Address, Brescia di [Michela Ceruti](#) / Francesco João "Seven Segment Display" Fondazione Zimei, Palazzo Cavallerini Lazzaroni, Roma di [Marta Silvi](#) / Alice Visentin "The morning tide of moods" Lateral, Roma di [Aurora Riviezzo](#) / Straperetana 2023 "Ultramoderne", Pereto di [Manuela Pacella](#) / "La sostanza agitata" Palazzo Colicola, Spoleto di [Simone Ciglia](#) / Veronica Bisesti "Dove brulica l'altrove" Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Napoli di [Giulia Pollicita](#) / Kazuo Miyamoto Museo Madre, Napoli di [Sara Dolfi Agostini](#) / Aria Dean "Wolves" Progetto, Lecce di [Olamiju Fajemisin](#) / Agostino Iacurci "Dry Days, Tropical Nights" Torre di Largo Treves, Milano di [Virginia Lambertucci](#)

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6 Ottobre 2023, 9:00 am CET

Jason Martin "Reminiscence" *Galleria Christian Stein / Milano* di [Federica Boragina](#)

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Jason Martin, "Reminiscence" Veduta della mostra presso Galleria Christian Stein, Milano, 2023. Fotografia di Agostino Osio. Courtesy l'artista e Galleria Christian Stein, Milano.

Suggestioni astratte e memorie minimaliste avvolgono l'osservatore che varca la soglia della Galleria Christian Stein, dove otto sono i lavori esposti dell'artista inglese Jason Martin.

Lo sguardo è subito travolto da *We Walk* e *We Walk there* (2023), due dipinti di oltre cinque metri quadrati ciascuno, realizzati a olio su strutture di alluminio. La materia pittorica abita la superficie con vitale aderenza e la trasforma in palcoscenico di ancestrale gestualità. Lamine argentate, tortuosi blu e vibranti verdi, profondità violacee e lacerazioni di luce: è una pittura che protrude verso l'occhio dello spettatore invadendone lo spazio visivo.

In effetti la pratica pittorica di Martin non si è mai accontentata della statica bidimensionalità: fin dagli esordi, sul finire degli anni Novanta, fra le fila degli Young British Artists, l'artista ha ricercato una metamorfosi del linguaggio pittorico, animando la superficie con gesti performativi che generano forme quasi scultoree. Nelle sue opere il gesto creativo e la materia sono protagonisti di una lotta vitale. In bilico fra resistenza alla fisica e casualità, fra rigore ed energia, fra tensioni gravitazionali e percorsi spirali, la materia ribolle eroicamente con il gesto dell'artista che tenta di governarla. Questi dipoli si confrontano senza sosta fino all'ultimo attimo/atto: l'epilogo non sancisce sconfitte o vittorie, ma concede spazio allo stupore ossia all'opportunità per la pittura di non essere solo pittura. Cos'altro allora? "Nei miei lavori - scrive Martin - la trasparenza, bilanciata e misurata, viene essenzialmente consumata dalla saturazione dello *spinel black*, unico pigmento nero trasparente."

È questo il punto: così come al nero è permesso di essere trasparente, ugualmente alla pittura è consentito essere performance e altorilievo, quasi scultura. A ben vedere, però, la potenzialità della ricerca di Martin non si consuma nella sola contaminazione fra generi.

L'opportunità che queste opere sperimentano è svelata dal titolo della mostra milanese, "Reminiscence". Richiamando alle menti miti platonici, tali reminiscenze alludono all'esistenza di una memoria del mondo che preesiste alla materia. Remoti desideri ed esperienze vissute in vite passate, luoghi immaginari o forse inabitati, incontri sfumati ed emozioni future, tenebre dimenticate e albe acerbe si avvicinano tra loro incessanti sulla superficie e disegnano intrecci narrativi. Sono soprattutto i moti della mente e del sentimento che generano la trasmutazione della materia, la quale si riversa tanto nella disarticolata profondità del monocromo proteso nello spazio, che si ritrova in *What She Said* e *Almost Midnight*, entrambe del 2021; quanto fra le onde increspate di colore in *Eterno*, *Flip Turn River* e in *Down We Go*, realizzate nel 2023.

Ulteriori reminiscenze, di natura storico-artistica, sono evocate da Sergio Risaliti nel testo che accompagna queste opere, tramite un sapiente e condivisibile rimando alla tradizione romantica del paesaggio e alle pennellate dense della pittura ottocentesca. Aleggja l'ombra di Turner, Constable, Courbet ma al contempo mi sembra inevitabile ripensare anche a quella passione viscerale e alla fiducia immaginifica che Jean Dubuffet riconosceva nella materia, descritta in *Note per i fini letterati*: "Sospingere a forza la mente fuori dei tracciati nei quali abitualmente si svolge, e introdurla in un mondo ove cessano i meccanismi delle abitudini, ove le trame delle abitudini si infrangono, ed in modo che tutto appaia carico di nuovi significati, formicolante d'echi, di risonanze, di armonie".

Jason Martin and the Abstract Idea of Landscape

Demetrio Paparoni

What allows us to recognize a work of art, and to accept its status as such when approaching its inherent meaning – regardless of its characteristics or the way it is presented – is the ability to elaborate considerations connected to theories and reflections which developed around works that were either created previously or around the same time. The role that theory plays in the definition of an artwork is, of course, important, particularly in the Modern and Post-Modern context, but it's obviously not enough to define its quality, or its power of attraction or repulsion – the latter is a component of aesthetics due to its connection to the concept of beauty, albeit by contrast. The question is complex, demonstrated by the fact that every object, not necessarily one with artistic purposes, can elicit feelings of attraction or repulsion. But the fascination exerted by an object does not alone suffice to define its status as an artwork.

I believe this introduction is necessary because, under the assumption that art is always born from art, and that each artwork is always a consequence of the seeds previously sown, it allows me to clarify that the reason why Jason Martin is one of the main players of the contemporary artistic scene is indeed his ability to create iconic works, which at the same time encompass significant experiences of Modernism and Postmodernism, without the urgency to quote them. In fact, Martin follows the example of Modern and Post-Modern painting tradition, refusing any notion of quotation or appropriation.

A step back in time and a few examples will help me clarifying what I mean. When in 1965 Roy Lichtenstein revisited de Kooning's brushstroke in a cartoon-like style, creating the subject of his series *Brushstroke*, it became immediately evident that we were witnessing the linguistic translation of a *gesture* that belonged to a different artist. Looking at his graphic translation of de Kooning's brushstroke, which flattens the pictorial matter and at the same time freezes the rapid gesture of a hand that holds a brush soaked in paint, our mind goes to the aforementioned Master of Abstract Expressionism. However, Lichtenstein's Pop spirit firmly stands out. We recognize the origin of the image but we are far from asserting that Lichtenstein's *Brushstrokes* are, in their originality, none but a quote of de Kooning's gesture. They are art born from art in a game of references that follow one another like links in a chain. Lichtenstein himself admitted that the idea behind his *Brushstrokes* came whilst looking at works by Mondrian and Picasso, "inevitably leading to the idea of a de Kooning¹".

¹ Roy Lichtenstein in conversation with John Coplans, *Artforum*, 5, n. 9, May 1967.

I write this because as I stood in front of several of Jason Martin's works (not all of them, I do not mean his variegated artistic output as a whole) I couldn't help but think of de Kooning who, in turn, in a game of references, brought to mind Liechtenstein. In the works by Martin in which the pictorial matter protrudes and gives the sense of the gesture's speed fail to find the translation of de Kooning's brushstroke; rather, I see original paintings which encompass the three-dimensionality of a sculpture, whilst remaining paintings—in other words, works that I wouldn't know if to define as sculptures or paintings. But in this game of references, the dual nature of Martin's works recalls the wooden and bronze sculptures that Liechtenstein himself created out of his *Brushstrokes*, in direct opposition to the graphic sign on the canvas. The subject of the work is still the same, but the nature between painting and sculpture remains very distinct—a distinction that is not always so clear in Martin's works. When faced with his works (and here I'm referring to his entire production) it becomes evident how the process requires a gesture that engages the artist's every last muscle. Yet this hand-to-hand with the painting does not recall the gesture of the Abstract Expressionists. In this case, once again, it is the differences, both conceptual and formal, that allow us to understand how Martin naturally avoids what's already been said and done. Martin's works originate from his sentimental relationship with nature, which in his works becomes abstraction, a *surface* or *body* able to evoke landscapes, figures and shadows. At times the pictorial spaces of his paintings contain the idea of a landscape, the reference of an illusion of a figurative pictorial space that doesn't lack in elemental references, such as earth turning into mud, fire bringing magma to a boil, water turning into ice, mist blurring shadows, wind shaping and moving them, evoking sea waves or sand dunes. His painting turns into a living body, and preserves the energy that is transferred from the artist's action to the pictorial matter.

The never-ending challenge that brings together many painters is the ability to create the illusion that light comes from within the painting itself. Martin's pictorial surfaces actually catch and retain light, allowing them to change depending on the different light source and the point of view of the observer. A similar effect can be found in Michelangelo Pistoletto's mirror works or in Robert Rauschenberg's mirror installations. The works of these two artists, however, are not paintings and the material they use, the mirror, has nothing to do with Martin's reflective high-relief casts, which are created from molds of thick *brushstrokes* and scratches, or textural impasto. Despite the conceptual nature they assigned to the mirror, for Pistoletto or Rauschenberg this medium is linked to a life-like dynamic, insofar as it returns a realistic picture. Martin's reflective casts instead turn the reflections of reality into abstraction.

While the cast on the one hand, the copy of something else, for example the body of the work, on the other hand the surface becomes an iridescent skin that can be conditioned by the external world. The

empirical process that leads to the final result and which includes pressing, casting, plating, and polishing is part of the work's integral significance which in Martin never prescind from the method. One of the most significant instances of the translation of images into abstract representation can be found in the numerous depictions of the Rouen Cathedral by Claude Monet. The cathedral in Monet's pictorial representations looks very different from how it actually appears in real life. During the 1960s Lichtenstein radicalized the process of abstractly representing the same subject, starting precisely with Monet's depictions from the end of the 19th century. Looking at Martin's works, it is evident how the fading form is not alien to reality. Martin further radicalizes the process started by Monet: he depicts natural reality whilst the form fades completely.

Martin's work oscillates between a sort of romantic subjectivity and the objectivity of Analytical Painting that emerged in the '60s, in parallel with Pop Art, with the work of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Agnes Martin, whose artistic production also includes paintings characterized by horizontal backgrounds. Rauschenberg and Agnes Martin considered the work (always square-shaped) as the setting in which they could experiment the language of painting with conceptual logic. They used brushstrokes, lines and grids on different media, so as to investigate the language through which painting manifests itself. Despite the evocative titles of some of their works, in particular those of Agnes Martin, these painters conceived abstraction as in contrast to figuration, and never made any concessions to romantic attitudes. On more than one occasion, Rauschenberg has described the reasons behind his paintings by indicating the number of brushstrokes and the size of the brush. In the series of paintings titled *Winsor* (1966), for example, he aims to "paint painting". He splits the panel in equal parts, and then lays a white-drenched brushstroke so as to obtain slightly detached strips, allowing the gestural interruption to be perceived. His works are cerebral; they call for an intellectual, scientific and objective analysis. Agnes Martin, on the contrary, introjects reality. His works are partly self-referential, and his personal vision of nature violently breaks into the painting, returning the shimmering light or the chiaroscuro determined by the viscosity and the movement of the pictorial matter, which often creates a reflective surface. Other times, it's the density of the pictorial mass on the surface of the painting that *draws* the chiaroscuro in a game of references and connections which include Fontana's holes and cuts, and the physical energy we find in the method of Jackson Pollock or Yves Klein. In Martin's words, "I have always found warmth by the references I stumble upon whilst painting. I consider painting to be a conversation that relies on previous discussions that I have witnessed or actively participated in or experienced. [...] I seek these moments of recollection and build content through these 'found' moments – the recollection of a methodical Cézanne brushmark; a luminous dash of white suggestive of Manet; a composition honed from an O'Keefe (flora or gender); a spiral rhythm plotting Boccioni or Balla – bringing into the surface a contemporary

chiaroscuro and extending the surface beyond the limits of the field, becoming a guileless Dada edge²”.

The inevitable gap between the work of Martin and that of previous generations of abstract painters is mainly triggered by the fact that, being born in 1970, he started painting in an atmosphere charged with the awareness of an art free of any ideological and formal constraint, something that the preceding generation had already partially escaped. This freedom is clearly visible in his works, as they don't need to stand in contrast to anything in order to exist. At the same time he deals with painting as a process: he thickens the layer of color onto the surface and spreads it with unusual tools, like a piece of cardboard or irregularly-cut polystyrene, or by using other flexible, smooth or comb-like materials. Within this dynamic, he accepts waste to the extent of preserving excess paint that blatantly overflows off the edges of the medium. He accepts the error and keeps repeating it until he sees it as the only possible solution. He creates a coexistence between what were once considered to be antithetical experiences. This and more makes him one of the most interesting abstract painters of our times, putting his art in felicitous harmony with that of his elder, Sean Scully. It's no coincidence that they both share an interest in geometry, that they both use a dense *brushstroke*, and that they both express a very personal vision of being alive.

The works on display were created during lockdown and - as the artist himself has stated – though they are not conceived as a whole, they share the sense of hollowness that emerged among humans due to the pandemic. In Martin's words, “The spaces explored are thresholds. [...] They suggest not a nostalgia but a current and classic redux”. The chromatic references of the present paintings are inspired by a Brazilian artistic movement called “Trópicalia”, from the '60s, which merged Brazilian and African rhythms with British and American psychedelia. This movement is an example of interaction as it embraces different influences without excluding any linguistic expression. We find the same openness in the works of Martin. The title of the exhibit, “Tropicalissimo”, is a fusion of the term “Trópicalia” with the Italian word “bellissimo”.

Demetrio Papanoni

² Jason Martin in Luca Massimo Barbero's *Of Night and Day*, catalogue of the exhibition *Vigil*, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, 2009, in collaboration with Mimmo Scognamiglio Artecontemporanea. Printed in 2011, p. 11.

Jason Martin – An interview

FEB 5, 2022SEP 29, 2023 □ *Posted in* [ART, INTERVIEWS](#)



by **Luca Fiore**

“Heavyweight champion Tyson Fury was asked which celebrities from the past he would like to have a beer with in the pub. The boxer replied: Eric Cantona, Jesus Christ and Elvis Presley. Should they ask me the same, I would choose Lucio Fontana, Jackson Pollock and Yves Klein”. Jason Martin, born in 1970 in Jersey, the largest island in the English Channel, is one of the heavyweights of contemporary abstract painting. The three names he cites, as his own personal artistic pantheon, are also a declaration of poetics. Although, in the early nineties at Goldsmith College in London, the cradle of the Young British Artists generation, the work that insinuated him into the seed of artistic research is a painting by the American artist Robert Ryman. “The all-white painting consisted of five span-wide bands of color, probably made with five uninterrupted brush strokes. They were the trace of a gesture that took place over a period of time, they outlined a time frame within which the color had been spread on the canvas. I liked the idea and started trying to develop it. It was a work on time, after all, and it was about why we are here now”.

Martin's first works consist of monochromatic oil or acrylic paintings, stretched on surfaces of aluminum, steel or Plexiglas with spatulas or combs that create swirling and hypnotic surfaces. Sometimes they look like the texture of a crazed vinyl record, in which the grooves are no longer concentric, but drawn with voluptuous elegance to produce visual vibrations of mysterious silent music. Black, bright red, metallic blue, white. When touching the color, light enhances the dynamism of the color surface. Over time, his research shifts to the use of pure pigment mixtures, which are applied on modeled panels, in which the exasperated sculptural effect seems to magnify the contortions of matter on a rippled palette of color. In recent years, the artist has also created works in mirroring metal (copper, silver and gold), made through casts of the paintings, in which the material painting becomes a real sculpture.

The latest works, conceived during lockdown, that the artist spent in his studio in the Portuguese countryside, exhibited in the recent exhibition, "Tropicalissimo, at the Galleria Mimmo Scognamiglio in Milan, are mainly small-sized paintings, in which he is used more than one color. "It is a series of paintings that are a bit of a synthesis of the paths that I started to follow during the time of the pandemic, in which I worked freely, without the time pressures of the art market", Martin explains: "I followed a playful and experimental attitude, in an attempt to conquer ground within the sphere of my pictorial language". Parallel bands of color, spread with a rough spatula, in which the tones blend to form atmospheric shades. From pink to pale pink, then yellow which becomes a soft pistachio green. Or vertical textures of yellow that blend, in the brushstroke, with a soul of red, producing orange halos. Elsewhere, blue and white are mixed. Or green and yellow again. Leaving the narrow circle of the monochromatic world seems to have opened the door to figurative suggestion for the painter. "I feel like a landscape painter disguised as an abstractionist", he explains with a smile. The masses of color and the composition of the forms lead the viewer's imagination to reconstruct natural images in his own mind. Sunsets, vegetation, flames, water, ice, fog. "In painting, this is almost inevitable, even when we are in the field of abstraction", continues Martin: "Leon Battista Alberti already understood this: painting recreates the illusion of depth on the surface. We are used to seeing something that goes beyond the flatness of the canvas. The painting is a threshold where a dialectic between surface and illusion is created. And the challenge is to look through, to see beyond".

Martin has a very particular way of telling the history of art of the twentieth century: using his body parts. "Artists of the turn of the century painted with their wrist. Braque and Picasso, to create their Cubist paintings, drew signs by articulating the movements with the elbow. De Kooning, with his shoulder, drew even wider brush strokes. Finally, Pollock placed the canvas on the ground and painted with his whole body. Fontana also used gestural language. Yves Klein threw all of himself into the void of the work. Here, I feel part of this club". Yet, it is the same who recognizes a debt also towards minimalism: "Yes, but it is as if I had found my personal way that combines abstract expressionism, action painting, and art that wanted to eliminate all body traces. It is as if I had filled the empty vase of minimalism". This seems to be the common thread that binds all the work of Jason Martin who, in hindsight, has significantly evolved in almost thirty years of career: the dialectic between opposites. Abstraction and figuration, expressionism and minimalism, painting and sculpture. "I don't think that, in an attempt to evolve my language, I will abandon this path, it is the only way I have to say something interesting to develop my own personal pictorial vocabulary".

But another legacy also weighs on the artist's shoulders, the one that comes from having participated in Sensation, the exhibition that the collector Charles Saatchi sponsored in 1997 at the Royal Academy in London (later shown also in New York and Berlin) and that consigned the

Young British Artists to history. We talk about artists like Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Sara Lucas, Jenny Saville, Marc Quinn, the Chapman brothers and others. Jason Martin was among them. "I remember that they hung my paintings upside down... Which, for works like mine, is not a serious problem... If the painting is good, it works the same. It was a great opportunity, but – even if we were more or less all peers (Hirst is five years older than me) – I don't feel like belonging to it. It's a story I ended up in without really wanting to". If those artists were seen as the expression of a return to a shocking realism, it was evident that Martin was not in the game. "It is clear that, from the media point of view, my work could not compete with the shark in formaldehyde. Mine is another way. Although I have a lot of respect for the work of Emin or Lucas, for example. But of that generation, the one I feel closest to is Ian Devenport who was eventually excluded from the Saatchi exhibition".

Martin's painting is much quieter, more intimate, than the roaring English art that was successful in those years. And he remembers well his fellows at Goldsmith, all busy finding their own way to create the installations that became popular in the following years. "I was one of the very few to paint", he explains: "There I met Steve McQueen, the videomaker, now an Oscar-winning director for *12 Years A Slave*. He too had started painting". As in the tradition of abstract painting, even for the English artist his work carries a marked spiritual and meditative dimension. And maybe for the same reason, perhaps, aged 24 he wrote to Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo to offer him his works. "He never answered me back. Perhaps because I was too much distant from the minimalist style he favored. But painting is also a spiritual exercise for me. It arises from the need to find my place in the world and, at the same time, to try to leave a trace for when I will be gone. I remember that astronaut from space who covered the Earth from his sight by stretching his thumb in front of his eyes. And he said: all I know is behind my finger. Everything else is unknown to me."

Domani, 30th January 2022 (<https://www.editorialedomani.it/idee/cultura/jason-martin-arte-dialettica-opposti-u5xya9qj>).









VIN
JASOIN
MARTIN



É no silêncio do campo português que Jason Martin cria as suas obras. Artista de renome internacional, viaja com frequência pelas principais capitais do mundo onde expõe, mas é no litoral alentejano, para onde se mudou em 2007, que se sente em casa. Numa conversa fácil e fluida, falámos deste seu novo país, do estúdio enterrado que o premiado arquiteto Souto de Moura lhe desenhou, dos planos que tem para o futuro, de vinho e, como não podia deixar de ser, de arte e do processo criativo.

KATYA DELIMBEUF TEXTO WORDS **PEDRO FERREIRA** FOTOGRAFIA PHOTOGRAPHY

Jason Martin creates his artworks in the still and silence of the Portuguese countryside. As an internationally renowned artist, he frequently visits the cities where his art is exhibited. However, it's on the Alentejo coast, where he moved in 2007, where he feels most at home. We talked about his adopted country, a buried studio designed for him by prize-winning architect Souto de Moura, future plans, wine and, of course, art and the creative process.









O estúdio de Jason Martin é no meio do nada. Um antigo armazém agrícola com vista para um arrozal, numa aldeia da Comporta. Ali, o artista britânico tem o silêncio por companhia e um ninho de cegonha como único vizinho. Cumprimenta-nos à entrada, as calças de ganga e os ténis como uma autêntica tela, uma amálgama de camadas e salpicos de tinta. Empurra a porta de correr do armazém e entramos no estúdio. O chão está pintalgado de tinta de todas as cores, alguma ainda fresca. Sob o pé direito alto, telas de grandes dimensões ocupam as paredes ou estão acondicionadas dentro dos seus encaixes de madeira. A palavra “frágil” está por todo o lado.

Na parede ao fundo, três quadros. Um maior ao centro, e dois mais pequenos, laterais. “Pinteí estes dois ontem”, confidencia Jason, “e gostei do resultado. Há três meses que não pintava”, o período mais longo desde há muito. Esteve fora de casa, nomeadamente em Nova Iorque, numa inauguração da Lisson Gallery, a galeria que o representa.

Jason Martin, 52 anos, é um dos nomes mais sólidos da arte contemporânea mundial. Trocou Inglaterra por Portugal em 2007. As suas telas são pinturas que roçam a escultura, com camadas de tinta de várias texturas, em que apetece tocar. À fase monocromática, talvez das mais conhecidas do artista, cheia de vida e movimento, seguiram-se outras. Diferentes mas sempre ecléticas.

O seu estúdio anterior era em Londres, no meio do bulício de uma grande cidade europeia. Aqui, estamos no meio do nada. Qual o melhor contexto para criar?

Para mim, este é o sítio perfeito para trabalhar. É isolado e remoto. Sem barulho, sem distrações. É aqui que crio, desde que este estúdio foi criado para mim, há sete anos.

Continua a pintar a óleo, na maior parte da sua obra.

Adoro o rasto da pincelada. Dá-nos o registo do tempo. É uma marca que fica. Pode ser vista aqui e agora, como pode transportar-nos através de milhares de anos, como uma máquina do tempo.

Como é o seu processo criativo? Pinta todos os dias? Tem uma disciplina rígida?

Ontem, pinteí pela primeira vez em quase três meses, porque passei uma temporada no estrangeiro. Foi a tal ponto que comecei quase a sentir-me um impostor. Não me lembro de ter estado tanto tempo sem pintar. Normalmente, tenho um sentido de urgência para vir para estúdio. Quase uma compulsão. Ontem vim e pinteí aqueles dois quadros [aponta para a parede do fundo do estúdio, onde duas telas mais pequenas ladeiam uma outra de maiores dimensões], e gostei do resultado. Mas na verdade, percebi que é preciso tanta disciplina para não estar em estúdio como para estar.

Martin's studio is in the middle of nowhere. Located in Comporta, this former agricultural warehouse offers a view of the surrounding rice paddies, with a stork's nest as his only company. He greets us at the entrance wearing paint-splattered jeans and trainers that could pass for a canvas.

He pushes the warehouse sliding door and we enter his studio. The floor is speckled with multicoloured paint, some still wet. Beneath a high roof, large-scale canvases cover the walls or are fitted snugly into wooden crates.

The word “fragile” is everywhere.

On the back wall, there are three paintings. A large work in the middle, flanked by two smaller ones. “I painted these two yesterday and I liked the way they turned out,” he says. “I hadn't painted in three months”, the longest inactive period for some time. He was away from home, in New York, at an opening at the Lisson Gallery, which represents him.

Martin is one of the most well-respected names in the world of contemporary art. His paintings border on sculpture, boasting layers of differently textured paint that invite touch. His monochrome phase, perhaps his best known, was followed by others. Different but always eclectic.

Your previous studio was in London, in the hustle and bustle of a large European city. Here, we're in the middle of nowhere. Which is better for creative purposes?

For me, this is the perfect place to work. It's isolated and remote. No noise, no distractions. It's here I create, ever since this studio was built for me seven years ago.

You continue using oils for most of your work.

I love the trace of the brushstroke. It gives us a record of time. It's a mark that endures. It can be seen in the here and now, or it can transport us back thousands of years, like a time machine.

What's your creative process like? Do you paint every day? Are you rigidly disciplined?

Yesterday, I painted for the first time in almost three months, after having spent some time abroad. It got to the point where I almost felt like an impostor. I can't remember spending so long without painting. Normally, I have a sense of urgency when it comes to going into the studio. Yesterday, I came in and painted these two [he points at two small canvases on the studio's rear wall], and I liked the way they turned out. But truth be told, I realised that you need as much discipline not to be in the studio as to be in the studio.



Porquê?

Nem todos os dias se tem algo de interessante para dar ao trabalho. Criar implica correr riscos, tentar coisas diferentes. Tem de ser imprevisível. É uma conversa permanente. É sempre sobre a jornada.

O que procura quando cria?

Trabalho para explorar viagens que encontrem verdade emocional. A minha ambição é revelar espaços cativantes ou limiares entre a cor e o espaço.

Como definiria “verdade emocional”?

É um encontro entre a decisão e o abandono. Isso acontece quando o movimento flui sem esforço aparente. Como uma meditação. Mergulho no que estou a fazer e depois ausento-me. Acabas por tornar-te apenas um veículo, numa espécie de abandono. É aí que se começa a fazer algo de interessante, quando o inconsciente começa a trabalhar. São momentos efémeros, em que o acaso é permitido.

Diz que o seu pior inimigo vive dentro da sua mente. O isolamento voluntário em que vive em Melides não torna tudo mais difícil?

Todos temos demónios, o desafio é torná-los nossos amigos de cabeceira. Leva o teu trabalho a sério, como um assunto de vida ou de morte, mas não confundas isso como uma ideia ilusória de ti. Nunca te podes levar demasiado a sério. Para se ter sucesso, acredito que devemos ser bons no que fazemos, gostarmos de o fazer e gostarmos de nós. Podemos pedir isso de nós próprios.

Esse exílio autoimposto é necessário à criação artística?

Acredito que todos os artistas têm de passar por um exílio e descobrir através do isolamento como enriquecer a sua prática de trabalho. Olhar através do buraco da agulha é um rito de passagem necessário. Aceitar o falhanço e experimentar através do risco é essencial para evoluir e para avançar no domínio da criatividade. Nada é estático ou garantido. Há um sentido de urgência em provar o novo. Uma urgência para criar.

Why?

Sometimes we don't have anything interesting to give. Creating involves taking risks, trying different things. It has to be unpredictable. It's a permanent conversation. It's always about the journey.

What do you seek when you create?

I work to explore journeys that find emotional truth. My ambition is to reveal captivating spaces or thresholds between colour and space.

How would you define “emotional truth”?

It's a meeting of decision and abandon. It occurs when movement flows with apparent effortlessness. Like meditation. I immerse myself in what I'm doing and then I become absent. You become a mere vehicle, in a type of abandon. It's there that something interesting happens. When the unconscious starts to function. They're fleeting moments, where chance is allowed.

You say that your worst enemy lives inside your mind. Doesn't your voluntary isolation in Melides make everything more difficult?

We all have demons; the challenge is to make them your bed friends.

Take your work seriously, like a matter of life and death, but do not confuse it with a delusional idea of yourself. You can never take yourself too seriously.

To be successful, I think we must be good at what we do, like doing it and like ourselves. We can ask that of ourselves.

Is this self-imposed exile necessary for artistic creation?

I think all artists have to experience exile and discover how to enrich their ways of working through isolation. Looking through the eye of the needle is a necessary rite of passage. Accepting failure and risking experimentation is essential to evolving and progressing, creatively speaking. Nothing is static or guaranteed. There's a sense of urgency in trying something new. An urgency to create.

Como aconteceu vir viver para Portugal?

Vim as primeiras vezes a Portugal em 2007. Andava à procura de um ambiente exótico e batido pelo vento – o Oceano Atlântico e a linha costeira continuam a ser para mim mais desafiantes do que o mar manso do Mediterrâneo. Queria um espaço amplo para construir um estúdio do qual pudesse ver o mar. Encontrar espaço com uma renda baixa na cidade tem sido o que os artistas procuram. Aplicando este pensamento ao contexto rural, o Alentejo em 2007 era cheio de possibilidades. Comecei por ter um atelier na LX Factory, em Lisboa. Mas no Alentejo, encontrei o equilíbrio perfeito para viver como gosto, imerso na natureza. Mais tarde, em 2015, este estúdio foi criado para mim. Na verdade, tenho uma relação familiar com Portugal: a minha avó era portuguesa. Nasceu no Porto. A família dela estabeleceu os vinhos do Porto Taylor's.

Ela falava-lhe de Portugal, ou ensinou-o a falar português?

Sim, falou-me um pouco da sua infância e cumprimentava-me sempre com um “Bom dia” pela manhã. Chamava-se Faith Winifred Martin Almeida. Era uma mulher de personalidade forte. Nunca vim a Portugal com ela, mas tínhamos uma relação próxima.

E hoje, como se sente em Portugal?

Sinto-me em casa. Sinto um calor aqui. Existe uma dignidade neste país que é profunda e bonita. O mundo tem muito a aprender com os portugueses e o seu modesto refúgio. Existe um sentido de ‘timelessness’ (intemporalidade) aqui. É um lugar autêntico, onde as pessoas não ostentam. Em que há uma relação próxima com a natureza, com as estações, com a agricultura. Portugal tem sido bom para mim.

Sente alguma relação entre a paisagem portuguesa em que escolheu viver e a da sua terra natal, as Ilhas Jersey?

O encontro entre o céu e o mar foi o único horizonte que vivenciei enquanto criança. Nasci numa ilha muito bonita, mas da qual tinha de escapar. Era um deserto cultural. Nunca me senti de lá.

A sua família está em Inglaterra?

Os meus filhos, de 15 e 21 anos, vivem em Londres. São independentes, ambos seguem caminhos criativos. O mais velho estuda escultura. O segundo toca bateria e enveredará provavelmente pela produção musical. Cresceram nos meus ateliers, a ver-me pintar. Ainda têm o hábito de levar os seus cadernos de desenho para todo o lado. Sempre os incentivei a desenhar – naturezas mortas, copos de vinho, perspectiva.

How did you end up living in Portugal?

I first came to Portugal in 2007. I was looking to find an environment exotic and windswept, the Atlantic Ocean with the coastline was for me and remains thrilling beyond the tame sea of the Mediterranean. I wanted a large space to build a studio that afforded me views of the sea. Finding space for cheaper rent in the urban context has been what artists seek. Apply that thinking to the rural context and Alentejo in 2007 was full of this possibility.

I started off with a studio in LX Factory, in Lisbon, but I found the perfect balance to live the way I want in the Alentejo, surrounded by nature. Later, in 2015, this studio was created for me.

Actually, I have a family connection with Portugal: my grandmother was Portuguese. She was born in Porto, where her family set up Taylor's port wines.

Did she talk to you about Portugal, or teach you how to speak Portuguese?

Yes, she talked a little of her childhood and always a *Bom Dia* greeting in the morning. Her name was Faith Winifred Martin Almeida, and she had a strong personality. I never visited Portugal with her, but we were close.

And now? How do you feel in Portugal?

I feel at home. I sense a warmth here. There's a dignity in this country that's profound and beautiful. The world has a lot to learn from the Portuguese and their modest haven. There's a sense of timelessness here. It's a real place, where people don't show off; where there is a close relationship with nature, with the seasons, with agriculture. Portugal's been good for me.

Do you feel some sort of connection between the Portuguese landscape where you have chosen to live in and the one where you come from, the island of Jersey?

Where the sky and sea met was the only horizon I experienced as a child. I was born on a beautiful island, but I had to escape. It was a cultural desert. I never felt I belonged there.



Jason Martin, Untitled (Brilliant pink/Ideal rose)
2022, Oil on aluminium, 180×140 cm
© Jason Martin; Courtesy Lisson Gallery



Jason Martin, Untitled (Viridian light/Scheveningen green deep)
2022, Oil on aluminium, 222×222 cm
© Jason Martin; Courtesy Lisson Gallery

E porque escolheu Melides para viver?

Fascinam-me as quatro tonalidades de verde que as árvores têm ao longo do ano – o eucalipto, o sobreiro, o pinheiro e a oliveira. Estou imerso na natureza. A única forma que tinha de construir um estúdio era tendo um projeto agrícola. Depois consegui uma licença cultural. Isso dá-me a responsabilidade de criar diversidade cultural. Quero fazer residências artísticas e sessões de filmes ao ar livre.

Quando?

Provavelmente no próximo verão. As exposições de filmes acontecerão no espaço do lago natural de água filtrada que eu construí. Os filmes serão projetados numa tela, que depois refletirá no lago. E as obras que os artistas em residências fizerem irão para A Moagem, um centro cultural em Melides. Assim, cria-se uma herança cultural para a região.

Por que escolheu o arquiteto Eduardo Souto de Moura para desenhar o projeto da sua nova casa?

O Eduardo [Souto de Moura] é um poeta que faz arquitetura. Não se impõe no espaço com as suas criações. Ele permite vistas emolduradas e uma libertação do espaço no ambiente natural. A casa, que foi desenhada em 2008 e que terá uma área de cerca de 500 m², terá vista para a Arrábida.

O seu projeto cultural também passa pelo vinho.

Sim. O meu plano é financiar o projeto cultural através da agricultura. Em 2010, comprei uma vinha com cerca de 2,5 hectares.

Que castas tem plantadas?

Arinto, Antão Vaz, Boal, Touriga Nacional, Castelão. Com os meus sócios, construímos uma adega tecnicamente perfeita. O alquimista faz vinho como uma obra de arte. Uma obra de arte evolui de uma alquimia de ideias e de prática. O vinho ensinou-me a ser extremamente paciente.

Are your family in England?

My kids, who are 15 and 21, live in London. They're independent, both doing creative stuff. The eldest is studying sculpture. The youngest plays drums and will probably go into music production. They grew up in my studios, watching me paint. They still carry their sketchbooks everywhere. I've always encouraged them to draw - still life, wine glasses, perspective.

And why did you choose to live in Melides?

I'm fascinated by the four shades of evergreen that the trees have throughout the year - eucalyptus, cork oak, pine, and olive tree. I'm immersed in nature. The only way I could build a studio was to have some sort of agricultural project. Then I got a cultural licence, which means I have to create cultural diversity. I want to do artist residencies and outdoor film sessions.

When?

Probably next summer the film screenings will take place at the natural water filter lake I built. The films will be projected on a screen, which will then reflect on the water. And the works that the artists in residence complete will go to A Moagem, a cultural centre in Melides. This way, there's a cultural heritage created for the region.

Why did you choose the Portuguese architect Eduardo Souto de Moura to design your new house?

Eduardo is a poet with architecture. He doesn't impose himself on the space with his creations. He allows framed views and spatial release of the natural environment. The studio, which was designed in 2008 and has an area of about 500 m², will have views towards the Arrábida.

Your cultural project also includes wine.

Yes. My plan is to fund the cultural project through agriculture. In 2010, I bought a vineyard of around 2.5 hectares.



Em 2013, nasceu uma experiência vínica da sua autoria que é efetivamente uma obra de arte em mais do que um sentido: uma edição limitada de garrafas 'magnums' moldadas por si, que têm uma pincelada gravada na garrafa em vez de um rótulo, além de uma caixa personalizada com uma pincelada de cor...

Sim, fizemos uma edição do "Impossible Vineyards" - 250 garrafas 'magnum'. Cada garrafa é única; estas questões técnicas nunca tinham sido abordadas. Ter uma edição de 250 magnums foi um triunfo contra a adversidade.

E estão previstos novos vinhos para breve?

Para o ano, pela mão do enólogo Pedro Vasconcelos e Souza, haverá três novos vinhos no mercado: dois monocastas de 'Caveira' [o nome da aldeia onde está plantada a vinha], e 'Alfaiate', que já estão em produção.

Qual o papel do acaso na carreira de um artista?

No meu caso, tive a sorte de sempre ter sabido o que queria fazer. Isso foi a minha bênção. Pintar era o meu único verdadeiro interesse. Lembro-me de passar horas a desenhar - peixes, flores, fauna... - dos 15 aos 18 anos. Tive a felicidade de ter um mentor nessa fase da minha vida, alguém que acreditou em mim, que me motivou a continuar. Uma palavra de apoio no momento certo pode mudar a vida de alguém.

Questões como a sua "imortalidade" enquanto artista ou o julgamento dos seus pares pesam sobre si?

Aprendi a ignorar o julgamento, não ajuda a uma prática criativa saudável. Testem-se as águas 50 anos após o nosso desaparecimento: essa será a medida do testemunho de uma vida criativa e meritória. Estamos cá para ensinar, para amar e para aprender. Nunca sabemos o que é andar nos sapatos dos outros. O mundo da arte é um negócio como outro qualquer, um desporto cruel. As modas vêm e vão. O meu trabalho é a minha vida. O trabalho é um professor para ser celebrado e usufruído.

What grapes varieties do you have planted?

Arinto, Antão Vaz, Boal, Touriga Nacional, Castelão. Together with my partners, we've built a technically perfect winery. The alchemist makes wine like a work of art. A work of art evolves from an alchemy. Wine taught me to be extremely patient.

In 2013, you came up with a wine project that's essentially a work of art, in more ways than one: a limited edition 'magnum' bottle moulded by you, which has a brushstroke imprinted on the bottle rather than a label, plus a personalised case with a splash of colour...

Yes. We did an edition of "Impossible Vineyards" - 250 'magnum' bottles. Each bottle is unique; these technical issues had never been considered. Having an edition of 250 magnums was a triumph over adversity.

Any new wines in the pipeline?

Next year, there will be three on the market, which were produced with the guidance and expertise of enologist Pedro Vasconcelos e Souza: two single varietals called 'Caveira' [the name of village where the vineyard is planted], and 'Alfaiate', already in production.

What role does chance play in an artist's career?

In my case, I was lucky enough to always know what I wanted to do. That was my blessing. Painting was my only real interest. I remember spending hours drawing - fish, flowers, and fauna - between the ages of 15 and 18. I was fortunate enough to have a mentor at that stage of my life, someone who believed in me, who inspired me to keep going. An encouraging word at the right time can change someone's life.

Do issues like your "immortality" as an artist or the judgement of your peers weigh on you?

I have learned to ignore judgement. It doesn't help healthy creative practice. The waters are tested 50 years after we've gone: that will be the measure of a creative and worthy life. We're here to teach, love and learn. We never know what it's like to be in other people's shoes. The art world is a business like any other, a cruel sport. Fashions come and go. My work is my life. Work is a teacher to be celebrated and enjoyed.

LISSON GALLERY

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大水花 Rolling Stone

RS TV | Jason Martin: 用抽象的艺术描绘出具象的永恒

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自上世纪九十年代初在伦敦金史密斯学院求学以来，英国画家杰森·马丁（Jason Martin）从自然中汲取无限的灵感，致力于探索和打破绘画与雕塑的边界。

马丁以厚涂画法和态势绘画著称。他将不同的媒介和材质混合进颜料中，以手代替画笔，在铝板上塑造出三维立体的效果。在大片纯粹的色彩和起伏的表面中，仿佛能看到艺术家位于葡萄牙的工作室外，自然界中经过千万年演化形成的壮丽痕迹。

当你走进里森画廊位于上海的展览空间时，便能看到艺术家使用**混合媒介**所制成的颜料创作而成的作品。

在马丁的画作中，他选择使用**单一的纯色**，通过双手将颜料在铝板上塑造出带有边缘、曲线和褶皱的起伏形态，形成自然的明暗交错。

画作表面的颗粒感和作画时留下的抽象痕迹，延伸出平面之外，呈现出三维立体效果，构建了一个超越绘画艺术本身的虚构空间。

雕塑和绘画之间的界限就此打破，带给观众一种脱离当下，回归虚空的观展体验。



Jason Martin
Untitled (Oriental blue), 2021
Mixed media on aluminium
90 x 73.3 x 11 cm
35 3/8 x 28 3/4 x 4 1/4 in
© Jason Martin, courtesy Lisson Gallery

视线转向右手边，一幅**群青色的圆形画**挂在走廊空间的尽头与观者遥遥相望。画作中显露的笔触痕迹，仿佛其中隐隐有山涧流水，令人想起中国的水墨画。而马丁也在接受采访时提到，他希望这次展览中的作品能够展现出一种**普世的魅力**，和一种能够与未来语境对话的永恒性。

往空间深处穿行，盛夏午后的阳光透过落地玻璃窗照射在墙上三幅荧光粉的画作上，视线变得明亮且开阔。阳光与颜料的表面产生了奇妙的反应，透出淡淡的玫瑰金色的光泽。而在这三幅作品的对面，**艺术家使用了一种猩红色颜料**，创作出一幅更大型的画作，作为这场展览的尾声。



Jason Martin
Untitled (Fluorescent pink / Titanium white), 2021
Mixed media on aluminium
103.2 x 82.8 x 12 cm
40 5/8 x 32 1/2 x 4 5/8 in
© Jason Martin, courtesy Lisson Gallery

在如今这样一个充斥着各式各样信息的纷扰时代里，马丁的画作中透露出难得的静谧与平和，正如他这次展览的标题 **“Space, Light, Time”** 一样，在空间和光影的变幻中，寻求一种接近自然的无限永恒。

马丁通过作品来讨论时间与空间的关系，在绘画和雕塑的边界中不断地探索与前行。

而在当下，观看一幅绘画作品对我们而言的意义是什么？ 我们又能否从艺术中获得更为深远的，超越时间和空间的影响？

《Rolling Stone大水花》 有幸邀请到英国画家杰森·马丁，做客本期的 **The Breakdown** 栏目，跟我们聊一聊关于绘画艺术跟人与自然之间的关系。



空间、光和时间



杰森·马丁《Space, Light, Time》展览现场, 2021 © 里森画廊

RS: 为什么要将这次展览命名为“**Space, Light, Time**”? 你认为这三者之间的关系是什么样的? 而你又是如何将这三者融入创作之中的?

Jason: 其实我一直都很想将这个标题作为一个展览的名字, 然后我觉得这次正好是一个完美的机会。

我在创作中一直都会回到这三件事物, 或者是有人在讨论绘画的时候, **它们是我创作的基石**。我一直都在试图讨论空间的模糊性与向量。

当然, 光线也是很重要的。

还有时间, 有一种物理痕迹的感觉, 与我在空间中的移动相关联。我想让这些概念尽量清晰直接, 避免过于文绉绉。

以前, 我做过隐喻性更强, 或是说更诗意的展览。所以在这个展览里, 我想要尽量地精简并且接近本质。

于是便有了这三个我的画里最常见的主题。你也许会还有“颜色”, 当然, 我们可以对此做一些讨论。但是空间、光、时间对我而言最基本的, 最本质的实践, 是我最想要表达的东西。

RS: 颜色在你的创作中扮演了什么样的角色?

Jason: **这次上海的展览里的作品都使用了混合媒介**。它们都是单色的, 但其中有几幅有色调变化, 颜色是分层叠加上去的。有好几层的颜色相叠加在一起, 通常需要数周的时间去达到最终饱和和强烈的色彩。

我使用的颜料其实透明度很高, 并没有很厚重的颗粒感, 并且一点点颜料就可以稀释覆盖到很大的范围。当我将颜料不断喷洒到平面上时, 才形成了饱和度更高的颜色。

我不知道这是否算是背离了单色画, 因为我已经探索单色画很久了。颜色这件事激起了我的兴趣, 我被它所吸引。我回归探索一些非常相似的颜色, 并且我尝试将群青色加入一些蓝色和红色中, 我想要将那些颜色叠加以产生新的颜色, **但是这些所有都是有关单纯的颜料本身。**

RS: 为什么会想到在铝板上作画？

Jason: 我作画的动作有时候非常消耗创作的平面，在画布上作画容易使它变得潮湿，而铝板通过焊接的方式支撑，**稳定性非常好**。所以选择用铝板是一个完全技术层面的决定，主要还是因为它的韧性和抗阻性，我可以在整块铝板上连贯地运动制造出张力，这是我用画布办不到的。

如果你仔细看作品的边缘，你能看出来它不是画布，因为看不出来画布的折边。

RS: 你是如何制作那些带有混合媒介的颜料的？

Jason: 如何制作这些作画的颜料是一个大工程。

你需要实时去追踪那些材质移动的轨迹，看是它们水平方向还是垂直方向，然后你需要用喷枪去叠加这些材质。

那些材质非常令人惊喜，它们会形成一簇一簇的造型。

如果你用放大镜去看，你会看到那些添加上去的纹理，遮盖了下面裸露的部分。

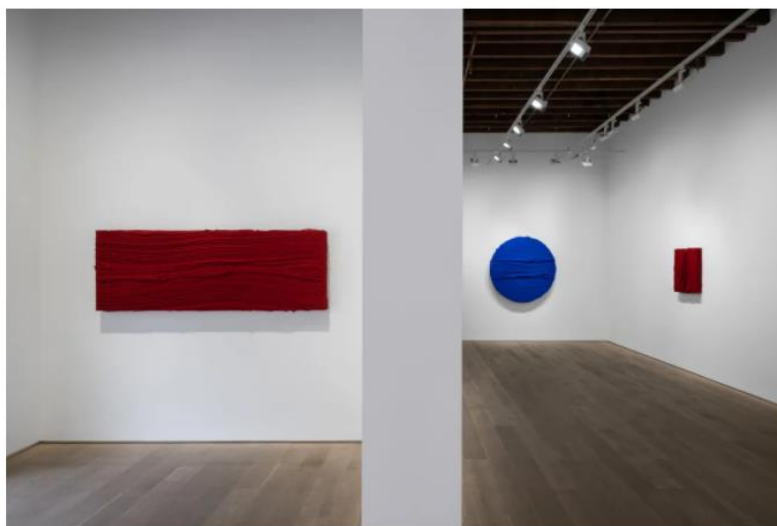
这样就形成了分层，**看上去非常的超现实主义**。它和自然界中的某些事物非常地相似，会令你联想到一些蝴蝶翅膀之类的东西。它们看起来像是来自过去的遗迹，有一些自然主义的样貌。

但相比起传统的绘画过程，这其实诞生于一种高度人工制造的过程，**是一种更加晦涩的语言**。

颜色在其中的实际应用是为了将作品中的平面带入一种新的境界。你需要通过不同的方式去将绘画的自主权展现出来，我作为一个主体将退居幕后。

这种物理的形态，它并不是非常直观，也不是很热烈，也不符合既定印象，所以会有那些隐含的笔刷的痕迹，隐藏在自然的纯粹的颜料材质之中。

绘画是一场舞蹈



杰森·马丁《Space, Light, Time》展览现场，2021 © 里森画廊

RS: 你作画的过程听起来很像是一种舞蹈

Jason: 这确实有一种身体性在里面。

我会进入一种像编舞一样的程序中，会有一段准备期，你会觉得：“好吧，我手上已经有了所有的材料，一切都准备好了。我应该怎么去实行这一切，让它变得有意义？”

你会进入一段舞蹈，或者说一种韵律中，那种韵律会引导某种情绪和过程。

你会在这个过程中忘记自我。

我想毕加索谈论过这件事。

他说：“渐渐地，所有事物都会离开你的脑海，**最终你会将自我留在作品中**。如果说你运气足够好，你会离开你自己，你会告别这一切。”

你会走出这个空间，只留下一种纯粹的物我两忘。就像是一种思维的灵修，你会清空所有的杂念，并且在很短的时间里和一些玄妙的变化相联结。

这是非常令人激动的。

这确实是一场舞蹈。

城市、 自然和疫情

RS: 城市和自然对你来说的意义分别是什么？

Jason: 我出生的地方是一座小岛，小到让你会觉得有点幽闭恐惧症的地步。但我有一些能够从岛上向远处远眺的机会，去寻找一些陆地，并且与海洋和天空相接触。

搬去伦敦这样的城市对我来说非常重要，去城市中接受一些影响，融入其中的文化，和不同的人进行对话交流。去大学学习也同样重要，**让我建立起某种概念性的框架**，它会帮助我达到我在绘画中的目的。

但是我从来都不想住在城市里。城市是一个值得常去的地方，但是它也会令人非常不知所措。

所以说我在寻求某种出口，我在葡萄牙找到了我想要的，这里非常与世隔绝，十分乡野与自然。这里一年四季绿树成荫，有橄榄树、桉树、松树、还有栓皮树，是一大片未开垦的绿色土地。

我觉得这是所有艺术家都会很感兴趣的地方，你可以从自然中获得灵感。

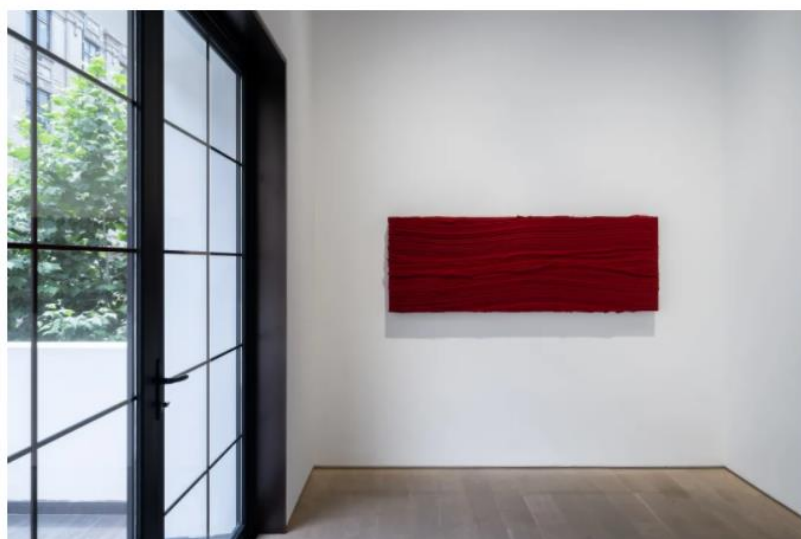
我认为自己是一个风景画家，但我在用一种抽象的语言创作，所以我一直都在从自然中获取灵感。

RS: 在经历了疫情之后，你在创作时会不会有一些不一样的感受？

Jason: 在疫情爆发之前，我一年大抵要在伦敦和里斯本之间来回飞四五十次。这让生活变得有些支离破碎。

从这点上来说，疫情期间的封锁让我能花更多的时间专注在工作室里，而我已经很多年没有这样做了。**我的创作变得更高效，并且更具多样性。**我可以尝试实验性更强的作品，开发更多的颜料。所以从这个角度来说，疫情对我而言是一件好事。

抽象主义自然实验



杰森·马丁《Space, Light, Time》展览现场，2021 © 星森画廊

RS: 绘画艺术从单纯平面的视觉的呈现，到后来对于空间性的突破，你在看来，这门艺术会继续往什么样的方向发展，**绘画的边界在哪里？**而对于你个人来说，你下一阶段的创作又会去探索什么样新的目标？

Jason: **我一直以来对于绘画和雕塑之间的碰撞都非常地感兴趣。**在这背后有一些高度现代主义的叙事，有关绘画的元素是什么，它为什么会变成这样，它是如何在其中包含了雕塑。

雕塑和绘画之间的平衡一直是一件很有意思的事情。

你可以从那些在1960年代洛杉矶的艺术家们那里，看到关于空间和光线的移动，像是John McCracken或者James Turrell，他们谈论光线，空间和色彩，而这些都是绘画的基础，但是他们同时又是在创作三维结构的作品。

绘画是一个想象的空间，同时又是一个物理的、三维立体的物体。我认为将这两者衔接到一起的时候，是最有趣的部分。**我真正感兴趣的就是绘画和雕塑之间的争论**，并且想成为这个议题中的一份子。

这是一个很大的挑战，我也在这条路上前进了很久。我在1993年毕业，**一直坚持着同样的原则和过程**，这也许是一条很窄的道路，但是我会去探索这其中的可能性。

在上海展出的那些作品，**我希望它们能有一些普世的魅力**，并且能够同下一代还没有出生的人们对话，在未来的一百年里，你将会看到这些作品仍然保持着永恒和经典性。问题在于，该如何去创作一种源于历史对话，同时具有个人特色的艺术语言。

在我年轻的时候，我在东京城外见到了一位八十岁的陶艺家。他给我看了他珍贵的一只碎成了7片的古埃及的杯子。我拿了一块放在手心，古埃及的图样非常完美，那些笔触痕迹来自公元两千年前，你仍然可以看到那些由他人的手制作的痕迹。对我来说，那些4000年前的笔触的痕迹将我带入了时间，而我所在的又是当下，所以，再一次地，联系到了展览标题 **“Space, Light, Time”**。

RS: 你认为抽象和具象之间有某种联结吗？

Jason: 我认为所有抽象中都有具象的元素，并且我认为所有的具象都有蕴含着各式各样的抽象，即使是最具象的作品，其中也一定有抽象的存在。

东方的艺术传统是走进山水之间，去探索雨雪和山岭，然后回到作画的地方，描绘出最原始本质的山水。

我喜欢这种描绘本质的概念。

对我而言，最有趣的抽象来源于具象的元素，所有，无论是光线还是自然的演绎。

抽象和具象之间有着某种参照，是相互交叠的。

信息时代的观看习惯

RS: 现如今人们接收信息的方式变得快速且直接并且某种程度显得有些表面化。但在你的作品中，我们可以感受到一种“凝固的流动感”，并且其中有一种“持续性”的存在，所以你认为在如今的大环境下，这样一种艺术所带有的持续性和视觉空间的拓展会如何影响观者的日常？

Jason: 我其实很抵触人们对于技术和社交网络的依赖，因为我不认为我的作品能被一张照片转化得很好。你需要看到我的作品的实体，去感受它。

对我而言网络无法令人满足，因为你在其中并不会经历我们在自然界中所经历的脆弱性。

而正是这种脆弱性孕育出了美。

一件艺术品需要一些脆弱性去突出它的美和意义。它必须要去承受那些与我们作为人类同样要承受的代价。

有句话我在更年轻的时候读到过，它一直停留在我的脑海里，是托尔斯泰说的，他说：“真理的对立面不是错误，而是假象”。

我当时在想，这究竟是什么意思？

但我想这句话在今天可以被用来形容社交网络。

人们认为他们可以理解他们观看的图像，但是无法去欣赏比例，文本，还有物理性。

我不认为线下看展的嗜好会改变，因为这非常有价值。如果你看见一件艺术品，发现了其中的令人激动的部分，这在所有层面上都值得去到一个展览去观看它，你永远不会从搜索引擎和网络中获得同样的体验。

RS: 这次在里森画廊上海空间的展览，也是你在中国大陆的首次个展，你会希望从这次展览中收获怎样的回应呢？而在另外一种文化语境中的作品的展示是否也可以看成是创作的一部分？

Jason: 对我而言，我很高兴这次能在上海办展。我之前去过几次上海，但很遗憾这次我不在现场。

现在看来这次展览收获的评价不错。我在筛选这次送去上海展览的作品的时候非常地谨慎。因为我想到中国拥有如此丰富的文化艺术传统，可以追溯到二十世纪之前。

我没有将我的作品看作是当代的艺术品，尽管它们确实是当代的，因为它们创作于当下。

我在过去一年中创作了这些作品，我想到你们拥有如此悠久的历史，观众可以将这些作品与绘画、雕塑、陶瓷一起参照。

THE MATTER IN HAND (THE ART OF JASON MARTIN)

A personal dialectic between matter and intuitive consciousness forms the necessary basis of the painted works of Jason Martin.

But then what can a painter use, save for the intuitions and insights of the conscious mind and the material sources of the surrounding world? To understand painting is therefore to experience a sentient mind applied to matter with a sense of its prescient immediateness, while at the same time utilising what is materially available in the world. Yet in so speaking of the materials at hand, however, there has over the last fifty years been much by way of processed innovation and extended material availability. And from the outset, the painter Martin has utilised these material innovations to his own uniquely creative advantage.ⁱ

In works that find their origins in informal abstraction and monochrome painting, he has created a highly personal and discerning vocabulary of expression. While tied to earlier aspects of action painting and new abstract and subjective modernist-minimal tendencies, he was among a challenging generation of British artists that returned to material *informel* and process-based painting in the late 1980s to early-to-mid 1990s.ⁱⁱ

The revived tendencies towards monochrome, or, less polemically put, monochroic (single colour) painting, was also evident in the period historicity at that time.ⁱⁱⁱ Yet the history of the monochrome, from its anarchic origins and fictive strategies in the nineteenth century, its role in the spiritual and/or purported metaphysics of Suprematist abstraction, through to its performance-related autonomy in the post-war, became rife with the polemics of fragmentation.^{iv} It was against this background and a desire to surmount reductionist tendencies in minimal art that the new Martin painting emerged.^v

Lines, Marks, Supports and Surface Structure

The content of abstract art is abstraction itself – something processed and perceived through the transformation of matter into a subsequent form of aesthetic materialisation.

Its associative relation to the world is otherwise argued as either immanent or transcendent, and therefore imbued with an indiscernible supplementary to what is materially present. An abstract painter develops a personal and identifiable language engaged with extended possibilities that aesthetically accrue to the materials of the world. Starting from a material viewpoint, for the last twenty-five years Jason Martin has infused every aspect of Mallarmé's so-called blank sheet of paper.^{vi}

When the painter begins, there is the initial support, the malleable materials, and the possibilities of use and application. In the context of this publication, emblematic of a discrete and unique body of STPI residential practice developed in Singapore, it is necessary nonetheless to explain the wider saturated involvement and address the consistent role and psychological sense of physical presence in the artist's works.

For nothing beneficial or of value to the artist is ever dispensed with, but has been elsewhere incorporated and honed for its potentiality. Much has been made of Martin's use of line and gesture, yet in reality it is not seen on the surface of his material supports, only its consequence or residue. You see the sweeping marks, expressive vocabulary and textured presence, that are the outcome of a gesture or series of gestures, since the performed gestural action is only ever inferred. Yet I do not argue that Martin's paintings are performances or visual records as such, unlike those of Georges Mathieu^{vii}; simply that the bodily involvement in the process is integrated into the language of making, within the working environment that surrounds the artist. If this may be less evident in the STPI works currently exhibited, it is nonetheless still redolent within the executed paper works.

In a technical sense, as works on paper they stand out as prints and drawings, but retain the continuous, creative mark-to-surface preoccupations of the artist. The stained drypoint plate etchings, while following the informal use of line in *tachisme* and encompassing Klee's famous dictum of taking a line for a walk, are a natural extension of his earlier larger scale use of the different metal surfaces of aluminium and polished stainless steel.^{viii}

Yet a new distinction is made in this instance by the use of paper supports and the impregnation process, whereby the material ink is substantially integrated in the work, rather than simply resting atop the surface.^{ix} In fact, Martin's printmaking has become an added dynamic to his work through his concentrated investigation in this area.

Martin's use of the trace, of arabesque-like marks and linear expressive ink drawing, is not actually a completely new undertaking. In many respects, it marks a return to his earlier investigative preoccupations and processed development —^x ones that recall the aesthetics of the "trace", remnant, residue, and aftermath; aesthetic issues that underpin many aspects and precocious contents of the *l'informe*.^{xi}

In the varied material pulp images exhibited we touch upon another consideration, namely that of intense material facture and the resulting surface structure. The artist has long been concerned with mediating the space between pictorial painting and the spatial aspects of sculpture. The largest of the artist's works in recent years suggest a noticeable sense of "objectness" through the variable depths in their frames and surfaces.

This question of colour, frame, expanded applications of material edges, breadth and depth of support facture and pictorial object in Martin's work, has become increasingly pronounced in recent years.^{xii} Consequently, "thingliness" is visually strengthened and grounded, shaping and extending the phenomenal logic of a given perception.^{xiii}

The Body and Movement

In abstract art the relation of the body to the support takes on a particularly unique consideration. Unlike figurative art where there is always a sense of the narrative and/or referential representational moment, abstraction in art uses inference and emotive inflection. Across the greater scope of Jason Martin's work, whether speaking of his large scale paintings or the smaller works of pulp and modelling paste, the artist's connectedness to movement and to surface mark and medium is a physical imperative. Whether the gesture is of sweep, drag, spread, splodge, drip or flick of paint, the outcome is necessarily defined by the psychophysiology of bodily presence.^{xiv}

Nonetheless, the nature of that astute presence in Martin's paintings results in certain different expressions of surface texture: each instance influences a sense of tone, and tone is distinct from colour, for sentient colour creates an optical effect while the tone of a painting creates its emotive affect. While a colour is a cognitive hue, tonal value creates and modulates through the means of light, a feeling of sensory extension.

But consciousness inhabits the world from within a body, and it is through the body that experience is ineluctably defined; what Merleau-Ponty calls the "flesh is the body inasmuch as it is the visible seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch—the sensitive sensible: inasmuch as in it is accomplished an equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing....between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea."^{xv}

Just as each work is enacted through the body of each maker, each painting is assimilated and shaped by the experience of its viewer. In the current exhibition, the green stained cel-vinyl images, *Selvagem I* and *Selvagem II*, are examples that differ in weight and configuration of coloured pulp

application and surface modelling, yet they still create quite distinct aesthetic experiences. For just as there are creative equivocations made present through the creative choices of the maker, a similar aspect of differential choice resides in the selective and variable responses of the viewer.

Many associative ideas are implied by these black carborandum, white titanium, and cel-vinyl blue pulp-based paintings on various paper supports: an aerial viewpoint of a planet, the waves of the sea, the abraded or excoriated earth, the actual interpretation remains to be apprehended in the cognizance of the viewer. This said there is often in the experience of abstract art a failure to notice that the body has an extended accumulation of senses.

The tyranny of modernism was to privilege the visual and aural above all else, to displace the value of the haptic, olfactory and gustatory. But these demoted senses are no less active in bodily movement and are of course fully engaged in all creative outward forms or expressions.

Haptic extensions of the sensory

Jason Martin's frequent attention towards a mediating anxiety between two-dimensional painting and wall relief sculpture, foregrounds the vital role and interplay of haptic presence in his art-making.

While the artist's hand is clearly an omnipresent aspect in his relief sculpture and painting – and we may want to emphasise the dexterous power of its material manipulation – it sometimes ignores a far wider scope and use expressed by the sense of touch through haptic activities.

All the senses, including vision, are but extensions of the tactile sense; the senses are specialisations of skin tissue, and all sensory experiences are modes of touching, related to tactility.^{xvi} Hence this haptic dimension may become all the more relevant in the research situation of an artist residency, for in the manipulation and enquiry into new media and materials the hands are the sculptor-painter's eyes, for "...the skin reads the texture, weight, density and temperature of matter."^{xvii}

If we translate this to the greater body of Martin's prolific creations over the last two decades, the sheer magnitude of haptic experiences realised through his use of touch and skin sensitivity is almost overwhelming. As the internal processor and maker, the common use of touch becomes embedded in memorial consciousness, demonstrating what is meant by "differentiated into the others" – an expression of synaesthesia.^{xviii}

This informs what is often understood as the relationship between matter and memory, and they constitute the grounds for involuntary evocations, implicit unconscious, and explicit forms of intentional memory.^{xix} Seen in the context of the pulp and Lascaux structura paste painting reliefs, the facture expresses tactile presence at every turn. While the rich blue Lascaux structura ultramarine paper works such as *Oriental Blue I* may be the artist's indirect homage to the famed monochrome artist Yves Klein, it does not diminish their sense of haptic-optical palpability.^{xx}

The participatory use of touch and the hand is the absent presence throughout all of Jason Martin's artistic developments, and remains the case notwithstanding the casting of some works in recent years. A cast is merely a displaced hand-originated model expressed through another process, no different from the role of a camera as a displaced mechanism for recording events. The use of tools for the spreading of his materials functions similarly, whether the combing effect seen in earlier works, or dragged paint, or Martin's recent powder pigment surfaces; the implications of touch remain the same.

This said chance also plays a part in the paintings' determined completion through the drying processes of a work. The artist may have some predictable foreknowledge, but the outcome is never totally stable; as Martin has acknowledged, many of his spread and saturated surfaces are

either subject to destruction or he simply scrapes them off and begins again.^{xvi} The material investigations and realised achievements of creating a discernible personal language of expression in abstract art is Martin's salutary achievement over the last quarter-century. Jason Martin and his practice continue to fulfil the famous dictum that abstract art remains prescient as "energy and motion made visible—memories arrested in space." (Jackson Pollock)

Mark Gisbourne

10 January 2019

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Martin has used gels, acrylics, oil, inks, sand and various mixed media, and recently metal casting. Also he has utilised an enormous diversity of symmetrical and asymmetrical painting supports systems such as aluminium, Plexiglas, MDF, Melamine, polished stainless steel, fibreglass, and recently nickel, as well as traditional historical supports such as copper and canvas. For the recent series of cast works see Ossian Ward "Opposites Attract" and Luca Massimo Barbero "It is all a moment (but forever)" in *Jason Martin: Painting as Sculpture*, Lisson Gallery, Milan, 2013, pp. 7-15.

ⁱⁱ These included British artists like Ian Davenport who left Goldsmiths and part of the Freeze generation and exhibition, 1988, see Martin Filler, Michael Bracewell and Damian Hirst, *Ian Davenport: Twenty Five Years of Painting*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2014. Also Alexis Harding who left Goldsmiths in 1995, see Mark Gisbourne, *Alexis Harding*, Andrew Mummery Gallery, London, 1998. And a number of abstract process painters like Estelle Thompson, among others, see monograph by Tony Godfrey and Deborah Robinson, *Estelle Thompson*, London, Merrill Publisher, 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ In 1993, as Martin was finishing his studies at Goldsmiths, a retrospective of *Robert Ryman* took place at the Tate Gallery (February 17—April 25), travelling to Madrid, New York, San Francisco and Minneapolis, see *Robert Ryman*, MOMA, 1993. Also an Yves Klein retrospective took place similarly at the Hayward Gallery, in 1994, see Sidra Stich, *Yves Klein*, Hayward Gallery, 1994.

^{iv} As cultural strategy, see Mark Gisbourne, In "Einem Streich: Von der Parodie zur Zeitlosigkeit darüber hinaus," *Jason Martin*, Städtische Galerie, Nordhorn, 1998, p. 35 (+ notes). For a detailed history on the monochrome, Denys Riout, *La Peinture Monochrome: histoire et archéologie d'un genre*, Nîmes, Editions Jacqueline Chambon, 1996.

^v For the different aspects of its development in the work of Jason Martin, see the textual paragraphs in Andrew Renton, *Jason Martin*, Milan, Charta, 2004.

^{vi} "...I'll put this sheet of paper between the two of us. Breaking the spell of your permanent presence, it will at least initiate you into what the invisible do not see, the minute detail of my days: it's thanks to this agreeable compensation that I've reached this decision." (1864) The poet quoted in Rosemary Lloyd, *Mallarmé: The Poet and his Circle*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, (1999) 2005, p. 46.

^{vii} The French lyrical abstraction artist Mathieu made filmed kimo-clad painting performances of his gestural and calligraphy expressive canvases sometimes realised literally in minutes, see Dario Cimorelli, *Georges Mathieu: Retrospective*, Paris, Paris Musées Association, 2003.

^{viii} The term *tachisme* is a painting process as part of the French post-war informal painting tradition, it places an emphasis on gesture and the aesthetic of trace. The concept was first propounded by Michel Tapié; *Un art où il s'agit de nouveaux dévidages du réel*, Paris Gabriel Giraud et fils, 1952.

^{ix} The impregnating of the surface and thereby integrating the material into the material support began with Jackson Pollock's use of raw cotton duck, but is attributed largely to the Washington Color School "stain painters" Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski, though they rejected all gestural aspects, see Karen Wilkin and Carl Belz, *Color as Field: 1950-75*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007.

^x Martin c. 1999-2003, also created a series of informal ink-based arabesque drawings, see Renton *op cit.*, pp. 20, 50-53, et al.

^{xi} In its ugly translation into English it is defined as “formlessness”, emerging as a concept conceived by the French Surrealist writer Georges Bataille (Documents, 1929-30), see Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User Guide*, New York, Zone Books, 1997 (published in an extended English following a major exhibition *L'Informe* “Mode d'Emploi”, Georges Pompidou, 1996).

^{xii} It has been evident from the outset as seen in works called *Untitled (Grey Loop Painting #1, 1997)* and *Untitled (Yellow Loop Painting #1, 1998)*, and an important aspect in the artist’s practice, see Jason Martin, *Jason Martin Werke 1997-2017*, The Schaufert Foundation, Schauwerk Sindelfingen, Sindelfingen, 2017.

^{xiii} For phenomenological “thingliness” and Heideggerian aesthetics, Martin Heidegger, “The Thing”, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Eng trans., Albert Hofstadter, New York, Harper & Row, 1971, (pp. 163-180) “What in the thing is thingly? What is the thing in itself? We shall not reach the thing in itself until our thinking has first reached the thing as a thing” p. 165.

^{xiv} The sense of various surface textures is particularly pronounced in a recent series of vertical paintings, see Francis Gooding, “New Works By Jason Martin”, *Jason Martin*, Lisson Gallery, London, 2016.

^{xv} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng trans., Alphonse Lingis, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1968, p. liv.

^{xvi} Ashley Montagu, *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin*, New York, Harper & Row, 1986. “The skin is the oldest and most sensitive of our organs, our first medium of communication, and our efficient protector...Even the transparent cornea of the eye is overlain by a layer of modified skin...Touch is the parent of our eyes, ears, nose and mouth, it is the sense which became differentiated into the others...‘the mother of the senses’.” p. 3.

^{xvii} Juhani Pallasmaa, “The Shape of Touch”, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Chichester and London, 2010, (pp. 56-59) p. 56.

^{xviii} *op cit.*, p. 3 For neural synaesthesia consult the extensive writings and researches of V.S. Ramachandran, *Phantoms of the Brain: Human Nature and the Architecture of the Mind* (1998), New York, Harper Collins, 2005.

^{xix} For early investigations into matter and memory, see Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory: Essay on the Relation of the Body and Spirit* (1896), New York, Zone Books, 1990.

^{xx} See Sidra Stich, *op cit.*

^{xxi} In this respect there is a striking affinity with the work of the Mexican Bosco Sodi, see Mark Gisbourne, “Matter as Metaphor: The Art of Bosco Sodi”, *Bosco Sodi*, Berlin Braus Verlag, 2015, pp. 88-89.

LISSON GALLERY

Article
July 2019

ARTICLE

PROCESS

Oil On Canvas

Long Way Home, Jason Martin's most recent show, filled the rooms of London's Lisson Gallery with the kind of paintings he's become internationally known for: minimal in approach, textured, expansive in their use of colour, deceptively simple yet subtly drawing you in.



Words_Trisha D'Hoker



Installation view of Jason Martin: 'Long Way Home' at Lisson Gallery, London, 15 May – 22 June 2019

(Opening image) "Untitled (Zinc white / Royal blue light / French graphite grey)", 2019
Oil on aluminium, 175 x 175 cm or 68 7/8 x 68 7/8 inch

© Jason Martin, Courtesy Lisson Gallery

I know Martin, and I've seen how he works; the *'Breaking Bad'* rooms (spray-painted, plastic-sheeted), the giant handmade brushes, the detritus of a visceral, energetic, restless artist. I want to ask him about his process: how he structures his day, how he keeps going, what drives him. So, one rainy day in June, I visit him at his studio. And we dive straight in, discussing his view of the world — and how the need for it to come up against something other than the confines of the artist's mind brings him out of self-imposed exile.

Martin's studio is in a leafy corner of southwest London, close to the river. The project has stalled of late but will one day house his complete collection of work. He works less here these days — spending more time in Portugal instead, where he has created his own unique space to live and create. With Martin, you have the feeling he never completely separates the two anyway; he is the embodiment of an artist who lives in his head, and in his art. But no matter how considered and expanded that mind is, it needs the other.

Trisha D'Hoker: What have you been up to the past few years?

Jason Martin: I go through my whole working routine — which goes from when I'm in the right condition to work, when I can be very prolific, to other times when I can get distracted, and I don't feel so good. Here, there are some changes I've been making to the building which have been on hold for some years. So I don't really feel here, now, is the best working space.

Whereas in Portugal, I feel much more motivated to work. I have more space. Here, I feel like I'm boxed in. In Portugal, when I work, I have much more of a rigorous routine. And I do feel more relaxed and comfortable when I'm there. I have space. I'm in the middle of nowhere. So I tend to be more prolific. In the last few years I've been kind of regrouping — doing a lot of experimentation, challenging the whole working process, the methodology. There's always a sense of urgency to develop new approaches, and that takes time to evolve. The result of this last show in London is something I've been developing over the past 2-3 years; I also did a show in New York for Lisson last year. It was these works (from *Long Way Home*), but they weren't as reduced. These works are much more silent, and under a certain controlled methodology. The pieces in the New York show were more spontaneous, less structured.

TDH: These works did feel more structured than in the past.

JM: Yes, very much so. More so than any I've made since I was younger. Each of these works is broken down into six different spaces, and the process of introducing different tonalities was slowed down. The tonality shifts in the graphite works are very subtle, so you're reading it more as a whole; you're not reading each section as if it is slightly in front or beyond. There is a sense of horizon — landscapes, but reduced; a more fundamental sense of abstraction, a series of uninterrupted movements within. They are a step away from previous works. But painting comes slowly.

TDH: And in one of the show's three rooms you used graphite, which you hadn't worked with before?

JM: Without getting into the boring bit about how the paint is made, and without going into the whole pyrotechnics of how it's done, it feels, the graphite, quite earthy and mineral, not what you would expect. It's not very smooth. There are these particles in it, which give it more a sense of sculpture. Which room was your favourite?

TDH: I thought it would be the darks or blues, but it was the room with the white paintings that held me the longest.

JM: I think a lot of people responded to that. But you know, the quiet concerns of painting; I'm not trying to make any great big claims, this is me working through the practice I've been exploring for the past 25 years or so, within the constraints I have chosen. How can I explore, and make a territory? So in a way, they're very much like earlier works. They have been kind of shifting, but in some ways, it goes back to some of my earlier approaches, how I started.

And I think that is interesting, kind of poetic – hence the name, *Long Way Home*. It's like I've made a full circle. Some of those works reference earlier works, but in a different light. But that was that show. When I do another exhibition, it'll be a whole different set of works.

TDH: How do you know when you're ready to do a show?

JM: When you're working in some new territory and there's something to be explored, and you're enjoying it. Hopefully, you've established some connection with a gallery and they say, '*OK, this time we're going to target this.*' So that keeps you focused.

TDH: Otherwise you could just keep working away...

JM: Once you get a certain space to hang your work in, it does focus you in a good way. You know you live in your head so much of the time. I do...

TDH: So the chance to connect with people is important.

JM: Absolutely. And you hang on to comments, that gives you confidence. You can't live in your head all of the time, continuously, trying to assess your work, create a dialogue without introducing it to a wider public – something that also has risks, but is necessary to the whole development of your work. Otherwise, I don't know how to gauge whether what I have done is successful. This is me. And I feel more defined by what I do, my work, than by anything else. So it's a chance for me to define myself by what I do, by how I approach the work. Everything I do is all in there.

TDH: Earlier you mentioned Heidegger's concept of Dasein, as a way of thinking about things.

JM: It's very interesting. Because it has to do with how others connect to you, and respond to what you do, giving you a sense of dialogue. It's about how we are defined by those around us, and how the kind of experiences that are meaningful are defined by the responses of those around us.

TDH: So how do you motivate yourself to be creative and productive?

JM: There is a more defined, structured way to work. And I can do that, but then I have to turn it on its head. I kind of terrorise myself, challenge myself, ask lots of questions – maybe too many questions — and then at some point I think, this is boring. So then I make something.

The best results are after I have had this hiatus of reflecting and ruminating. And it always comes from doubt. And the doubt — it either paralyses you, caught in the headlights, or you then define yourself against it. So that's a challenge to overcome. It's all about defining yourself beyond the obstacles in front of you. And then you create new obstacles. It can be a hazard. Because it's very anti-social and you can be your own worst victim, living in your self-appointed exile. At the same time, without that, you don't then answer to what you do. And I do go through periods of complete pathos. I've been doing it a long time, and for me, my worst enemy is inside my head, the way that I make conclusions — and it's probably not the best analytical mind.

TDH: To see things differently or be able to consider the same thing with different perspectives – you need an open, sensitive mind.

JM: I don't know if I have an open sensitive mind — or if it's more like Janus.

TDH: Two-faced?

JM: Or facing two directions. It's like, is my whole life a performance? And if it is, and I'm working through it within my criteria and I succeed in that, then is that an inauthentic life or is that a true life? I feel I need to fight to have a true life, due to conditions beyond my control. But I've made certain conclusions about how I live, based on that sense of authenticity. That's come from the relationship I have with others, and how I understand that. You want to hide within yourself — but at the same time, you feel like you always want to connect. I do feel like I'm being observed, that I am part of some bigger observation, and then effectively, for me to succeed in myself, to be able to live in my head, I have to be both at the same time — like the Janus. So how do you reconcile that? How do you find a sense of self in yourself when you're different people at different times? Can you be different people, wear different hats at different times? And does that mean you are any less authentic? You do have to adapt, but it doesn't mean you have to give up on this core idea of yourself. So over the last few years, I've been trying to reconcile and resolve that.

TDH: What about the idea that art can fill gaps where words or normal communication is difficult?

JM: Look, there's that saying; *"I've got nothing to say and I'm saying it."* And I love that. Because what we do is, we motivate ourselves by doing something creative, not with a sense of conceit, of knowing something; when we have conversations, we don't talk about what we know, we engage in reaching out to vulnerability. Isn't that what is worth talking about? Do we express things that we actually know? Do we execute those ideas and illustrate those ideas? Or do we journey those ideas through the process of working practice and in the making?

I'm more of the later.

TDH: A journeyman!

JM: I'm sure there will be more contextual meat on the bone with other artists as far as writing about it goes, because what I am talking about is not really tangible. Painting is really about the relationship one has with a certain energy that comes from your interior mind. Frank Bowling has this fantastic exhibition at the Tate now. It's taken the retrospective look on his whole life to see how inventive, how extraordinary he's been. He's been living in the shadows, in the margins for many years. He's been recognised by the establishment, but maybe not by as many as he should have been; he's due his recognition. It's good to see that, that the old guys get the recognition in the end.

[Martin, ever restless, begins pacing, picking up my notes.]

JM: Look, what are you going to write about? Nobody wants to write about my paintings. Someone wrote the other day that my paintings were more like dessert than protein. I'm talking about the context, who am I interested in, I don't know how that translates (*laughs*). Or will you just make something up?

At this point, we decide to have a glass of wine and call it a day. But not just any wine. Martin planted a vineyard on his property in Portugal about 10 years ago, and while he leaves the actual winemaking to local partners, he has created beautiful bespoke glass bottles for the wine, where the bottle is cast and the surface relief is not, as it normally would be, attached, but is part of the mold. The details are then sandblasted; there is no paper label.

PROCESS

Martin believes this may be a first in terms of design for a wine bottle. Each bottle also comes in an exclusively designed box; the one I saw with a beguiling green brushstroke, draped across and around the box, drawing you in, making you want to reach out and touch – a mini-Martin masterpiece, each one.

Jason Martin: *Long Way Home* was at Lisson Gallery, 67 Lisson Street, London NW1 5DA from 15 May – 22 June 2019

For more information about the vineyard or the wine, pegodamoura@gmail.com

Long Way Home



Art in America

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

APRIL 2018

JASON MARTIN

Lisson

With richly tactile surfaces embellished with undulating pigmented mounds that sometimes protrude more than a foot from metal panels, Jason Martin's paintings can resemble sculptural reliefs. His first New York solo exhibition in twenty years featured sumptuous monochromes. The compositions appeared to have resulted from a short sequence of visceral, spontaneous gestures with huge brushes or comblike trowels. Yet Martin's process is always carefully planned and calibrated, as he aims to create a primal image emblematic of the act of painting itself.

Born in Jersey, in the Channel Islands, Martin currently works in London and Portugal. His early works, from the 1990s, are seductive icons rather than the psychologically resonant expressions historically associated with gestural abstraction. They seem to engage with a visual language akin to Color Field painting, and to relate to Bram Bogart's excessive impasto reliefs or some of Jules Olitski's overloaded late works. Opulent, ornate, and at times a bit outré, the paintings are nevertheless too aggressive in their implementation and emphatic in their comportment to be merely decorative, as some of his detractors have claimed over the years.

Representing a dramatic and welcome new development in Martin's art, the works in the recent show (all 2017) bear subtle compositions of neutral-hued oil on medium-size or large-scale aluminum panels, with incidents here and there of modulated color. A wide range of luminous grays predominates. For some pieces, Martin has modified black or white pigment with just the barest touches of pink, green, or blue.

In one of the most striking pieces, *Untitled (Davy's Grey Deep / Graphite Grey / Titanium White)*, 2017, Martin slathered thick layers of pigment in irregular horizontal striations spanning the width of the panel. He used trowels to apply the underpainting, and brushes for the top layers. The deep gray of a band at the upper portion of the work blends gracefully with lighter grays at the center and bottom. A number of blobby splatters disrupt the stripe pattern and help activate the surface. In its insistent horizontality, the composition faintly suggests land- or seascape imagery—a dynamic view of surging ocean waves, perhaps—but Martin eschews any sort of representational detail.

Another outstanding work, *Untitled (Titanium White / Raw Umber / Payne's Grey Deep)*, at first appears to be a white monochrome. As one's eyes adjust to the dense, blaring surface, a delicate composition of horizontal bands several inches wide becomes apparent. Defined by gentle shifts of hue—aided by the addition of minute amounts of gray and raw umber to the white paint—the bands slowly appear in miragelike fashion. Due to the static positions of the gallery's light sources, some details of the composition could be



Jason Martin: *Untitled (Davy's Grey Deep / Graphite Grey / Titanium White)*, 2017, oil on aluminum, 86 by 70 inches; at Lisson.

perceived only as the viewer moved in relation to the panel, thus suggesting a temporal aspect to the work.

The slick, semi-reflective surfaces as well as the seemingly effortless fluidity of these works recalls Martin's early style. Yet the pieces suggest a direct engagement with Minimalist painting, particularly that of seminal figures such as Robert Ryman and Agnes Martin. The elegant show conveyed a rather melancholy mood, perhaps; and, to this viewer at least, offered a sense of introspective solace.

—David Ebony

ARTFORUM



Jason Martin, *Untitled (Permanent Yellow/Madder Lake)*, 2017, oil on aluminum, 86 5/8 x 70".

Jason Martin

MIMMO SCOGNAMIGLIO ARTECONTEMPORANEA

With his most recent show, "New Oils," Jason Martin introduced a new chapter in his investigation of the fundamentals of painting. The artist, who divides his time between London and Lisbon, received worldwide attention with his participation in the 1997 exhibition "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection" at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He is known for monochrome paintings on aluminum, stainless steel, or Plexiglas

grounds, in which dense and expressive brushstrokes project outward, creating dynamic tension. In his recent works, Martin has applied the paint, which has a saturated and viscous materiality, in parallel bands arranged in one direction. The linearity of the backgrounds' marks, however, is constantly and irregularly interrupted and enriched by chromatic agglomerations—thickenings generated via the application of paint or by the force of gravity at work on the still-wet substance. In this way Martin unites control, through the repetition of the gesture that structures the surface, with chance, which frees the material to express a more complete sense of its corporeality.

For Martin, every new work is a physical experience that elevates his energy and concentration and translates them into the painting; he puts himself into a relationship with the dense, voluminous material of these pieces through a continuous manipulation of the pictorial surface, aiming to create an effect of perpetual and uninterrupted movement. It is precisely this marriage of the intensity of each painting's basic structure with the lightness with which its dynamic tensions are articulated that ends up delineating a new phase in his investigation of painting and its constituent elements—in this case including oil paint. Every detail of these surfaces draws attention directly to the physicality of the action that has defined them, continuously juxtaposing the image and its underlying dynamism. Each work is defined by its title: an exact description of the basic pigment from which it is made, emphasizing the artist's investigation into material, which determines the resulting image.

Martin approaches each new surface as a stage in a continuous mutation, in which we see—as when viewing an abstract landscape in uninterrupted and agitated flow—moments of life and concentrations of energy, in a constant and inevitable engagement that is both physical and sensory. What is surprising in these new works is the renewed monumentality and decisiveness of their brushstrokes, their extraordinary occupation and articulation of space, above all through the dialogue that the artist created between the works throughout the exhibition's rooms. The intense and variegated tones, like individual chromatic bodies (yellows, grays, reds, blues, blacks), thus resulted in the creation of a sort of energy path that, snaking from one room to another, transported viewers back to Martin's act of painting. The sheer force of these surfaces, incisive and vital in the almost sculptural way they unfurl, urges viewers to delve deep into the mechanisms of painting, to confront the stratification and concentration, accumulation and rarefaction, and clashes and distensions of material. But compared with the gleaming baroque effects that characterize Martin's earlier works, with their textural volumes and waves of colored matter, a new sensibility seems to be revealed in his latest efforts, characterized by a process that is in a certain sense more analytical and that even tends, in places, toward a decantation of the material. In these works, one comes face-to-face with the spreading of the paint, opening outward and moving, sometimes emphatically, sometimes intermittently, to form a pictorial landscape of the mind.

—*Francesca Pola*

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

It is all a moment (but forever)

Luca Massimo Barbero

“I wish to create the new signs of my inner movement, for the way of the world is in me”ⁱ

Kazimir Malevich, 1919

For a long time, Jason Martin’s research has been characterized by a personal and original focus on the whirlwind of painting; the way that it builds a visually and literally ‘fluctuating’ world through gesture and matter. The swirling paint and the way it disperses on a flat surface create an exceptional relationship between the painting and the viewer. There is a kind of *image* in the paint’s placement, which the viewer recognizes (our retina detects it by perceptual associations). This is our reaction to the flux of painting, to Martin’s control of the oil’s glossy matter and, it must be said, to his compelling ability to evoke the expanse of a landscape, the alluring carnality of a body, the silkiness of flowing hair.

In time, painting acquires its own visual life through the way it is conceptualized and realized. This is typical of Martin, an artist who never ceases to aspire to new worlds to achieve the act of painting, to form its ‘body’, to captivate the eye. The secret tools used in the studio have their own movement. They represent the rhythms and gestures of the artist’s body and its extension; they are prostheses that can be used to reach out in the medium, deploying it like a spell on the two-dimensional surface. They evoke the torment of deep space, of a majestic vortex, of sensuality made to be ‘touched’ by the eyes.

In 2007, in a conversation with Martin, I mentioned and quoted from the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting*ⁱⁱ to define both his possible cultural and conceptual roots and the exceptional “continuous physical and visual movement” of his paintings. However, in that conversation, the constant relation between “tension” and “stillness” emerged as a theme of his research. The tension is linked to the very way he paints, thinks, and acts. It is also associated with the physical act of flooding the surface with the glossiness of the colour/medium, sometimes spilling it beyond the surface’s borders, like a jarring noise in contemporary music. The tension is also due to the way force and gesture are measured out in the clash between his medium and the surface of the work (which is often metallic): in the shine and resilience of aluminium. Aluminium is the metal that is the ‘counterpart’ to his painting, its two-dimensional, physical body.

Futurists write that “a profile is never motionless before our eyes, but it constantly appears and disappears”. For a long time, this rejection of visual immobility has been a theme of Martin’s painting, of his visions. These visions (echoing once more the great avant-gardes and their utopias) are “states of mind” (following Boccioni), and as such they tend to appear and disappear forever in their “rapidity”. Remaining physically the same, they change due to the action of several elements—from light to gaze.

Conversely, the element of stillness belongs to the work in a more secret manner; a way that is no less radical than what the maelstrom of the gesture conceals. In Jason Martin’s paintings, stillness emerges like the shift of light between night and day; it is an aspiration rather than a concept of pictorial research. Stillness is to be read with a willingness to go beyond the gesture itself; one must move past the literary technique of abstract expressionist avant-gardes, or the technical reconceptualization of painting that the *Art Informel* brought about in European history (and which plays a strong role in Martin’s memory of his training, and in the exceptional continuity that painting always implies). One must move past—or rather, bring together—the vehemence of his gesture and the immobility of the medium.

In some works, the medium has 'spilled' beyond the borders and become an existential, anomalous lump that surpasses the legitimate limits of the surface. It has become exuberant, 'geological', and almost sumptuous; it expands by yearning for, and desiring, the third dimension. In some works, the paint itself physically juts out. Gesture and immobile medium thus blend in a series of works that is parallel to the oil paintings. These works are created with thick, vibrant pastes that Dubuffet, even at his most astral point, would have found volcanic, explosive, constructed with a rough medium that goes beyond what is earthly: the sands of plague-ridden deserts and the secret layout of ocean floors. If it is true, as Rousseau writes, that "*Tout est dans un flux continuuel sur la terre*"ⁱⁱⁱ, in time Jason Martin has managed to blend poetic torment, static ecstasy, passion's errancy and the always mysterious, fascinating, and changing heaviness of the dense, substantial, and magmatic medium that is pigment. Pigments appropriate the surface; they expand on it, fulfilling the desire for stillness and movement. The fluctuating and suggestive world meets the heaviness of the sands, the shifting luminosity of pigments, the shine and dullness of crystals. This generates works in which tension and stillness leave the physical and conceptual space to the dialectic clash between overcoming simple genres and interrogating the limits between painting and plasticity (which echoes sculpture). To clarify, the notion of being sculptural is not a simple change in one's path.

As we have generally seen so far, Martin as an artist never ceases to question himself and push the physical notion of painting beyond its obsolete limits; yet he continues to interrogate the 'origins', the seeds of the definition and practice of painting. This imperative to interact with the space beyond the two dimensions is charged with the irrepressible and vital nature of Jason Martin's work. Technique, materials, and the search for unknown reactions inspired by painting and creating are, for him, a fertile field where he fights, encounters difficulties, pushes himself to search for new borders to transgress, conquer and deliver to the audience's gaze. His painting is 'modelled' by hand, plunging his body once more into the medium to create the work. And while in two-dimensional paintings Martin constructs a fully-evoked, extraordinary and mysterious world, in the new cast metal works he shapes a moment, a lump, a 'thrust' of the paint, almost immortalizing the gesture. Paint and its elements become the evident subject. The medium is deployed in the cast works, brushstrokes, clots, and these become pure subjects in their manifestation, approaching the status of symbols. In an almost paradoxical way, Jason Martin creates the spontaneity of the gesture; he slowly creates the immediacy of a moment viewed as instinctual, serendipitous and irrational through a well thought out process and procedure. It is not surprising then to hear him say that "the casting of a brushmark literalized as 'subject' is a source of investigative and exploratory practice always challenged and redefined by a collective dialogue".

His brushstrokes shine with the preciousness of an ancient Dutch and Flemish painting tradition (which Martin so often evokes) where light, gold and air emerge from a brilliant lump, a particle of material so precious that it seems free and accidental—the preciousness of painting that arouses desire. I would say (or rather, write) that surprisingly, and bravely, Jason Martin continues on in this nearly-resolved debate between the ostensible casualness of the gesture and the preciousness of the medium. In these works, the materials' 'sound' dominates space (an element that has always fascinated Martin, and which he has always wanted to include): the sombre mystery of bronze, the alchemic gleam of copper, or the seductive, impertinent hardness of glinting nickel.

Martin leads us into a world of splendour and new visual desires. We, as the audience, are asked to maintain the same mobile gaze and multiple points of view that the artist has asked of us for a long time; we are asked to never slow down, to let his paintings live with full energy, in continuous movement. The immobile, almost frozen, pictorial gesture of these casts contains (like the plant in the seeds) the world of painting, its evolution, its highest concept—but also a self-aware irony, a fight between the elements. We look at it and we read it without being able to categorize,

determine its limits, or label it. This inability to ‘freeze’ Martin’s painting captivates us and is part of its joyful vitality, as if all these reflections, the medium’s metallic projections, wanted to enter our eyes, saying: “It is all a moment, but...forever.”

For these reasons, we are taking a “moment” to converse with the artist. We’ll proceed in an orderly fashion and talk first about the origins of this new series of works.

LMB: In my 2007 text on your work, reproduced in the catalogue for *Atlas*, I write about the exceptional but natural fascination aroused by your works. The “constant flux on this Earth” of your painting that would awaken Rousseauian *réveries*, inducing in the viewer of your worlds a sense of a natural, phenomenological and evocative narrative; that is, a narrative that would call upon the senses, movement, and our capacity for seduction. The sense of the light through the dense dialectic of your painting, induced by the medium and the sequence of gestures, is also produced by a “poetic excitement” (yours and your way of painting) of impressive duration, which, as I suggested, Edgar Allan Poe has described. In 2012 you painted *Crime* and, notably, *Rousseau’s Nightmare*, whose titles evoke Poe’s gothic atmospheres and the French philosopher himself. Can you talk about these two paintings and their titles, which are so deep, so evocative—and basically literary and narrative? Are they an evolution of your work, of ‘literary tropes’ and the echoes of passion? What is the *crime* concealed in the painting of Rousseau’s nightmare?

JM: The possible narratives in my paintings have not been contrived, rather uncovered. This approach to the development of my work is empirical and allows the discovery of new worlds: spaces that hold the viewer’s gaze, enriching suggestion and encouraging contemplation. I am not a topographical painter and am not concerned with depicting an illusory window on to perspective. Rather, I aim to intimate a genre of landscape with an unmediated sensory stimulation. There is an excitement that I arrive at most often through unprecedented situations and circumstances beyond my control. *Rousseau’s Nightmare* was an intense and claustrophobic exercise. The sense of turmoil and turbid rhythm found in the composition of this panoramic oil demanded a conviction of pure resolve to surmount the violent and oppressive demands of its making. The result is an abyss of fauna, a jungle never to be given light, a hinterland void of shadow, a no-man’s-land where existence is questioned. The gesture, furious and yet precise, proffers a legitimate and necessary savagery that underpins an endless space at once infinite and horrific. Perhaps the transgression is this entrapment of a rhythmic gesture - a movement of potential grace and belonging, delivered with the menace and butchery of a slashing machete. *Crime* was equally exhaustive. The canvas steals truth from the abandon and release of gestures left unruly and wild: beauty is perceived in a muted world of tropical thuggery, as ruthless and as dark as a lion’s pit.

LMB: In the works for *Atlas*, it was surprising to witness the emergence of transparent medium; it was a non-material that shaped (or rather fought, almost climbed up) the metallic surface of the painting. The painting, being both seduced and possessed, shone with that luminous transparency and became a pictorial hymn made of light and material that was ostensibly non-existent and ethereal. At the Peggy Guggenheim Collection exhibition, you presented a transparent, mystical work *Cry* (2009). A short while after, your works started showing signs of a dull, sandy medium, such as the white painting *Salt* (2008). This medium is more strained, volcanic; it is immersed in a geological, crystal world, a mysteriously captivating mineral universe. Then,

throughout your painting career, the crystals and the coloured sands of your paintings acquired more and more other mediums, until they were possessed by them, constructed by them, and finally became as earthy as they are extraordinarily ‘infernal’ and magmatic. What was (or is) your relationship with transparency, the luminescence of the medium, the way it reflects the light—from oil, to acrylic, to the mysterious gel? Conversely, what is the meaning inherent in the sandy and mineral medium of some of your works from the end of last decade?

JM: The gel works are fraught with technical challenges and often yield less successful results than any other medium I have explored. However, when successful, the allure and mystery of this most artificial of working medium can be ethereal and otherworldly. To look through, as well as to look at, is an ongoing concern and, if suspended over a reflective ground, the gel behaves much like crystal or glass. The work *Cry* is a meditation on divine sorrow, a hymn of pity and sadness. Its surface is replete with reflection and refraction. Light and life are juxtaposed with the symbolism of the crucifix, itself the embodiment of life and death.

‘Sandy’ and ‘mineral’ works such as *Salt* or *Gold* (2008) are journeys into the inanimate and frozen. They represent earlier attempts to expand and develop a different vocabulary from my oils. The inner life of these works further evidences my exploration of landscape and exemplifies my relationship to the earthy and the archaeological. The inherent characteristics of both gel and course paste mediums are distinct and different and yet they both recall elements found in our natural world. Familiar yet exceptional, the recollections of those who encounter these works are more often than not descriptions of natural phenomena: feathers, shells, hair etc., literary and descriptive interpretations that I enjoy and understand as affirming a belated naturalism that these contemporary yet timeless relics embody.

LMB: The struggle between transparency and opacity—between being traversed by light and its luminous impact on the base and taking light from dullness and reflecting it deeply through the crystals and asperities of the medium—seems to be dialectically represented in two cast works. One is *Paeon*, a 2012 cast bronze, the other (richly evocative of painting) is *Rijks*, a 2013 nickel cast work. The ‘sound’ of bronze—sombre, monumental, often defined as ‘dull’—and the symbolically exceptional nickel mass—with its loud ‘sound’, vibrant with reflections—confirm your statement - “I identify with each work as a development from the last”. That is, this is the way your research has evolved, the way it is rooted in the world of painting. What were the first attempts that led you to the cast works? What is the ‘sound’ of the metal base? What is your intention concerning its reflection? Tell us about how these works were born, about your curiosity in making them and your need to produce works such as these.

JM: The beginnings of my cast works can be traced to the mixed media works I made for *Atlas* in 2007, a group of works that particularly explore dry material. These led to the use of paste-like mediums that resulted in a more concrete, granular, rough and muted surface, void of reflection. The development of the pictorial language, now visible in the cast works, was born from a grip on a new material ultimately modelled by my hands. I work on the flat, nurturing a simultaneous utopian / dystopian series of gestural movements. My aim, and this remains true of all my explorations, is to arrive at an image that remains mutable. I ultimately attempt to harness a rhythm born of a reverberating core. This core echoes, explodes, collides, collapses and unfolds to release a series of moments – constant and infinite.

Slowing down what would otherwise be fleeting, my strategies of making involve a constant change

of pace from rapid and frenetic to very slow and almost mannered. Adopting practices familiar with sculpture and using them to subvert traditional modes of painting ultimately refreshes old ideas and reclaims reflection as the domain of the story of Western painting: 17th century Dutch still-life revisited post-Kapoor / Koons. When the topography of these gritty works gets transformed into a reflective surface, new beguiling possibilities emerge.

LMB: In regard to your work, people have written about the gesture, about the way it is almost immediately equated with your being a painter, a great dialectician of painting, a challenger and lover of painting as movement and as pervasive, totalizing space. In our critical conversation I used a quote from the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* to describe and summarize your evolutionary sense of movement and gesture in the space of painting, that is, within the painting domain. As the quote put it: “Moving objects constantly multiply themselves; their form changes like rapid vibrations, in their mad career”. Some of your works consisted in ‘being’ the movement. What happens with the cast works, where everything is ostensibly still, immortalized in an instant? What is their relationship with the painting gesture, the painting sign? How do you construct their slow emergence, the process by which they become ready for the viewer, and would you also describe this from a technical perspective?

JM: The casting of a 'brushmark' or a 'trace' subverts the act of its making to become instead a subject to be explored, like the generic traits within strands of DNA isolated by biologists. These forays into the grammar of painting become, through this process, monuments charting the legitimacy of an investigative mark. A mark, otherwise possibly abandoned and dismissed, instead flourishes unashamedly as a record of an emboldened, tougher accent. What might be no more than searching, tentatively modest and playful becomes, through such an invested process, a testament to a less conceited gesture. Whimsical marks become noble, empowered by their rejection of mere artifice and generalised cliché. Painting as sculpture, whilst losing a temporal virginity, gains ground in terms of surface identity and furthers the 'story so far' of high Modernism and painting's relationship to sculpture.

The gesture of painting within the cast works might be frozen and inanimate but this cryogenic stillness belies an inherent truth and integrity akin to, if not greater than, that of the raw gesture, left naked and free of encapsulation. In conceiving a process that involves such technical challenges, I am forced to revise my approach as to how to construct gesture. This highlights very real issues surrounding the time prior to and immediately after the 'found' moments I seek, during the resolution of a panel in readiness for casting.

The literal demands of the physical process - moulding, casting, plating, polishing – are echoed in the literalness of one's imagination, necessary in order to understand the next move. How to construct gestures that might run the course and end in positive and exceptional results is a concern loaded with significance and occupying thought prior to those more heavy-duty procedures. The approach to the live studio relationship between painter and surface or thought and act gets radically altered. The anticipation of how the live moment might translate within the work informs the development of one gesture to the next. There is a slowing of pace that encourages a meditative and contemplative process that in turn instills an awareness not to overwork, overburden or exhaust the work and to instead maintain a live, dynamic and palpable energy.

ⁱ Kazimir Malevich, “Nuovi sistemi nell’arte”, in Kazimir S. Malevich, *Scritti*, ed. by Andrei B. Nakov, 245—273, Feltrinelli (Milano, 1977). English quote from Rainer Crone & David Moos, *Kazimir Malevich: The climax of disclosure*, Reaktion Books (London, 1991), 35.

ⁱⁱ In *Jason Martin: Atlas*, ed. by Luca Massimo Barbero, Mimmo Scognamiglio Artecontemporanea (Napoli, 2007): “Tutto si muove, tutto corre, tutto volge rapido. Una figura non è mai stabile davanti a noi, ma appare e scompare incessantemente. Per la persistenza dell’immagine nella retina, le cose in movimento si moltiplicano, si deformano, susseguendosi come vibrazioni, nello spazio che percorrono” [“All things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing. A profile is never motionless before our eyes, but it constantly appears and disappears. On account of the persistency of an image upon the retina, moving objects constantly multiply themselves; their form changes like rapid vibrations, in their mad career”]; *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting*, available at <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/techpaint.html>]

ⁱⁱⁱ In *Jason Martin: Atlas*, ed. by Luca Massimo Barbero, Mimmo Scognamiglio Artecontemporanea (Napoli, 2007). “Tout est dans un flux continuel sur la terre. Rien n’y garde une forme constante et arrêtée, et nos affections qui s’attachent aux choses extérieures passent et changent nécessairement come elles. Toujours en avant ou en arrière de nous, elles rappellent le passé qui n’est plus ou préviennent l’avenir qui souvent ne doit point Etre; il n’y a rien de solide à quoi le coeur se puisse attacher” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Réveries du promeneur solitaire*) [Everything on earth is in a state of constant flux. Nothing keeps the same, fixed shape, and our affections, which are attached to external things, like them necessarily pass away and change. Always beyond or behind us, they remind us of the past which is no longer or anticipate the future which is often not to be: there is nothing solid in them for the heart to become attached to” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Russell Goulbourne, Oxford University Press (Oxford, 2011), 55.

Jason Martin: Painter of Other Landscapes

Paul Moorhouse

A century ago Western art embarked on an astonishing new journey of exploration and discovery. For almost six hundred years the observed world had held artists in thrall. Its emulation was their goal; the capacity to imitate was the evidence of their attainment. The more compelling the illusion, the more highly prized was its creator. Giotto, and the extraordinary artistic revolution he unleashed, presented art as a wonderful spectacle. Denying the material fact of paint, the artist performed a kind of alchemy, turning dumb matter into the appearance of flesh, sky and earth – the familiar world of beings, objects, textures and colours. The real, it seemed, was ensnared within the embrace of art, subject to the will and desire of a mind. But, as the twentieth century gathered pace, the mirage dissolved. Building on the earlier insights of Kant and Schopenhauer, modern philosophy and science confirmed that the true nature of reality remained elusive. Far from ensnaring the real world, the artist was an onlooker, entranced by appearance. Faced with this predicament, Kandinsky and Malevich forged a new direction. Dispensing with observation and imitation, painting now turned to itself as subject. This is where Jason Martin's art begins.

Among contemporary abstract painters, the intensity of Martin's engagement with his chosen medium is a defining characteristic. In his work the substance of paint is not simply a vehicle for expression. Rather, it becomes an entire world that he inhabits, explores and tests. Its defining features are colour, shape and texture, and while each of these elements is concentrated to maximum pitch they are nevertheless nuanced with extreme sensitivity. His feeling for colour is extraordinary, ranging from super-saturated, pure pigments to delicate inflexions in which different hues are refracted and mixed. Shape is no less a remarkable physical – and not simply optical – presence. Earlier painters such as Franz Kline articulated abstract form as a kind of non-descriptive ideogram surrounded by space. In contrast, in Martin's art shape is inseparable from the movement and texture of paint. Its plasticity is an expressive, physical fact in which event and surface are as one. Indeed, the key to Martin's art is the unique way that all these elements are enmeshed, with none predominating. As in the world we occupy, colour, shape and texture form an integral fabric. Indivisible, these elements are the components of the places he creates - terrains of visual and tactile sensation, experienced directly and essentially.

It is perhaps for this reason that, surprisingly, Martin intimates a relationship between his visual language and the genre of landscape painting. On face value this seems an unlikely connection. The topographical painter depicts a view as if seen through the illusory window of perspective. Defying that convention, Martin's domain, it seems, is that of imagination and unmediated sensory stimulation. No link seems possible. But this would be to underestimate his achievement. The external world of appearances conceals its true nature. Similarly, Martin's world, though abstract, appeals no less to the senses. It too seduces the eye, presenting a mysterious threshold on which to pause.

Luca Massimo Barbero
Of night and day

Jason Martin's work shifts across the dialectics of tension and calm. His art simultaneously gives substance to the gestural and dynamism of the image; his unerring quality lies in perpetual movement, in the artist's constant need to call into question both himself and the infinite possibilities of paint.

Each work holds within itself a certain unfailing vitality, energy and tension. His ability to root his work firmly in the theory and practice of a current concept of futurist avant-garde may be seen in the dynamism and resonance which inspire and make up the space of each painting. The upward, engaging progression of line, the study of the perceptual and symbolic possibilities of colour, the movement of reflected light shifting with the material are at the basis of this approach: Martin appears to observe not so much the mechanicism of Balla—focused on the reproduction of human movement—as the naturally philosophical feelings of Boccioni, for whom art is the living, moving, vibrant possibility of understanding what is real. From the act of painting to the formal progression of his work, and the movement of the perceiving eye, all recalling the visual dynamism bound to the construction of Boccioni's "frames of mind"—constantly calling into question the state of paint and painting.

Scrolling through the ages and the history of the image, Martin's work is closely bound to action painting. But it is not so much the fragmentary, sudden and naturalistic nature of the act that interests Martin but the quality of the execution, which runs through all his works from their conception to their enjoyment. Artist and viewer are thus involved in the dynamics of a 'single act' which brings together creation and viewing, gestation and observation: a theatre of visual action effected within the elastic space of the work itself, which is thus capable of going beyond its physical confines to reach the solidness of the real. Thus nature in Martin's work is revealed not as a realistic fact, but what Rousseau defined as the "constant flow of the earth", cosmic infinity, a constantly shifting body.

The hypothetical geographies of Jason Martin are a sensitive, telluric diagram of painting as body, landscape and geography. They do not refer to any specific place or person but restore a "living soul" to the eye. The phenomenon is seen from within, matter is the fruits of an immersion in the nature of a deeply romantic vein, capable of seizing the Sublime and of translating it into the overwhelming quality of the act and the constantly active, magmatic and vital matter within the "painting".

I would like to start this conversation talking about your beginning, as an artist. What was your biographical situation at that time? Was there a relationship between your situation and what became the development of your peculiar visual language at the time?

I was born on a very small island. Up until I was in my late teens I never saw a horizon that wasn't the meeting of sea and sky. I was exposed to the drama of an environment that always fell influence to the elements. My exposure to an everchanging environment gave me a strong feeling of movement and light. Later on at Art school I explored different approaches and strategies to making work, responding in particular to various paths of Modernism. Landscape and abstraction played heavy in my concerns. I was very keen on

post-war American abstract expressionism, Kline, Pollock, de Kooning, and the later high modernist concerns of Ryman and Judd. To possibly further the reductionism of Pollock was, I believed, the most challenging prospect facing painting. Pollock had, and still has claim to the last radical statement in painting.

Ryman also held quite a unique position for me. After I went to the 1993 retrospective at the Tate a work approximately 200 cm² titled 'Mayco' made a strong impression on me. This white oil comprised bands of 5- or 6-inch horizontal brushmarks almost seamlessly held together with a series of steady singular movements all just about meeting. I wanted to make the step of bridging the time delays between each stroke. In effect I wanted to make a work in a single uninterrupted sweep. A brushstroke that you could fall into, tracing the passage of time recording its making. I started to widen the possible reach of an oversized brush. My 'peculiar visual language' was born out of these specific concerns.

What I hadn't expected was the pictorial depth or space that opened up in front of me. The results were very much a testimony to the movement of my body and hence I found a distance from the arm-led gesture that I was so keen to get away from. I recognised the reductionism I sought coupled with a physical and more self-referential 'expressionism'. I felt an antipathy towards the attitudes of the generation preceding me at Goldsmiths. Housepaint, colourcharts, assistants, flat colour were not for me. I was very much of the mindset of how to paint not what to paint.

Your discourse, since then, has taken a parallel path in respect to the YBA school (Young British Artists). I would like to investigate briefly with you how this connection partially affected your initial vision, and more at length what kind of different approaches you choose in the following years, to arrive where you are now.

The YBA movement differs from previous groups of artists throughout history as the factors bringing these artists together are not theoretical but generational. I found myself loosely of that generation, albeit a bit younger and with no common ground for discussion. Inevitably I wasn't included in the many survey exhibitions that followed. I was a painter with more quiet concerns. I was and still remain engaged with the ongoing challenges of developing a studio practice.

The attitude towards that generation has mellowed over time. To begin with artists associated with them were stereotyped with 'one-liner' critiques. I was also 'pegged'. My answer was and has always been to develop as rich a pictorial language or vocabulary as possible. My language may be described as a mono-language; however, developing a more singular idea has for centuries been what artists do.

I have always wanted to develop the more sculptural aspects of my work and have made some journeys that have failed. I will continue to explore this regardless. My work is reliant on recognising failure. Positive results have always been arrived at through a temperance of deliberation and abandon.

It seems to me that your painting is full of references to seminal presences in the history of art—there is a sort of dialogue with artists from different ages, which is part of your choice for painting. What are these passions of yours that you then transform into visions? What are these “masters of the contemporary”, from avant-

garde to action panting and beyond, that you include in your painterly reflection, how, and why?

I have always found warmth by the references I stumble upon whilst painting. I consider painting to be a conversation that relies on previous discussions that I have witnessed or actively participated in or experienced.

The connections or references reached through my approach could easily be overlooked as facile or superficial. I seek these moments of recollection and build content through these 'found' moments—the recollection of a methodical Cezanne brushmark; a luminous dash of white suggestive of Manet; a composition honed from an O'Keefe (flora or gender); a spiral rhythm plotting Boccioni or Balla—bringing into the surface a contemporary chiaroscuro and extending the surface beyond the limits of the field, becoming a guileless Dada edge.

If my work is to have some universal understanding or a common touch, I must reveal something found in the human condition, in our human condition. In being part of the story so far, with the history of art, there is the chance to voice a shared anthropology that started with the caves in Lascaux 10,000 years before we learned the spoken word. My painterly reflection relies on an irrationally-led visual language.

The gestural element in your painting creates a dynamics that goes beyond perceptual concerns to generate a sort of saturated body that finds its presence in a space which never stands still. It feels like you go from painting one painting to the next—without interruption—in a sort of unavoidable flux of matter through you body, which gets transferred on to the surface. Is there this aspect of identification between you and your images, and in what terms?

Some works, depending on their composition, become more, or less self-referential. I identify with each work as a development from the last. Each work allows space, movement and form to speak as singular elements. However for a work to succeed none of these elements must bear unequal significance in their totality.

The translation of my body through the brush suggests a multiplicity of association. Of late, the spaces are torqued, spiral, turbulent and abysmal. Like some William Blake ghost figure rising from a central core, a figure or entity purged from the mire. The spaces—however complex or simple—gather light from their source to suggest bodies or natural forms existent in and out of my imagination. Whether seen as reflections on an interior life or the manifestation of a self made elemental force depends on how the surface is seen as illusion or corporeal body. I consider both mystifying—coupled and reliant on each other's presence. There always remains throughout our history of painting the projected space beyond, our looking through. There is also the looking at the skin, the matter, the form.

Can this same dialectic of your visions between tension and stillness, focus and expansion, be one of the reasons why, in a certain sense, your images can be read both as portraits and as landscapes, human and natural figures? Like emotional waves, shapes of an introjected reality?

All my private wars are won and lost in a hinterland of projected visions and reflected karma. Painting for me is a stage as well as a space. When I work, my emotional landscape is given the freedom to exorcise a visceral, erotic, irrational and fetishised

sense of self. My introjected reality demands a process of objectification and realisation. My work is body and testament to that will.

Of night and day, through the dream world or waking state, my interior life is full of landscapes, figures, shadows. These all get investigated through the vessel of my painting process.

Another important element in your painting is the experimental nature of the materials—pigments and surfaces—and their combinations. Colour is its structure, gesture its composition. The density which derives from this experimentation creates these translucent bodies of light, which have a visceral quality to them, as if they were taken out of the core of earth. How would you explain this organic primeval effect through your hyperartificial saturation?

Materials have always been a fascination. How to understand the mystery of oil or acrylic, or how to harness colour through medium robbed of any viscosity.

I always identify nature as the measure to which painting should aspire—heaven on earth found gazing into the brazen glory of a flower etc. I experiment with nature and I use nature but I do not mimic nature. If I were to copy or describe the wonders of our shared landscape, my visions would be dull. Perhaps I afford myself a belated naturalism with my reflections on matter in and of the landscape. I recreate forms intuitively.

The pictorial arrangements I find are as much a result of the capabilities of the materials I use as the suggested or implied spaces those forms, shapes or planes inhabit.

In what sense you would say this aspect became part of the meaning of the ‘Vigil’ exhibition, also in its display as a dialogue with the space of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection?

‘Vigil’ suggests waiting and watching. A ritual where fears and anticipation become the primary emotional focus in a protracted psycho-drama. I first visited Venice at night and found the labyrinth of walkways, connecting bridges and canals a perfect elixir for the unconscious.

There is a consistent, strong surrealist undercurrent running through the Collection. There are many examples where earlier discourses between figuration and abstraction collide beautifully—in particular the works by Gorky, Matta, De Chirico, Ernst and Pollock. I thought I might develop a narrative that demonstrates my own approach to figuration whilst still acknowledging the more elemental side of painting.

‘Vigil’ becomes an embodiment of a more emotive and subjective idea that I hoped would suggest how my emotional landscape drives my imagination. I thought this apt with the roots of Surrealism being found in the deepest recesses of the unconscious.