

**Julie Mehretu: Grey Area**  
Commissioned Work for the Deutsche Guggenheim  
August 15 to October 16, 2009

From October 28, 2009 until January 6, 2010, Deutsche Guggenheim presents the exhibition *Julie Mehretu: Grey Area* as its fifteenth work within the commission series for the space on Unter den Linden. The term "gray area" speaks to a condition of indeterminacy, a liminal state in which something is not clearly defined or is perhaps impossible to define. Julie Mehretu adapts such enigmatic circumstances as a tool to engage the viewer in her complex compositions of meticulously drawn mechanical renderings, spontaneous gestural markings, and colorful interjections. Whether capturing specific settings or the general tenor of the urban experience, such as in *Berliner Plätze* (2008-09) and *Fragment* (2008-09) respectively, Mehretu's paintings evoke the psychogeography of the city and the effects of the built environment on individuals while at the same time contemplating the past and the surviving traces of lived history. Berlin plays a significant role in the investigation of memory and the urban experience in the *Grey Area* suite, first conceived during a residency at the American Academy in Berlin in 2007. Walking through the city, where one still encounters the vestiges of war, an American such as Mehretu might recall that such destruction is currently perpetrated in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq; to see memories preserved after decades of recovery is a poignant reminder of conflicts from which the American public has been carefully screened. *Believer's Palace* (2008-09), referencing the partially destroyed palace that sat atop Saddam Hussein's Baghdad bunker, addresses these current events directly. This painting, along with *Atlantic Wall* (2008-09), which renders the interiors of bunkers built by Germany along the Western European coastline in World War II, conjures the physical aftermath of war. Through Mehretu's layering, erasure, and smudging of marks, structures seem to dissolve on the surface of the canvas, like a virtual rendering of a fading memory. As suggested by the title of the painting *Middle Grey* (2007-09), which designates the midpoint between the two extremes of black and white, the compositions often exist at a fulcrum where the work

could either plunge into dense obscurity or almost disappear into an ethereal cloud of dust. Yet a remarkable sense of pictorial space always exists in Mehretu's paintings, created not just by their layering but also by the contrasts inherent in them. Solid forms and precise line drawings underlie frenetic forces painted on the surface. These gestures in black acrylic can be detailed and precise or looser, like the quickly drafted scribbles in *Notations* (2009), to indicate atmosphere or set a mood.

The title of the painting *Plover's Wing* (2009) poetically evokes one's interaction with Mehretu's works. The plover bird feigns a broken wing, pretending to be easy prey in order to distract predators from its young only to fly away just before being harmed. So too might one be deceived by a first impression of Mehretu's art. What appears abstract from afar is replete with detailed drawings when viewed close up, but just as one is able to glean some bit of information by which a rendering might be identified, the work seems to vaporize into indeterminacy that compels the viewer to look again and again and again.

The exhibition is being organized by Joan Young, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. It will be accompanied by a German and English catalogue, with texts by Joan Young and Brian Dillon at a price of 29 Euros.

As Edition No. 49 for the Deutsche Guggenheim Julie Mehretu created the graphic print *Julie Mehretu: Untitled (Grey Area)*, 2009, in a limited and signed edition of 40 copies/ 15 A.P. which is exclusively available at the Deutsche Guggenheim SHOP.

Together with Joan Young Julie Mehretu will talk about her new works for the Deutsche Guggenheim on October 29, 7 p.m. Related to Mehretu's painting cycle the Berlin based composer Jochen Neurath has created a commissioned composition. It premieres on November 27, 7 p.m. in the exhibition hall. Further the culture journalist Magdalena Kröner will talk about "The Tectonics of Remembrance: On the Work of Julie Mehretu" on November 19, 7 p.m.

Free guided tours are offered daily at 6 p.m. The popular Lunch Lectures, Wednesdays at 1 p.m., the established Brunch Lectures, dedicated to a specific aspect of the show each Sunday at 11:30 a.m., as well as the I like Mondays Lectures, Mondays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., round off the wide range of possible encounters with art.

Please find more information in the enclosed materials.

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