

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



Jason Martin. July 2014

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 a similar body of work 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 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 latter.

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 a retrospective looking at his whole life and how inventive and 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.

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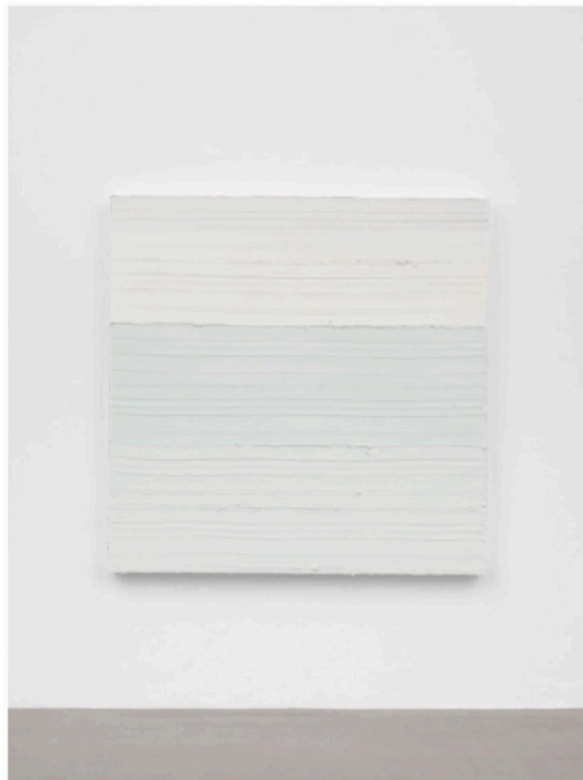
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"Untitled (Zinc white / Scheveningen blue)", 2018
Oil on aluminium, 178 x 178 cm or 70 x 70 inch
© Jason Martin, Courtesy Lisson Gallery



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

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



LISSON GALLERY

Art & Object
31 May 2019



Jason Martin on the Process of Painting

STUDIO |



To coincide with an exhibition at Lisson Gallery, Jason Martin reveals the processes and materials behind the creation of a new painting, over the course of a day in the studio.

LISSON GALLERY

Artnet

22 May 2019

artnet[®]news

‘It Has to Have a Life of Its Own’: See How Artist Jason Martin Creates His Luminous, Meditative Abstractions

In a new exhibition at Lisson Gallery, he focuses his Minimalist approach on three colors: titanium white, cobalt blue, and graphite gray.

Katie White, May 22, 2019



Installation view of "Jason Martin: Long Way Home," 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery.

When artist Jason Martin mixes paint, he looks like a baker making frosting. He mixes minutely different shades in big plastic bowls and then generously slathers them across the surface of the canvas. This thick impasto is characteristic of the artist's work, and it is on full, decadent display in "Long Way Home," his new exhibition at Lisson Gallery in London.

Martin's new body of work focuses on variations in three main hues: titanium white, cobalt blue, and a dark blackish tone made from graphite. Distinct gallery space is devoted to each of the three, creating the impression of a journey through morning, day, and night. Each horizontally banded composition draws the eye to subtle tonal shifts in color.



Installation view of "Jason Martin: Long Way Home," 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery.

Among these, the darkest works have a special luminosity, due largely to the paint. Martin worked with paint manufacturer Old Holland, a company founded by 17th-century Dutch Old Master painters, to create a new kind of oil paint that mixes graphite into it directly, giving it a textured, metallic quality.

The formal elements of Martin's compositions call to mind the work of an artist with whom he shares a surname (but no relation): Agnes Martin. The dedicated simplicity of his premise is aligned with the Minimalist tradition, but the viscosity of the paints and the impressions left by chance effects in their density create a far more performative and even decadent sensation. This is painting less as protein, more as dessert.



Installation view of "Jason Martin: Long Way Home," 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery.



Installation view of "Jason Martin: Long Way Home," 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery.

Throughout the exhibition, Martin's adept juxtapositions of color have an unexpected effect. Though entirely abstract compositions, one has the impression is seeing something—the ocean and sky seen from the shore, a glimmering stone on a forest floor, skin in the sunlight—through a most primary lens.

Too see Martin in action, watch the video below.



"Jason Martin: Long Way Home" is on view at Lisson Gallery through June 22, 2019.

LISSON GALLERY

Art Rabbit
May, 2019

ART



EXHIBITION

Jason Martin: Long Way Home 15 May 2019 - 22 Jun 2019

Lisson Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Jason Martin.

About

Following exhibitions in New York and Paris last year, Jason Martin continues his investigation into the fundamentals of oil painting, creating horizontally banded compositions of multiple shades, chromatic blends and subtle tonal shifts. This exhibition will be constructed around a trio of different colours divided across three rooms, working from variations on titanium white, Cobalt blue and a suite of works made using a new material for the artist: graphite.

As seen throughout his career, Martin never ceases to challenge himself and interrogate the origins and parameters of painting. Through his experiments into the unknown, Martin explores new materials to discover different reactions through which to expand his practice. For this exhibition Martin utilises graphite, known for many purposes, from lead pencils to batteries, and yet not known for its use in painting. Working with the paint manufacturer Old Holland – a company started by Dutch Old Master painters in the 17th century that has for centuries produced paint for artists, from Van Gogh to Vermeer – Martin has invented a new type of oil paint. The two unique shades, 'Jason Graphite Grey' and 'Jason Graphite Grey Deep', blend graphite into the paint mixture directly. The resulting series of works have an intensely textured, metallic-like finish, and due to their earthy and elemental nature, possess a fundamental sculptural quality.

Complimenting the dark tones is another room dedicated to Martin's sharp titanium white paintings. Just as with the dark graphite paintings, these works are made up of multiple shades, from green to blue to pink. Harmonising together to create an indefinable colour, they rhythmically divert the eye with spatial interplay. These works sit within a more traditional understanding of oil painting: viscous and thixotropic, free flowing and malleable to apply, yet fixed and smooth on finish. While Martin's previous bodies of work assumed a sense of chance and serendipity, this new series of symphonic gradations are more restrained in composition. These paintings are considered and thoughtful, exploring subtle tonal relationships and veering away from the expressionistic gesture or the happenstance of painting.

Continuing into the exhibition, visitors will experience Martin's Cobalt Blue and Cobalt Violet paintings. While Martin's work naturally aligns in the history of Minimalist painting, each of his paintings reflect a particular subject matter. These works, created using a range of blue hues, depict a landscape scene, traditional in the colouring and composition, yet rendered in a portrait format and with thick impasto oil. Equally, by transforming landscapes into portrait or square formats (and often also by converting colour into grayscale), this new development suggests digital photographic processes. These add to the multiple tensions articulated in these paintings: between nature and manipulation; object and image; and between gestural abstraction and the impulse towards representation.

All works presented in the exhibition are consistent in their compositions between three and six divisions, with each band individually created using one broad, focused sweep of the brush. This physical manipulation of the paint is a work of performance in its own right – a representation of the artist's intense interaction with the space beyond the two-dimensional. The physicality of flooding the surface with the dense layers of paint is at once a personal, solo act and a public presentation – the precise moment is shaped in the layers of folding paint, the deliberate motion immortalised in the final work of art.

Art in America
April 2018

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

LISSON GALLERY

Art Review

1 February 2018

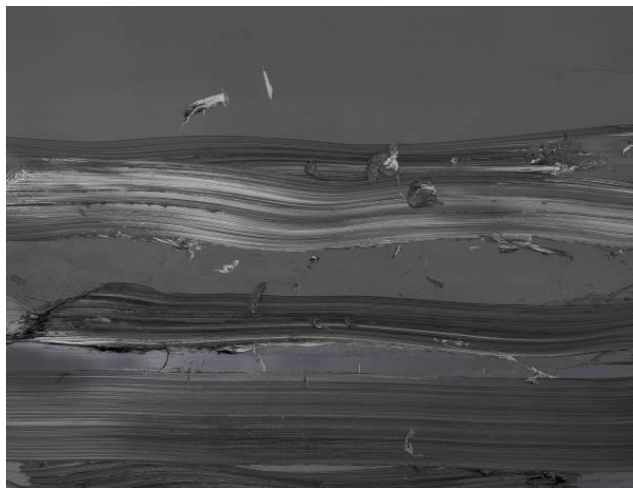
GalleriesNow

Jason Martin

Lisson Gallery, New York, New York

Fri 19 Jan 2018 to Sat 24 Feb 2018

Jason Martin presents a new body of paintings for his first exhibition at Lisson Gallery New York. The works on display continue Martin's investigation of the fundamentals of painting, his experimentation beyond its traditional boundaries into three-dimensional space and his recent re-engagement with oil paint.



To produce these works, Martin begins with minimal means – no more than three colors, often similar in tonality, as well as just a handful of tools or brushes and a number of vertically aligned, aluminum panels. Despite these self-imposed limitations, Martin's latest series veer from epic and luscious compositions of swirling dark oils to pared-down and muted abstractions in smoky off-whites. Formed of horizontal bands being swept to and fro across the surface, the paintings are loaded with varying quantities of paint, resulting perhaps in significant spillages, impasto ridges and arabesque whorls or else in smaller, incidental edges, ripples and smears. These parallel strata are built up from repeated, physical gestures – a process that Martin has honed since his days at Goldsmiths College in London in the early 1990s – although are created here, not by mechanical comb-like tools, but through precise and controlled gestures, albeit with the intervention of chance, moments of happenstance and the occasional swirl of chaos.

Far from monochromes, these works are subtly gradated essays in harmonic relationships between hues and are essentially mixed during their making, as evidenced by the subtitles to

each work, which includes the color combination employed, such as: Titanium White, Dutch Brown and Scheveningen Blue. These tripartite pieces lend themselves to three or more 'horizon lines', although smaller panels, often composed of two colors, such as French Cassel Earth and French Ardoise Grey, are just as complex and involved as images – in fact the effects of individual gestures and their intensity are magnified at this concentrated scale.

Martin's dense layering and over-painting does not preclude the abundance of internal light experienced in many works here, which are themselves progressions in both luminosity and restraint from the first exhibition of this body of work in London last year. While some of his paintings appear to be in continuous motion and flux, this show also furthers the distinction between passages of flattened ground versus Martin's raised, striated line, highlighting the spatial and temporal rifts present on each surface.

all images © the gallery and the artist(s)

LISSON GALLERY

Artforum

November 2017

ARTFORUM

MILAN

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.



Jason Martin, *Untitled* (*Permanent Yellow/Madder Lake*), 2017, oil on aluminum, 86 1/4 x 70".

LISSON GALLERY

The British Art Journal
Spring 2017

The BRITISH ART *Journal*

'Jason Martin'

Lisson Gallery, 27 Bell Street, London NW1 5BY, 18 November 2016–7
January 2017

Francis Gooding

Jason Martin

Lisson Gallery, 2016, pb np, fully illus
ISBN 978 0 947 830 57 1

Alexander Adams

A rare London showing of British painter Jason Martin (b 1970) demonstrated new developments in his exploration of the potential of abstraction and provided heartening evidence of a painter who believes in the potency of paint.

In the exhibition at Lisson Gallery's venue at 27 Bell Street a selection of paintings and cast reliefs from 2016 was exhibited. In the main space were five large paintings; the small paintings were shown on commensurately smaller walls. The paintings were oil on panel and only titled in reference to the constituent pigments (eg, *Untitled (Davy's Grey/Titanium White/Raw Umber)* (2016)). The large were from 242 to 176 cm in height and 199 to 142 cm in width; the small were 47 x 33 cm and 41 x 31 cm. They were made in approximately similar ways. Layers of different colour oil paint are applied on deep-profile metal (usually aluminium) panels. The colours in these pieces are usually chromatically close. The thick layers of paint (sometimes over an inch deep) are trowelled smooth with a plasterer's steel float. The smoothing can tend to lift and meld lower levels, creating subtle mottling effects that are barely perceptible. Then the painter places the panel in an upright position and brushes vigorously through the central part, breaking the surface, revealing lower layers and spattering thick paint in a debris spray. The action is violent and cathartic. It introduces a richly brushed surface to a smooth surrounding and makes clear the means of its own making.

This new work is exuberant but chromatically (and tonally) more austere than some of Martin's earlier work. (The only hot hue on show was a small coral orange-and-vermilion panel.) With the horizontal incident on nearly blank grounds (which, paradoxically, are actually the most prominent raised part of the painting, spatter debris excepted) these paintings recall not so much the landscape watercolour sketch but the marine sketch in character and tone. The wavering lines irresistibly suggest surfaces of bodies of water. They are – again – paradoxically liquid in appearance, belying the thickly viscous medium. They are powerfully physical paintings and one is consciously of the sheer weight of paint present. (During the show the paintings smelled of fresh paint; a temporal attribute they will lose.) The sizes are well-judged: the large have real presence while not being overbearing or ostentatious; the small are true 'cabinet pictures'.

We can describe Martin's art as a form of Process Art (or Process Painting), wherein much of the work's meaning is derived from viewers comprehending the means by which the object before them has reached its current state. Martin's process is intelligible and intellectually important but he does intend to create objects that are lush, attractive and full of vigour. He is largely in control of his method and wholly in control of deciding if the resultant painting meets his criteria and should therefore be made public. We cannot say Martin's art

is primarily a consciously controlled aesthetic or conceptual statement or if it is pure Process Painting; it is a deliberate fusion. It is arrested entropy and it is *sprezzatura*.

Six small silver castings, entitled *Ag I-VI* (2016), were displayed in a separate room. They are high-relief castings of manipulated paste on flat surfaces. The paste is thrown, daubed and lightly brushed, forming a raised motif on a flat ground. They are very lightly worked and retain a spontaneous, energetic quality. The cast surfaces are uniformly highly polished. Each is 44 cm high, 33 cm wide and 5 cm deep (relief height on the surface and deep edges). The untouched areas are mirror-smooth; the motif areas are bulging, bristle-marked and bubbled, with thin lariats of excess matter looping and speckles of spatter. The highly reflective silver makes them appealing and also difficult to comprehend in plastic terms. These sculptures attract the hands but repel the eyes. The gaze skates over them but finds them hard to grasp.

The silver castings have the histrionic quality of hysterical gestures tightly confined. They are akin to bundles of drapery one finds in baroque paintings. Much of Martin's past work suggests he could be seen as an upholder of the dissident tradition of baroque in British art. Rather than painting drapery, he makes painting into drapery. Earlier paintings were formed using notched rubber blades over wet paint, which created rippling grooves which swept across flat grounds. The colours were sometimes austere (black especially) but they could be strongly hued, such as purple. Martin's paintings must be the most visually and tactilely sensual being produced anywhere today.

It will be curious to see how the silver castings are conserved: unprotected and left to tarnish; varnished and thereby altered; or periodically polished, with attendant wear and loss of detail. Martin seems to wish his works to exist in stasis rather than joining that group of Process artists who welcome degeneration of the object (including Eva Hesse, Robert Smithson, perhaps even Gordon Matta-Clark, if he can be so classed as a Process artist).

Martin is one of the few painters today who really believes that paint has latent potency and the potential to act as cathartic agent and exemplar of sensual beauty. Martin does not shy away from beauty nor does he consider beauty irrelevant or shameful. He also does not seem to pursue it, as this current exhibition of brusquely executed and sombrely coloured pieces attests. The exhibition consists of 14 works. Martin deserves a large exhibition at a British public venue. He is one of the best painters working today, not just in Britain but in the world.

LISSON GALLERY

Blouin Artinfo
22 January 2017

BLOUINARTINFO

Jason Martin at Lisson Gallery, New York

BY BLOUIN ARTINFO | JANUARY 22, 2018



Jason Martin Untitled (Olive Green Deep / Graphite Grey), 2017 Oil on aluminium 220 x 178 cm 86 5/8 x 70 1/8 inches ©
Jason Martin.
(Courtesy: Lisson Gallery)

Lisson Gallery exhibits [Jason Martin](#)'s new paintings at its New York venue.

Jason Martin new body of paintings for his first exhibition at Lisson Gallery New York investigate the fundamentals of painting. His experimentation beyond its traditional boundaries into three-dimensional space and his recent re-engagement with oil paint. Martin begins with minimal means – no more than three colors, often similar in tonality, as well as just a handful of tools or brushes and a number of vertically aligned, aluminum panels. This latest series veer from epic and

luscious compositions of swirling dark oils to pared-down and muted abstractions in smoky off-whites. Horizontal bands are being swept to and fro across the surface, the paintings are loaded with varying quantities of paint, resulting perhaps in significant spillages, impasto ridges and arabesque whorls or else in smaller, incidental edges, ripples and smears.

Jason Martin (b.Jersey, 1970 in the Channel Islands) lives and works between London and Portugal. He has a BA from Goldsmiths, London (1993) and his works oscillations between sculpture and painting, with the vigor of action painting but a controlled hand. Solo exhibitions include Museum gegenstandsfreier Kunst, Otterndorf, Germany (2016), Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, Venice, Italy (2013), Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2012), Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy (2009), Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporany de Palma, Majorca, Spain (2008), Kunstverein Kreis Gütersloh, Gütersloh, Germany (2007), Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (2005). He was a prizewinner in John Moores 21, Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, UK (1999) and of the Golfo della Spezia, European Biennial of the Visual Arts, La Spezia, Italy (2000).

The exhibition will be on view from January 19 through February 24, 2018, at Lisson Gallery, 504 West 24th Street, New York.

LISSON GALLERY

Garage

19 January 2017



It's Monochrome Painting, But with More Colors

HETTIE JUDAH

Jan 19 2018, 1:31pm

British artist Jason Martin's first New York show in 20 years is a muted pleasure.

There's a framing store near Jason Martin's home studio in the London suburb of Teddington called But Is It Art?, one of those friendly neighborhood places that'll happily mount a signed sports shirt. I wonder what they'd make of Martin's work, with its extreme fetishization of texture, dalliance with the limits of the monochrome, and giddy comingling of painting and sculpture. To be fair, Martin doesn't have much use for frames—his paintings are solid things that burst from the wall, the licks of paint that course past the edges of their aluminum supports often their most expressive element.

Teddington is Thames-side, low-rise, and pleasant. Halfway up a neat lane of terraced cottages with planted window boxes and bright front doors, Martin's studio registers as alien: a windowless white façade with a unnumbered grey door, it occupies the site of a former glass workshop. Inside, his studio and the home that it backs onto hold works and experiments that span his career. Some he's retained simply because he likes them: "I can look at a painting I made 20 years ago," he told GARAGE, "and think that, while I'd never make that work

now, for 20 years ago it was quite good.” Others, by contrast, have earned their place for the unresolved challenges they represent. “There are times that you touch on something and think that you’re not ready to explore it, so you park it for a while.”



Jason Martin, *Untitled (Olive Green Deep / Graphite Grey)*, 2017. © Jason Martin, courtesy of Lisson Gallery

On a wall of the paint-spattered studio is one of a series of glossy, black-surfaced oils in which the fine layer of monochrome paint has been worked into textured forms with a large brush, etching strands into a surface fine and shiny as carbon fiber. Ultra-matte works in deep plum and aquamarine have had their heavily impastoed surfaces sprayed with light-sucking pigment. A rose-gold relief is an early try-out from a series of sculptures begun in 2012 that mold vast swathes of creamy paint in mirror-polished metal.

[Now on view at Lisson Gallery in New York](#), the artist’s newest body of work is a series of restrained oil panels. Blacks, whites, and grays are spiked with

calorific colors that become almost imperceptible as Martin works into them. “The chaos of color I wanted to restrict to greys and grey with very subtle amounts of more active tone. Ultimately they are grey paintings,” he explained, adding, cheerily, “Rothko described gray as ‘the color of tragedy.’” They seem appropriately wintry, like NYC snow absorbing the grot of traffic, but Martin’s plane of reference is more the territory of Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman, and Brice Marden, art from an epoch referred to by Peter Schjeldahl as “the Age of Paying Attention, or the Noticing Years, or the Not So Fast Era.”



Installation view of *Jason Martin*, Lisson Gallery London, November 2016–January 2017. Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

Each work is finished with gestural stripes as Martin tracks a brush horizontally back and forth in an even rhythm, the strokes dictated by the length of his reach. If you don’t sense it right away, his titles send you back to seek out color: *Untitled (Titanium White / French Ardoise Grey / Dianthus Pink)*, *Untitled (Titanium White / French Ardoise Grey / Scheveningen Blue)*.

The Lisson show is Martin’s first New York outing in 20 years. His last, in 1998, received a sharply worded review from Roberta Smith in the *New York Times*. Let’s assume it smarted: the artist can still quote Smith verbatim while admitting that her payoff suggestion—that the works in that show had “the brief dazzle of a Slinky toy making its way down the stairs”—was not one he necessarily felt as a criticism. The new series is the result of “quite a frenzied

period of making,” and even more frenzied editing. “I’ve made many that have not worked out,” he admitted. “The majority were stripped and reworked.” The result is a tight series of paintings that performs as an ensemble. “I like to think you could create a tension between a group of works,” he says. “If you are working with colors where you are slightly shifting away from gray, you see the particularities of each work arising from differences rather than similarities.” In his ongoing urge to crack all the possibilities offered to him by oils, each painting also earns its place as an individual: “there are certain moments within the making of each work that got them invited to the party.”



Jason Martin, *Untitled (French Ardoise Grey / Titanium White)*, 2017. © Jason Martin, courtesy of Lisson Gallery

Jason Martin is on view at Lisson Gallery New York, through February 24.

LISSON GALLERY

Aesthetica
3 January 2017

Aesthetica

Visual Landscapes



Copiously applied oil paint forms the thick, textural layers of Jason Martin's new works at Lisson Gallery, London. The depth at which the material has been caked onto the aluminum panels and the tangibility of its surfaces transforms the works into sculpture. The deep layering, distinctly visible on the panels' edges and within the tonal differentiation of the monochromatic colour palette, seems to reflect deeply personal studies over two decades.

Yet this is the first time Martin has returned to the medium after a three year hiatus. Pushing the pigment horizontally across the surface of the portrait-orientated panels, and creating an abstracted visual landscape with brush strokes, flattened areas above and underneath which have been smoothed by a trowel. The contours and ridges, trenches and valleys formed by this movement reveal a controlled rhythm within the repetition. Landscapes are not the intention here, however the way in which the globs of paint gather are similar to master works – appearing abstracted up close, and a beautifully rendered composition from a distance. In the first room of the exhibition, the five large-scale works on view are at once striking and subtle.

These heavily weighted works with their generous volume of the viscous oils exude a sense of calm and a minimalist nature. Attributing to this is the colour palettes of black, grey and white, matched with the titles of each work such as *Titanium White*, *Payne's Grey*, *Ivory Black* which are simply the name of the shades used. Leading into the next room, three smaller works are displayed, one in a vibrant Vermilion – a colour Martin describes in the accompanying video piece as the only hue with an equivalent power to black and white.

The exhibition shifts from the sticky to the shiny, with six silver cast works in the following gallery room. The sporadically crafted contours articulate the artist's gestural movements where polished metal has become the chosen material. The contrast between the literally reflexive surface and varied textures captured below, including the bead-like bubbles and dolloped mounds of modeller's paste, suggest of a subterranean-esque effect. Metallic magma against the mirrored veneer lends to a theatrical ebb and flow while viewing one sculptural painting to the next.

As a whole, the collection is an evolution of explorations and expressions, taking mark-making to mountainous three dimensional heights, inflicting monochromatic minimalism with traces of variation and vibrancy and capturing the chaos with a controlled creative hand.

Ashton Chandler Guyatt

Jason Martin is at Lisson Gallery, London, until 7 January. For more information, visit www.lissongallery.com

Credits:

1. Jason Martin *Jason Martin*, Installation view. Courtesy of Lisson Gallery London.

Posted on 3 January 2017

Artinfo

6 January 2017

BLOUINARTINFO

Last Chance: Jason Martin at Lisson Gallery, London

BY BLOUIN ARTINFO | JANUARY 06, 2017



Last Chance: Jason Martin at Lisson Gallery, London

Jason Martin. Untitled (Davy's Grey / Ivory Black), 2016. Oil on aluminium. 220 x 178 cm (86 5/8 x 70 in).
(COURTESY: LISSON GALLERY)

RELATED

VENUES

Lisson Gallery

ARTISTS

Jason Martin

The ongoing exhibition of the works of Jason Martin at Lisson Gallery, London, will end on January 7, 2017. This is your last chance to check out the works of this British artist, at the gallery.

The exhibition features new oil paintings and a series of silver cast works, which represent a new departure for Jason Martin who for over twenty years, has pursued a deep personal investigation in painting. Martin's work oscillates between sculpture and painting, most prominent in his monochromatic paintings where layers of paint are dragged across different surfaces with a fine, comb-like piece of metal or board. In his new paintings, oil paint acts as both medium and motive for his work. Presented on the board in thick impasto and sculptural in its three-dimensionality, the paint is transformed into a performative volume, as the viscosity of oil is exemplified in the adventures of globules of paint that resists its gravitational pull and instead rise upwards, while dragged or pushed against the aluminium and panel supports. In his series of silver cast works, paint is replaced by polished metal. In these works, mountainous sweeps of modeller's paste are hand-sculpted before being plated on silver. Fixating on the surface, these works conceal the expressionistic creativity under their agent veneer. Both the oil paintings and this silver cast works; embody dialectical opposition that



Jason Martin, *Pangea*, 2015, mixed media on aluminum, 96 x 80 x 7 1/2 in. (243.8 x 203.2 x 19.1 cm)

JASON MARTIN COUNTERFEIT

13 APRIL – 14 MAY 2016

Opening reception:
Wednesday, 13 April, 6-8 pm
[Remarks by the Artist, 6:45 pm](#)

Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new paintings by the London- and Portugal-based artist Jason Martin.

Martin has titled the exhibition *Counterfeit*, “to express the duplication of a subject.” In over a dozen new works on view,

the artist seeks to replicate or embody the natural world through the mержence of artificial visualization and actual elemental forces. Following several years of exploring new materials and techniques, this exhibition represents a culmination of Martin’s discoveries, resulting in dynamic and radical painting surfaces.

“En plein air” is a term most commonly used for painting made outdoors; an artist painting “in situ” is exposed to the elements and directly responding to the environment. Rather than copying or recording the properties of nature, Martin instead uses them to precipitate unpredictable and exciting results. Working flat, the artist creates these paintings with a paste medium, which he manipulates on aluminum panels, or surfaces covered with sail cloth or cotton duck. Martin then applies various pigments, dyes and watercolor manipulated by hand, brush and spray to the hardened surfaces. Harnessing natural forces, the works are often placed in direct contact with the elements, exposing their surfaces to heat, light, wind and rain, to encourage alchemical metamorphoses and chance encounters. Over several months, color and substance shift – clustering, drifting, pooling may occur – conjuring associations of subterranean, mountainous or cosmic landscapes. According to the artist: “Each work seeks to reveal an emotional truth, a critical point or brink of surfeit where a tension remains ambiguous yet emphatic. Closure of a work is ultimately intuitive.”

One of the most distinguishable shifts in these works is Martin’s use of color. Whereas previous paintings featured monochromatic applications, these new works embrace a variety of palettes and display a sophisticated command of color, ranging from subtle to dramatic. Martin’s approach to pigmentation further accentuates his mastery of sculptural gestures, intensifying surface peaks and depressions.

As Martin states: “This methodology combines processes of artificiality and natural phenomenology: a delicate balance mirrored in the interplay of new color harmonies that challenge the dogma of the monochrome.”

Born in Jersey, Channel Islands, Jason Martin attended the Chelsea School of Art (1989-1990) and Goldsmiths' College, London (1990-1993). Martin achieved early attention for his work, with gallery exhibitions in London, Nagoya, Japan, and Nordhorn, Germany in the mid-1990s. He has received international recognition with his inclusion in *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, Royal Academy, London (traveled to Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin and Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York), 1997-2000. This was followed by the exhibitions *Post-Hypnotic*, University Galleries, New York (traveled to the MAC, Dallas; The Atlanta College Art Gallery; The Chicago Cultural Center; Tweed Museum, University of Minnesota; Naples Museum of Art, Florida, and Massachusetts College of Art) in 1999, and *Monochrome*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2004. Other exhibitions include *Nomad*, Centro de Arte Contemporaneo, Málaga, Spain; and *Rock*, Centro Britânico Brasileiro, Sao Paulo, Brazil, both in 2008; and *Vigil*, The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 2009. In recent years, Martin has exhibited worldwide, including in Austria, Spain, Belgium, Norway, Brazil and China. The artist will be featured in forthcoming exhibitions at Museum Gegenstandsfreier Kunst, Otterndorf, Germany; Pelaires Centre Cultural Contemporani, Palma, Majorca, Spain; and SCHAUWERK Sindelfingen M3useum, Sindelfingen, Germany.

Martin's work is found in public and private collections, including Valencia, Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias, Oviedo and Centro de Arte Contemporaneo, Málaga, Spain; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna and Sammlung Essl, Klosterneuburg, Austria; Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland; Wuerth Collection, Germany; Fnac, Strasbourg, France; Birmingham Museum, UK; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Denver Art Museum, Colorado; and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

Martin lives and works in London and Southern Portugal.

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Kolesnikov-Jessop, Sonia. "Lisson Gallery and STPI Present "Collaborations" Exhibition." *Blouin Art Info*, September 17, 2015. Web.

BLOUINARTINFO INTERNATIONAL ▼

VISUAL ARTS / GALLERIES / ARTICLE

Lisson Gallery and STPI Present "Collaborations" Exhibition

BY SONIA KOLESNIKOV-JESSOP | SEPTEMBER 17, 2015



Visitor in front of a painting by Jason Martin

Collaborations, a joint exhibition between Lisson Gallery and STPI, explores the links between an artist's practice through different media, and the role of collaborations in the development of an artist's vocabulary. [Richard Deacon](#), [Ryan Gander](#), and [Shirazeh Houshiary](#) have already collaborated with the STPI, while the two others — [Jason Martin](#) and [Jorinde Voigt](#) — are expected to work at the printmaking atelier in the New Year.

"The starting point of the exhibition was the collaboration some of these artists have already had with the STPI. Richard came in 2012 and Ryan in 2014, and Shirazeh is currently completing her residency. The other two have been invited," says Sarah Wang, associate, director, Asia Pacific, Lisson Gallery, explaining that the STPI pieces were contextualized by work that the artists have made in their own studio.

During his STPI residency, British sculptor Deacon was partly exploring the relationship between spaces and the void, foreground and background, and he used a Japanese printing technique to color his paper sculptures

(inspired by Singapore's HDB public housing) to give them a stunning marbled effect that was uncannily similar to the marbling he'd earlier achieved with ceramic sculptures — all on display now in one of the STPI's four gallery spaces. An early work from 2003, *Infinity* in stainless steel, offers looser organic forms that are also echoed in some of the STPI prints.

British conceptual artist Gander often makes visual references to art history in his works (Matisse's cut-outs, Richter's photo paintings), as well as graphic design elements complete with catchy artwork titles, and during his STPI residency he created a diverse body of work, including those now on show: a series of boldly colored prints with scratch marks inspired by close-up photographs of UK Police cars. These works are placed in the same central room as a tall sculptural installation of Ikea tables (in white, yellow, red, and blue), which are neatly piled above one another to create a color pattern reminiscent of a Mondrian painting.

[Jorinde Voigt](#) is based in Berlin and has yet to collaborate with STPI, but is represented by Lisson. The artist started as a photographer and then one day started to write down the descriptions of her photographs and the rationale for taking the pictures, which led to her first mind-map drawings, which in their earlier form were all black and white and in pencil but have since become more colorful. Voigt's works, include hand-scribed marks and are inspired by literature and music, and are performative in nature, which will make her upcoming collaboration with STPI interesting.

Iranian artist Houshiary presents several meditative abstract paintings, as well as a rare video work from 2007, an animated drawing that captures a breath. The artist is currently completing a residency at STPI and will have a solo exhibition there next March/

Houshiary's abstract works are facing those by Martin, a British artist who started his career with minimalism and expressionism, and is now best known for his monochromatic paintings, where layers of oil or acrylic gel are dragged across hard-surfaces such as aluminum, Plexiglass, or stainless steel using large brushes. Present at the opening of the exhibition, Martin explains that he created these painting with one large swooping, movement that gives a rhythmic textures to his works. On display is *Rugen*, 2011, that seems to trace the movement of his body. "The composition is one that is uninterrupted and a series of movements.

Understanding that choreography is unlocking the painting," he explains, adding he has not be using oil for years "because as an artist, it's reached a point where I've exhausted where I want to be with it."

Most recently, he's been working with acrylic paste, which he pours by the bucket on his studio floor, which he then works on with his hands and body before building layers of pure pigments on top and finally making a color choice. "Really it's about creating a form on the surface," Jason explains. This technique creates the illusion of fabrics, and his works, like *Melville* 2013 (on display), almost invite the viewer to touch them.

"Intuitively, I am a painter, but my concerns are to move high modernist ideas of 'Where can painting go after Jackson Pollock or Morris Louis?'" he says.

Lisson Gallery & STPI present: Collaborations runs until October 17 at STPI

LISSON GALLERY

Artnet News

16th September 2014

artnetnews

arnet Asks: Jason Martin

Lorraine Rubio, Tuesday, September 16, 2014

SHARE



Jason Martin
Photo: courtesy of the artist.

British-based artist Jason Martin most often works in monochromatic fields of pure pigment, brushing over them with a fine tool, similar in appearance to a comb, to create dynamic wave movements frozen in time and space in the material. Also sometimes working in hard surfaces such as aluminum, stainless steel, or Plexiglas, Martin's resulting works perplex and challenge the viewer to question the nature of the materials making up what they see before them. Pieces such as his *Behemoth* (2012) have been exhibited internationally, and wowed at the Armory Show in New York, The Fine Arts Society in London, and Galerie Mario Sequeira in Braga, Portugal. artnet News caught up with the artist to ask him what exactly inspires his abstract works, and what he has in the pipeline.

When did you know you wanted to be an artist?

I knew I wanted to be an artist when I was in my early teens—I found drawing and painting intuitive and natural—I felt I belonged to the world of making and doing.



Jason Martin, *Zocalo* (2013)
Copper, 17.7 x 13 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery.

What inspires you?

Nature and the sea and the freedom to imagine possibilities in color and form



Jason Martin, *Terse* (2009)
Pure pigment on panel, 23.6 x 18.1 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist and DEP ART.

If you could own any work of modern or contemporary art, what would it be?

Gustav Courbet's *I'Origine Du Monde*, or *The deep* by Jackson Pollock, anything by Modigliani, the list could go on.



Jason Martin, *Behemoth* (2012)
Virgin cork and pure pigment (ivory black), 118.1 x 118.1 x 102.4 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Galerie Forsblom.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am working on 3 x 250 cm. (1.2 x 98.4 in.) square paintings, a maquette prototype for a sculpture, a planning application for an agricultural warehouse, my second harvest is next week, three bronze wall reliefs, and other bits and pieces.

When not making art, what do you like to do?

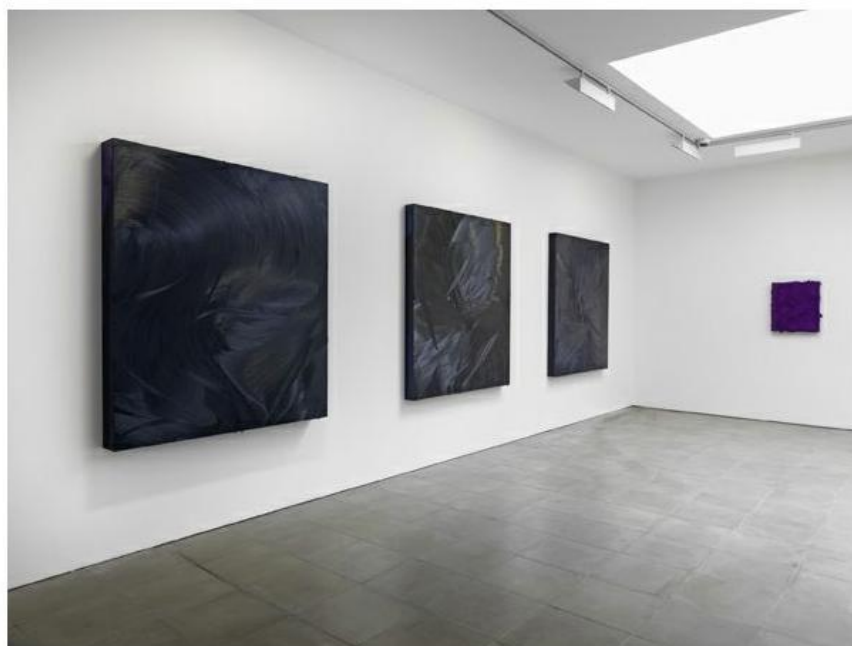
Spend fun time with my two boys, further my natural water filter lake (think Giverny with a pontoon) fish, play cards, listen to music, swim, read, plan the logistics of stealing works by Rembrandt van Rijn.

LISSON GALLERY

Moussemagazine.it
7th June 2012



Jason Martin "Infinite" at Lisson Gallery, London
June 7~2012



Martin makes paintings about paint – its materiality, sculptural presence and transformative, alchemical nature. The energy of Martin's process is palpable in a new series of rich, dark, monochromatic oil on aluminium works. In *Tempest* (2011), the dense swathes of colour are applied in thick, fluid, overlaid brushstrokes. Light plays across the surface echoing the dynamism and vigour of its making. Sensual and tactile, each work in this group is definitively autonomous. The titles invite contemplation and emphasise the inherent narrative of the work but the meaning is mutable.

Pushing the boundaries of painting is at the core of Martin's creative process. These continuing investigations are evinced in a series of vividly intense, jewel-like pure pigment paintings. Taking a basic sculptor's medium as his starting point, Martin has molded, scraped, and gouged the material to create a dense, turbulent, worked surface. Intensely vibrant pure pigment is then applied in layers directly to the still wet medium. The resultant works appear mysterious, molten, capricious: the spinel black surface of *Yaba* is ominous and unknowable, the rich cadmium red of *Valentine* resonant and seductive.

These hand-worked surfaces form the basis for an exciting new series of cast works. As with the pigments, Martin manipulates the medium, which is then cast – in nickel, copper or bronze. The resultant mirrored surface of, for example, *Titus* (2012), is smooth and impenetrable, its nature discrete. The restless energy of the pigments has been hushed – the implicit movement frozen and a primordial gesture made concrete.

In a daring new work, Martin has dramatically transcended the two-dimensional. On arriving at the gallery, the visitor is confronted by the monumental, matt black, cubed block, *Behemoth*, measuring 3m x 3m at its base and over 2.6m high. Comprising layer upon layer of stacked virgin cork coated in pure black pigment, the squatting sculpture dominates its setting. The work is impossible to understand in a single perspective and the spectator is forced to negotiate its sides and edges, unable to access its top. Simultaneously awe inspiring and intimidating, elusive and alluring, *Behemoth* accesses a shared primal memory: the Kaaba of Mecca, a mausoleum to a long dead dignitary, an inviolable alchemist's box. Initially solid and impenetrable, closer inspection reveals the gnarled, pitted unruly surface of the untreated, pigment-blackened cork, sourced from the area around Martin's Portuguese studio. Its natural undulations and inconsistencies echo the raw, worked, sculptural surfaces of Martin's pigments. The form of *Behemoth*, and its physical presence in the gallery space, echo the theatrical preoccupations of Minimalist sculpture but the ancient and organic nature of the material conversely alludes to an inherent human narrative that belies these conceptual concerns. *Behemoth* marks a radical departure in Martin's oeuvre.

at [Lisson Gallery, London](#)

until June 23, 2012







Jason Martin, Vero, 2010



Jason Martin, Yfus, 2012



Jason Martin, Feba, 2011

Jason Martin, Tóbu, 2011



Jason Martin, Tempest, 2011

Jason Martin, Tempest, 2011



Jason Martin, Sikh, 2011

Jason Martin, Sikh, 2011



Jason Martin, Paeon, 2012

Jason Martin, Paeon, 2012

Jason Martin, Rugen, 2011



Jason Martin, *Rugen*, 2011

Jason Martin, *Rugen*, 2011



Jason Martin, *Dactyl*, 2012

Jason Martin, *Dactyl*, 2012



Jason Martin, *Cepes*, 2012

Jason Martin, *Ceyx*, 2012



Jason Martin, *Behemoth*, 2012



Jason Martin, *Behemoth*, 2012

Jason Martin, *Behemoth*, 2012

All works © the artist. Courtesy: Lisson Gallery, London

October 2013

A conversation between Luca Massimo Barbero and Jason Martin

LMB:

I refer to the Texts of Atlas and Vigil as a chronological and spontaneous guide to show or almost draw (like in a map, an atlas of the ideal of the painting) the movements and the meanings of your painting in recent years.

In Atlas text of 2007 I wrote of an extraordinary natural fascination which is produced by your works, where the "continuous flux on earth" of your pictorial horizon awakened ones "Reveries" of Rousseau's that the viewers of your world achieves in a sense of landscape narrative, evocative phenomenon of senses, movement and seduction.

This "sense", induced by the pattern of the gesture, by the light between the dense dialectic of painting, - also produced that "'poetic excitement" of exceptional duration (yours, your paint) as I then suggested, it recalled that described by Edgar Allan Poe.

In 2012 you've painted "Crime" and especially "Rousseau's Nightmare" whose titles seem to evoke the atmosphere of Gothic Poe and the French philosopher. Can you talk about these two paintings and two titles, so deep, evocative and ultimately literary/narrative?

Are they an evolution of your work, of "literary places" and the echoes of the passion? What is the crime hidden in the painting of the nightmare of Rousseau?

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* (2012) 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* (2012) 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 had emerged as a surprise the transparent mater, a non-matter shaping and almost struggling to climb on the surface of the work, that is invaded, possessed, seduced by that shining light of transparency, - and became a pictorial 'song' of light and apparently non-existent matter, ... immaterial.

After not long, for the exhibition at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, you presented a transparent and mystical work 'Cry', - the opaque, sandy, stressed, volcanic matter, immersed in a geological and crystal world, a mineral and mysteriously fascinating universe also present in some works as the very candid 'Salt'.

Then in your pictorial path the world of these crystals and sand color horizons, enrich themselves to become more and more material, possessed, becoming much 'earthier' and extraordinarily 'infernal', magmatic.

What was or is your relationship with the transparency, the brightness of the material, its reflection of light, from oil to acrylic to the mysterious Gel?

And what is the meaning that you want to give to the sandy and mineral matter, to the 'opaque' of some of your work toward the end of the 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* (2009) 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 fight (the struggle) between transparent and opaque matter, between being crossed by bright light to achieve impact to the bottom (to the core) and the "catch" of light in the opaque and its deep reflection through the crystals of the matter, - this fight seems to meet in two casts, one is *Paeon*, a bronze cast of 2012 and the other is "*Rijks*" (rich evocation of a painter) a nickel of 2013.

The 'sound' of bronze, matte, monumental, often called a 'deaf sound' and the symbolically exceptional solidity of the raw material of nickel with its 'sound' strong and vibrant, - they confirm your saying << I identify with each work as a development from the last ">> the evolution of your research, and its deep origin into the world of painting.

Which are the first tests/experiences that led you to the casts?

What is the 'sound' at the bottom (at the core) of the work in metal, and what your intention about the reflection.

Tell us about from the birth of these works to your inquisitive mind and curiosity so to develop them and about your need to create works like 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 modeled 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:

Of your work - it has always been written and "spoken" of its gestural element, its almost immediate identification with your "being a painter," a great 'dialectic' of painting, its challenger and lover, - of painting as a movement pervading the all space.

In our critical dialogue I used a quote from the Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting to describe and summarize your sense of "evolution" of movement and gesture in the "space" of painting in the field of action painting. "Things are moving, multiplying, deforming, following one another as vibrations, in their mad career" proclaimed that quote of a futurist. Of that "being" in movement some of your works lived/lives. What happens with the casts where apparently all is still, immortalized in the moment?

What is their relationship with the gesture of the act of painting?

How do you build their slow 'coming into life', - their technical path through which they are created and ready for the viewer?

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.

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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.

Jason Martin, October 2013

CULTURA

Jason Martin, la «otra cara» de los Young British Artists

Exhibe por vez primera en Madrid sus trabajos en solitario: «La esencia del arte se ha perdido»

NATIVIDAD PULIDO / MADRID
Día 09/06/2011

A escasos kilómetros de Madrid, en La Florida (Guecho, 12 B), instaló no hace mucho su especialísima galería Javier López junto a la portuguesa Mário Sequeira. Es un remanso de arte, arquitectura y naturaleza, en total armonía. A través de los amplísimos ventanales de este bello edificio de corte minimalista —recuerda a la Fundación Beyeler— se entrevén las también minimalistas obras del británico Jason Martin (Jersey, 1970). Se están colgando sus monocromas composiciones, que nos entusiasman desde hace años en ARCO y que ahora conforman la muestra «Jason Martin. Oils and Pigments» (14 de junio-28 de septiembre; solo previa cita). Tienen algo de magnético estas piezas, muy gestuales, a caballo entre pintura y escultura, entre abstracción y figuración, entre Pollock y Fontana. Parecen hechas con elementos orgánicos: pelo, plumas... Es como si el artista hubiera creado una larguísima cabellera negra en sus cuadros. Da ganas de tocarlos, de peinarlos, de acariciarlos. A lo lejos aparece Jason Martin. Tiene más pinta de surfista que de artista. Tez muy morena, pelo rubio con mechas, camisa muy colorista, vaqueros... Te lo imaginas con el neopreno y la tabla, entre olas. Pero nada más comenzar a conversar con él te das cuenta de que tiene la cabeza muy bien amueblada. Es su primera exposición individual en Madrid. Le encanta el espacio.

Del minimalismo le atrae lo reduccionista; del expresionismo, la parte más expresiva de la pintura. El secreto de su éxito, unir ambas cosas. Su pintura es muy sensual y gestual, al modo de Cézanne, pintor que le apasiona por el trazo, la pincelada: «A veces tengo que reprimir el uso de la figuración. Todo mi interés por la abstracción viene de la figuración». Formado en la Chelsea School of Art y en el Goldsmiths College de Londres, recuerda que le aburrían los típicos pinceles con los que se hacían pastiches. Compró un gran pincel y con el movimiento no solo de la mano, sino de todo el cuerpo, logró formar parte de un selecto club de artistas que ya lo hicieron en el siglo XX: Pollock, De Kooning, Fontana... Sus pinturas se tornan cada vez más escultóricas, tridimensionales: la pasta, los pigmentos se acumulan creando mucho volumen. «Me gusta ir más lejos que Donald Judd». No trabaja sobre lienzo, sino sobre superficies duras y lisas como el aluminio o incluso el níquel.

Su estilo es claramente reconocible, lo cual es una ventaja, pero también corre el peligro de repetirse. «Soy consciente de ello, pero sigo investigando y buscando nuevos lenguajes». Pertenece a los Young British Artists, pero deja claro que ser joven, artista y británico no es sinónimo de provocador. No tiene nada que ver con Hirst, Emin, los Chapman... «No me siento parte de esa generación. No tienen nada que ver con mis preocupaciones; yo pretendo cosas distintas. Distingo entre artistas, a veces un poco neuróticos, y pintores». Cree que al arte le sobra tanto show a su alrededor: «Se ha desmadrado un poco y se ha perdido la esencia del arte. Es repulsivo que existan mafias, lobbys». Y, en medio de tanto ruido, el silencio de las obras de Martin: «El mundo del arte debería ser místico, pero es todo lo contrario. Van a una sala de subastas y no miran el alma de una obra; es solo una transacción económica. Pero no quiero ser hipócrita. Yo formo parte de ese mercado del arte y me beneficio de él». Participó en la polémica muestra «Sensation» de la colección Saatchi. «No sé aún por qué me escogieron; no tengo nada que ver con ellos. Pero sé que el mundo del arte es mejor con Saatchi que sin él, porque ha ayudado a muchos artistas».

March 2013

Paul Moorhouse: Jason Martin, Painter of Other Landscapes

Scared Masters, Scared Monsters – Denizens of the Demonic Demagogue
(Pearl Lam Gallery, March 2013)

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

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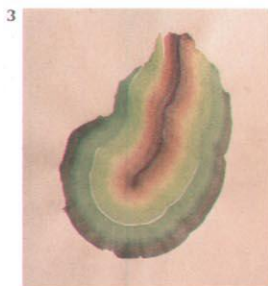
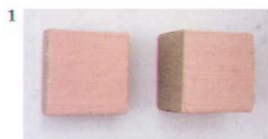
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through the illusory window of perspective. Defying that convention, Martin's domain, it seems, is that of imagination and unmediated sensory stimulation. No link seems possible. But this would be to underestimate his achievement. The external world 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.

Paul Moorhouse

Jason Martin

"I ruminate for hours to identify the absolute meaning of a work. Each painting has a very specific emotional identity"



1 **Babe** (1995)
oil on linen, 12 x 12 x 10cm

2 **Mexican Girl** (2005)
ink on paper, 59.4 x 42cm

3 **Paw Paw St. Lucia** (2007)
ink on paper, 23 x 23cm

Opposite **Untitled** (2007)
oil on aluminium, Church of the
Apostles, Gütersloh, Germany,
300 x 200cm

JASON MARTIN has been pushing, dragging and smearing thick, richly coloured paint across a range of surfaces since the mid-1990s. His seductive monochrome works are resolutely non-figurative, but the gestures of Martin's body are increasingly evident in the sweeping marks that he shapes on the differing surfaces, and other organic and human forms are hinted at in the manipulated mass of paint. The paintings' effects shift radically as you move around them, and their powerful sculptural presence is particularly acute in works made on unusually shaped supports. Martin's enticing objects demand the viewer's physical, as well as ocular, interaction. **INTERVIEW: Ben Luke**

Being a painter named Martin, you are part of a small but noble tradition. But is Agnes more to your taste than John? John Martin's paintings impressed me first when I was a teenager and his extraordinary vision remains great. But Agnes would be my first choice; she was a spiritual athlete.

Over time, you've increased the fluidity of the movement in your paintings – how have you achieved this?
I have adapted brushes that are flexible and I can control lateral movements with much greater freedom than with a rigid brush.

There has always been a sense of your body in your work, but how do you account for it becoming increasingly graceful as the work has progressed?
The movements and compositions serve to further animate my whole body. Rather than being confined to a reach from the shoulder, the movements I can now investigate are more physical and choreographed.

There is a tension between colour and format in your paintings. How long does it take to get a successful combination?
Some works challenge you for many hours but some are more forgiving and succeed in a relatively short time – less than an hour. Colour and format have to be resolved through the intense and uninterrupted emotional journey of making the work. This often demands a shift in strategy and pace along the way, but a successful piece is always reached in one sitting. It takes a lot of hard work to make things look easy.

You've worked on a variety of shaped supports. What challenges do the differing shapes present?
The irregular panels present unpredictable compositional challenges. There is also a danger that the identity of the work spills over into wall sculpture, and I try to keep the frame of reference predominantly painting.

You use supports like aluminium and stainless steel, as well as Perspex. How do you choose which to use, and what do the different surfaces bring to the works?
The varied supports contribute to the pictorial space of the works. Reflective grounds offer varied depths of field, and implied spaces become active through the oil, acrylic or mixed media I use. When I make decisions about the support or ground, transparency and opacity are the most immediate concerns. The painted surfaces vibrate very differently depending on the ground, and the absorbency and resistance of the surface contribute to the painting's final temperament or mood. A painting on a wooden panel traditionally prepared with gesso will feel radically different from one on lacquered, polished stainless steel.

How do you name your pieces?
I find the titles through a poetic exchange, searching for a work's specific character and personality. I ruminate for hours – often much longer than the actual physical investment of making the piece – to identify the absolute meaning of a work. Each painting has a very specific emotional identity.

How much of a role does chance play?
Chance and intention are both ever-present in my work. All vital painting relies on chance and a temperance of deliberation and abandon. Without risk and chance, painting is empty.

The works are so tactile – do you have problems with viewers touching them?
Touch completes the sensory experience. The surfaces invite you to get closer and closer – I have had plenty of works damaged.

In your drawings of 2005, there were clear allusions to a naked female form. Do these inform the paintings, or do you see them as autonomous works?
I make drawings, sketches or studies as a means to connect further with different

genres, so still life, landscape, and the figure become integrated into my paintings. The sketches allow me to absorb the natural world and respond to spaces, places and people, and this is belatedly distilled in the paintings. I further the story of abstraction while recognising the real and emotional warmth of figuration. I like to bring the viewer close to the work without the burden of a fixed identity.

One can see the influence of Rothko, Newman and Serra in your work – but who is the greatest influence on you?
Pollock, as he invested his entire body in the process. This was, and remains, truly radical.

What do you read, and does it inform your work at all?
At present I am reading about the arguments for and against God, crossovers of Christian and Muslim faith. I just hung a painting in a church in Gütersloh in Germany; it's part Islamic diamond shape and part cross [right]. The exhibition is called *For God's Sake* and deliberately challenges how you read those words; as expletive, blasphemy, as an answer to a question or as blatant matter of fact.

Do you listen to music while you paint?
I listen to an eclectic mix on a playlist that I change every now and then. The playlist is very specific and I will play it for months, allowing the computer to shuffle the order.

Where would you most like to live in the world?
India or Thailand half the year, and the rest I can't quite decide – I'm still working on it. At the minute, I am building a studio in Portugal, surrounded by 200 olive trees.

Finally, if you could live with any work of art ever made, what would it be?
Cape Arkona [1806] by Caspar David Friedrich, in the Albertina in Vienna. ⁴
Exhibition: 'Nomad', a solo exhibition at CAC Malaga, Spain, until 6 Apr.



Born: 1970, Jersey, Channel Islands Studied: Chelsea School of Art, London; Goldsmiths College, London
Lives and works: London Represented: Lisson Gallery, London; LA Louver, Venice, CA; Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris and Salzburg

Q: Do you feel any affinity with the work of Yves Klein?

A: Yes, Fontana and Pollock included. I feel part of a small club as they all used their whole body in the making of their work.

Q: But you don't really seem to be attacking your work ...

A: No, I engage with painting as a stage and an event, where serendipity thrives however I am also committed to resolving a pictorial space. I like the idea that painting is a vessel for your mental landscape allowing a freedom of reference and poetic association. You look through as a window onto a world as a space beyond. You also have this surface, a physical space a surface very sculptural and material. When I started out I had an interest in bringing a cool approach to a rudimentary idea or 'Minimalism' together with the live emotive and more heated posture of Expressionism. My finite act or acts remain elemental.

Q: What does having a studio mean to you?

A: I've always wanted to work large industrial spaces. The prospect of engaging a studio practice in more ambitious spaces raises bigger challenges for the advancement of my work not least in terms of understanding scale. With my London studio I found a space to work in and reflect and hopefully further my artistic endeavour. I am guilty of cocooning myself in this environment.

Q: How many hours do you work each day?

A: I am usually working a full day starting at 8:30 - 9am and working through until 7pm.

Q: Are there differences between the works you produce in England versus Lisbon?

A: I do have a more grungy approach in my Lisboa studio, for parts of the year the walls are crumbling from high extremes of humidity.

Q: Your first exposure was the 1997 *Sensation* exhibition. Did you feel part of the YBAs?

A: The YBAs came together for generational reasons. There are previous movements in art history where an ethos or an ideology brings artists together. I don't see the YBAs as having too much in common. During that time I wasn't included in many of the group shows, and although I was in *Sensation* I didn't feel part of that group. In fact people really haven't known what to do with me here. I've had much more success overseas. The Latin cultures respond better to the physicality of my work. Brazil, Portugal Spain and Italy engage more so than UK where the sentiment and mood is more nonchalant or indifferent.

Q: What would you like to be remembered for?

A: I'd like to be thought of as developing a new territory in painting, pushing the margins or the understanding of what painting can be, developing the language and the story of abstract painting or the story so far.

I'd like my work to bring enjoyment to future generations who may or may not have a cultural attitude.

Q: Do you think of artists who deal with similar issues as kind of lonely?

A: High modernism is quite a solitary path. There are artists I really admire Kelly, Marden, Ryman. There aren't many who have that grace and that power. There's truth and integrity in their work. I like to think that I'm part of that story. I like to think that my paintings, as much as they are contemporary works, also relate back to early communications in art, to cave art. I'm exploring classic more quiet concerns that have compelled artists over centuries. Fundamental issues in painting.

Q: When you wake up in the morning, what drives you?

A: I want to make my contribution to painting. I've always felt that that's why I'm here. That's my purpose, that's my vocation. I've always felt a sense of urgency and I've always had a work ethic, so I've always been very driven to make work. I have the belief that I have something to offer in the story of painting. Also I'm very curious to work with paint. I'm a paint junkie. I am really in the business of trapping mystery in oil or acrylic. Maybe it's a combination of fear and entropy and knowing that eventually we're all going the same way. There's no life other than a creative life.

WHITEHOT MAGAZINE TM

Martin approaches the act of painting with a tactility that borders on the grotesque, a luscious and provocative fluidity that is maddeningly sexy and sensual, frozen in space and time and yet very nearly carnal in its provocations. All in all it is clear that a “seeing eye” is working straight through this artist’s hand with lightening speed and a specific trajectory, i.e. to stand as visual testament to the possibilities of movement in paint however quiet and stealthy those gestures may be.

Works like the ubiquitous *Genus* (2011) offer a compellingly stalwart account of the possibility of movement as this pure pigment on panel work verifiably twists and seethes within itself as though we as viewers were witnessing the secret, inner life of an electric current as it surges along its ten miles of coil. Martin’s fierce and uncompromising use of color, in this case magenta, heightens the experience of looking into the painting whereby the color field transforms into its own electric playing field. Still, other works in the exhibition are more overt with their agenda as is the case with *Tzion* (2011) where Martin’s slathering of the paint loses its effectiveness to the heft and weightiness of the color gold. The two gold paintings in the exhibition (*Tzion* and *Shaolin*) appear more obviously decorative, the works inherent fluidity obfuscated by the false decadence that presupposes anything shiny and gold. Gold and silver are tricky colors by which an artist might hope to appear honest, if not to the world, then at least to himself, and these two works are no exception. It’s like introducing small children and puppies on stage at the Ahmanson during a great performance of Hamlet. Anyone is bound to be upstaged.

The title of the show offers a glimpse into Martin’s working process, *Near By Far*, meaning that the way in which we as viewers “see” or witness an artwork is strangely its own journey “where far only becomes near from the reflection of the distance traveled. Getting closer depends on your perception of how far you have traveled. This can be an illusion, and to arrive at a place is, of course, another departure.” The immediacy and materiality of the paint is projected forward of the picture plane creating a sense of intimacy, yet within that intimate gesture is tremendous movement which broadens and expands the image outward beyond itself. This is a truly experiential process both for the artist as well as for the viewer, or as Grace Slick so eloquently put it, referring to the New Wonderland of experimental drugs, “One pill makes you larger. One pill makes you small, and the ones that mother gives you don’t do anything at all.”



Installation photography, Jason Martin - Near by Far, 21 July – 27 August 2011

Art Review

June 2004

Jason Martin

21 April-22 May
Lisson Gallery, London NW1
(+44 (0)20 7724 2739,
www.lisson.co.uk)

Review by Morgan Falconer



Jason Martin's pictures may have the stridency and stentorian volume of Abstract Expressionism, but their surfaces look so wet and delicate that it seems a marvel that they have made their way into the world at all. To create them, Martin draws oil or viscous acrylic gel across aluminium surfaces with a hefty comb, manipulating it as he goes to create palpable impressions of depth. When he is good he is very very good: the appearance is of a softly corrugated surface, swooping into depths, alive with reflected light at its peaks, and everywhere delicious to the eye. Often the image flutters on the retina like Op Art, but the paint has always a viscid richness that makes us attend to details as well – the way lines break up in places, or how a thick line droops over onto its neighbour.

Martin can be intriguingly, thematically ambiguous as well: in the best piece in his new show, a long *Untitled* work created earlier this year, a sweep of curving pale cream paint is all it takes to suggest a muscular landscape, as if the picture were an illustration of some vast geographical space. And yet, of course, it's pure abstraction.

But when he is bad, he gives one doubts. While the cream *Untitled* picture seems to directly engage with the idea of landscape, it is hard to say where some of the other works are aimed. Many have shiny, acidic, metallic palettes, and many have unusually shaped supports: there is a tondo, a hemisphere, some segments and squares with slightly shaved-off sides. One inevitably

thinks of the shaped canvases of Morris Louis and Frank Stella, and the whole project of painterly Minimalism that was intent on harrying the humanity out of painting. But what relation do Martin's canvases have to this tradition? The purpose of the shaped canvas used to be to intrude on the representational character of painting, to make the picture more object-like and, perhaps foremost, to savour the effects of the canvas edge, in and for itself. Martin's shapes often look merely eccentric, as if they exist just to bring new life to a technique that has become restrictive for him – he has, after all, been making these paintings for 10 years.

It looks like anxiety. One gets the same impression from the two pictures in the front gallery, where he has over-dramatised the impressions of welling, spilling and spinning in the pictures by splattering paint about the walls and floors in a Pollock-esque frenzy.

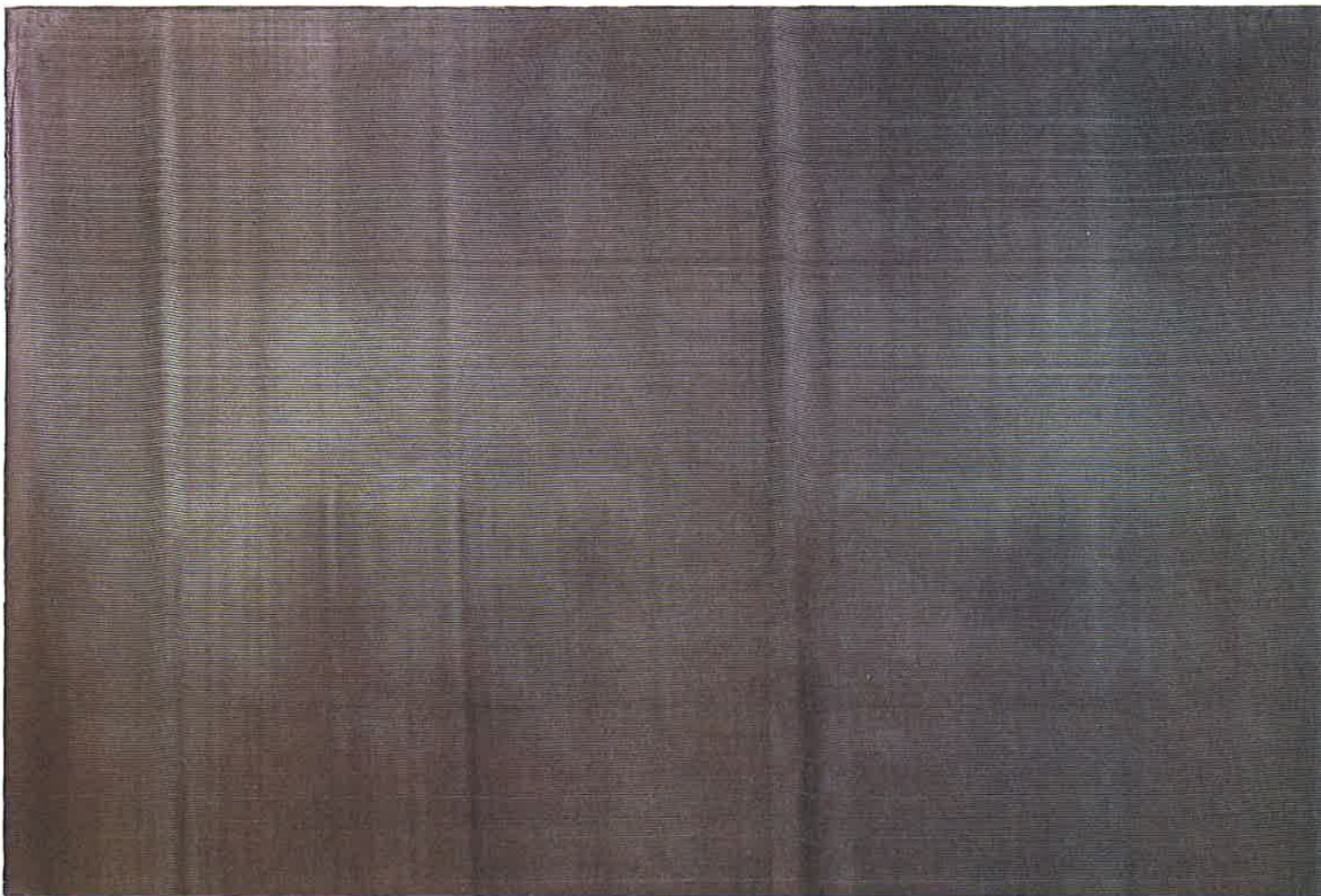
Martin may have an audience of fans and collectors who go ga-ga over his sparkling technique, but he cannot be oblivious to the fact that despite his established maturity he isn't receiving the acclaimed retrospectives, the buttery profiles and the shiny gongs that are bestowed upon the current darlings. But if he stays calm he can paint confident pictures like that cream landscape; and if he can do that, the rest will come in time.

Above: Jason Martin, *Fecund*, 2004, oil on copper, 240 x 120 x 10cm, detail



JASON MARTIN

NICK HACKWORTH



above: *Sanction*, 2000, acrylic on aluminium, 244 x 366 cms (96 x 145 inches) Photograph by Dave Morgan. Courtesy: Lisson Gallery, London.
previous pages: *Ripper*, 1999, acrylic on aluminium, 244 x 366 cms (96 x 145 inches) Photograph by Dave Morgan. Courtesy: Lisson Gallery, London

WE do not choose the histories into which we are born but we must negotiate them as best we can nonetheless. Our odd times have bequeathed us a bundle of conflicting imperatives, for while life in the West continues apace, moving to the rhythms of material accumulation and technological advance, the various utopian ideologies which once gave that movement the illusion of purpose have long since collapsed, undercut by the realities of history and human nature. What is true of our politics and culture in general is true of our art too, and painting especially. Like contemporary political theorists, painters must live with the fact that all the grand gestures have been enacted and the radical notions deployed; and that to repeat them would be pathetic in the true sense of that word. Yet even now it is possible for painters and thinkers alike to be modern, if they honestly accept the world as it is. As the philosopher John Gray sets out with ruthless clarity in his recent work, *Straw Dogs* 'Today the good life... is not to be found in dreams of progress, but in coping with tragic contingencies.' To be modern is to accept the limitations inherent in our times.

painters must live with the fact that all the grand gestures have been enacted and the radical notions deployed

For ten years now Jason Martin has done just that. Unlike most contemporary painters who have dealt the past either by forgetting it, consciously or not, or by attempting to defuse its constrictive power with irony laden brushstrokes, Martin has found room for manoeuvre whilst engaging with the history of painting on its own terms. His work fuses elements from the legacies of both Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, creating works that stand between painting and sculpture, and radiate an aesthetic and sensibility that is entirely contemporary, not least in its engagement with limitation.

Process has previously been the focus when discussing Martin's work. Since his graduation show at Goldsmiths' College, he has used essentially the same method of painting: drawing an unusually wide implement – a brush in the form of a draught excluder or a

comb-like piece of metal or board – across the surface of the support to create a record in paint of a single balletic mark-making motion, a visible trace of physical movement through space. However the appearance of the painting consisting of just one movement or mark is an illusion, for often Martin will repeat the action many times until one brings a particularly pleasing irregularity in the striation or satisfying distribution of the paint across the surface, and so becomes the last. Nevertheless the illusion is productive, for it is the apparently instant and rapid mark-making that makes the work look so contemporary. In his pieces painted with either oil or acrylic gel on hard, reflective stainless steel, aluminium or Perspex, the quality of translucency and the bouncing light serves to accentuate the sense of the speed of the mark.

Furlong (1997) exploits its horizontality to intimate prolonged acceleration, while in *Vivant*



Mercenary, 2003, oil on aluminium, 40 x 40 cms (15.75 x 15.75 inches) Courtesy: Galerie Thaddeus Ropac, Paris

(2003) the visibility of the shiny support and the insubstantiality of the gel add the quintessentially modern quality of attractive superficiality to the aesthetic of speed. Such works inevitably recall Pollock and the emotive intentionality of his gestural marks. Yet they intelligently, even mournfully, play with that memory, for Martin's paintings are the product of an era both harder and faster, seemingly made by a Pollock who has no time for looping, circular calligraphic motions but instead needs to maximise the efficiency of a linear trip from A to B. So Martin has made a virtue of the history of painting which seemed to be suffocating, python-like, all hopes of positive action. By following the logic of what has gone before, he has employed one device – the single mark – whose economy speaks eloquently of the restrictions imposed by history, to create space, both literal and metaphorical, in which to operate.

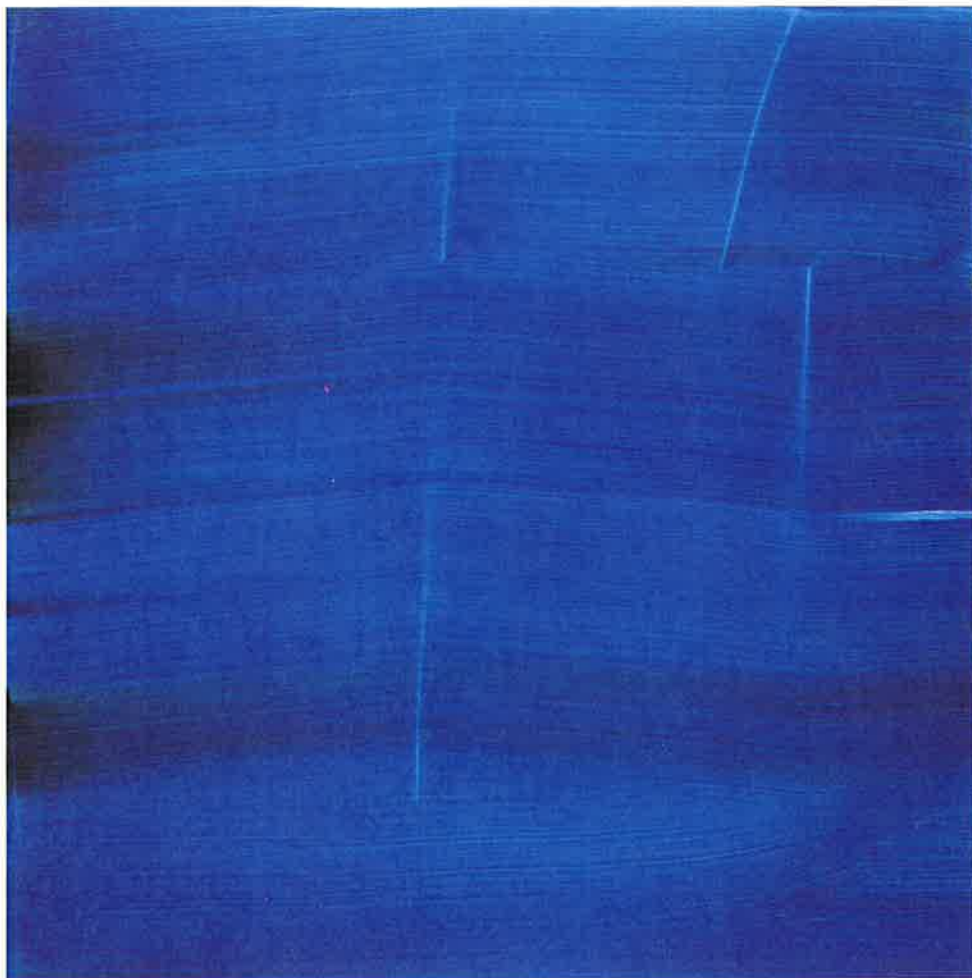
Recently Martin has extended that space by moving from the single, linear mark towards monochromes that explore deeper the perennial painterly concerns of light, form and space. This has been aided by further self-imposed restrictions for, since 2000, Martin has employed a more restrictive, muted palate, turning away from the gaudiness of the hues in previous works. As with his minimal mark-making, a conscious narrowing of options has served to deepen the focus of both artist and viewer on what is left. In his so-called apex works he has begun to plan the composition of the work, relying less on spontaneous, accidental or pseudo-mechanical actions. In these pieces he uses grand, looping movements that run from left to right across the support, creating

rounded, fan-like, quasi-organic forms that have as their fulcrum, or apex, a point at the middle of the bottom edge. As these increasingly complex surfaces testify, it is still possible, by dealing honestly with the contingencies of

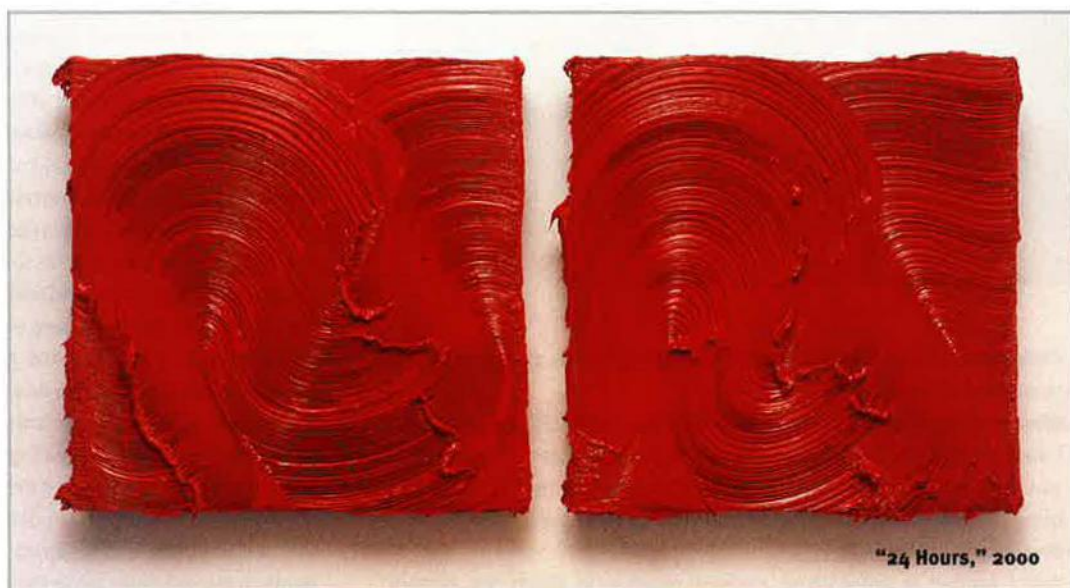
history, to act positively and cause new forms to flourish in lands that once looked barren and exhausted.

NICK HACKWORTH

Chase, 2002, oil on composite panel, 150 x 150 cms (59.06 x 59.06 inches) Courtesy: Galerie Thaddeus Ropac, Paris



The U.K.'s Jason Martin
is a one-man art movement.



BEAU GESTE

written by **Christopher Miles** photographed by **Christopher Floyd**

At just 30, Jason Martin is among the best known of a new generation of abstract painters. His gorgeous paintings offer no apologies for being the eye candy that they are, transporting viewers to a kind of imaginary space. Covering panels of stainless steel, aluminum, or Plexiglass with massive quantities of viscous oil or acrylic paint, utilizing one color only per panel, Martin then drags brushes and tools in a single pass across the painting, repeating the gesture until he makes a mark that is to his satisfaction. That single, final mark becomes the defining characteristic of the finished work.

Born in Jersey, a British island community off the northwest coast of France, and schooled at the Chelsea School of Art and Goldsmiths College, both in London, Martin proved to be among the least shocking but most truly interesting artists in last year's eyebrow-raising *Sensation* exhibition. He has enjoyed a meteoric rise while being lumped into the category of Young British Artists (a.k.a. YBA) that is behind the U.K.'s latest invasion of the art world. While Martin admits that the hype surrounding *Sensation*, the Saatchi Collection, and the überhip London art scene certainly haven't hurt his career—and that art celebrity isn't without its more curious moments—he claims he'd prefer not to be pigeonholed with many of England's new, young art stars with whom he feels little affinity.

Recently in Venice, California, following a successful run at the L.A. Louver Gallery—the latest notch in an exhibition record that includes solo shows in London, New York, Milan, Nagoya, Japan, and Nordhorn, Germany, as well as group exhibitions worldwide—Martin, who prefers to talk about painting, sat down to do just that.



"Masai," 2000

Christopher Miles: How long have you worked in this manner?

Jason Martin: Seven years now.

Were you heading in this direction while you were still in school?

I was, yes. I'd been making pouring paintings for a couple of years, and I was desperate to find a way to get back to using a brush. I wanted to bring the relationship of the body back into the painting.

Meaning gesture?

Yes, I wanted to get back to abstract painting in which the gesture involved in creating the work was apparent.

It's a lot easier to create the appearance of gesture than to make gesture that's apparent.

Exactly. You almost inevitably wind up with a pastiche of past abstract painting styles, or a very clichéd painting that's more like a picture of an abstract painting than an actual abstract painting. You can go to any number of art schools and find scores of young painters who want to bring spontaneity and freedom back into painting, but most of them wind up making paintings that just look like old paintings by other painters who were free and spontaneous.

How did you see your way out of that trap?

I started working on large monochromatic surfaces, just a single color, with the idea that the painting would be defined solely by the evidence of the brushmarks in the surface of the paint so that my movements would be translated onto the surface.

Were you using conventional brushes then?

I was, and it was very limiting because I was interested in the idea of making a seamless mark that covered the whole painting, so that the painting would record both a movement and a duration of time that ran from one side to the other. The trouble was that I was back to making something that looked like the gesture I wanted rather than actually making the gesture. I was making a lot of smaller marks and then very carefully trying to join them together to make it look like one continuous mark.

So you had to find a bigger brush.

I did, and instead of connecting a bunch of brushes together, I began using brushes or brushlike things that were normally used for other purposes—anything that would allow me to cover the entire surface with one mark.

Nowadays, some of your brushes are custom-made, and certain comb-

like tools as well, yes?

Depending on the type and quality of mark I want—whether I want it sharper or softer, and how I want the grooves it leaves to vary depending on the size of the painting I have in mind—I'll have tools made, or I'll alter brushes I already have. In the end though, the tools really aren't important. I've made paintings with different brushes and tools, and I've made paintings with pieces of Styrofoam and cardboard. I've even made very small pieces with the side of a crumpled cigarette pack. I just look for whatever will leave the kind of mark I want.

That single mark became the defining characteristic of your paintings.

It opened up a whole new kind of space in the paintings. When I drag the brush across the surface horizontally and also move the brush vertically as I go, it creates a kind of illusionistic space that's generated by the way the light hits the paint on the surface, but I'm not painting an illusionistic image the way one would traditionally.

The paintings appear to have waves or folds in the surfaces, or areas that protrude or recede from the surface. They really flirt with the boundary between illusion and abstraction, don't they?

It was really a kind of backward development. I was never interested in developing narratives or painting pictures of things or scenes. I was really interested in just exploring the possibilities of what you could do with the medium abstractly, with paint on a surface, and I really wanted to get into the physical, bodily aspect of that. I wound up creating a kind of depth in the paintings while I was at it.

You're really not interested in the paintings having a fixed point of focus?

No. That's something about Cézanne that fascinates me. Every bit of the surface of a Cézanne is worked out. Every bit is as interesting to look at as every other. There's an all-overness to it. Morandi was like that too. He'd paint a still life, but he'd paint the dead space between objects with as much devotion as the objects themselves, so throughout the surface you have the same level of commitment and integrity in the brushwork. Then you've got Pollock, whose paintings have that quality that interests me, of having an all-overness, almost a democratic handling of the surface. I wanted that quality, and I wanted to deal with just surface and color, so it made sense to go monochrome, although I don't like to call them monochrome or think of them in that way.

How do you like to think of them?

As reflections, I suppose. Monochrome sounds flat. When you're looking at the paintings, what you're seeing as color is the light reflected on the surface of the painting. If you're looking at one of my paintings that's blue, all of the pigment in the paint is the exact same blue, but because of the way I handle the surface, you see a variety of blues when the light bounces off, and it changes as you move about the work. There are all kinds of qualities and spatial effects that come about because of the way the light reflects off the paint, and I like to stumble into those things by chance through the process.

In a way, you're really stripping painting down to fundamentals.

That's what I want to do. Color, space, light, scale, movement, time, chance, intention—these are what really interest me. Along with the choices about what colors and tools and types of paint to use, and what kind of surfaces I paint on, they are the concerns that will have the greatest effect on what kind of painting I have when I'm finished.

You're really a modernist painter at heart, aren't you?

I suppose so. I've always been interested in the grammar of painting, in the uncertainty of the process. Cézanne has always been the starting point for me—the way that he would paint various images, many of them multiple times, and he would use that as a kind of excuse to explore how to make a painting. For me, that's a very important thing, and it's a basic modernist approach—that the question of how to paint replaces the question of what to paint.

Do you think of yourself as a modernist or a postmodernist, or do you care for those distinctions?

I don't think of myself one way or the other. What I do know is that I'm interested in certain qualities of painting, and if you go to the world's museums, the paintings in which you see the greatest exploration of the aspects of painting that interest me are the paintings we call modernist.

So how much of an idea do you start out with when you work?

I have a certain clarity about what I want the work to have in general, and I have ideas about what color and size I want to work with, what kind of paint and what implement, but then what happens in terms of the mark on the surface gets worked out as I go.

So there are many marks made.

Many marks. I cover the surface with paint, and then start passing over it. The mark you see is the last mark, but there are many marks made before that: over and over, back and forth. It's a long, continuous process. If I leave it to talk on the phone or whatever, it's very hard to get back to it. You lose the evolution of the work, and that's what brings you to that final mark.

Do they always have to be beautiful?

Well, I think it's safe to say that I'm certainly not afraid of them being beautiful. I'm not of the school of thought that something can't be both beautiful and interesting.

But could you make a painting that was, say, awesomely, profoundly ugly?

Well, I think that some are more somber perhaps than others.

Do you think of them as recording your moods or psychological states?

No, I think of them as recording movement. In the mark, there is a record of how I move, how I shift my weight, and such; and of course, if I'm tired or rested or in a good or bad mood, naturally that affects how I move and how I carry myself, so it figures into the work. I don't think of it as being a case where the painting reflects my state of mind. I just think of my state of mind as being one of the interesting, unpredictable variables that reflects the outcome of the painting. I do think, though, that it's safe to say that the paintings might suggest moods, not my moods so much, but just moods.

They're generally on the happier side, even the somber ones, aren't they?

Well, they're not tragic.

Do you think of them as being born of a sort of visionary mentality?

How do you mean that?

They suggest to me that there is still something to be done in painting, that it isn't exhausted as a craft, and that the person who made them believes in the possibility of doing something new.

Well, I believe that's the challenge of every artist, to understand the tradition of what you're doing, and to try to find what you can do with it that carries it on.

To me, that's a visionary point of view. And I think your paintings embody a kind of optimism.

It's definitely about being alive. I look at these paintings and remember certain associations about where I was in my life when I made them, and I certainly don't think other people can see those things in the paintings—they're not psychological imprints—but I do believe that as records of movement, they're records of vitality and freedom. When I got into making art, it was because I wanted to leave something behind, not because of ego, but because I had that sense of freedom, and I wanted to be able to make a record of that sense and show it to other people.

You're very serious about what you do.

I think a lot of young artists make the mistake of taking themselves very seriously and then hoping that will rub off on the work. I take my work very seriously, but I can't afford to take myself that seriously.