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LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Jason Martin

Space, Light, Time

5 June – 21 August 2021

2/F, 27 Huqiu Road, Huangpu District, Shanghai 200002

Lisson Gallery is pleased to present Jason Martin's first solo exhibition in Shanghai, unveiling eight new works created specifically for the show. As the title suggests, the exhibition is a return to the fundamentals of life – *Space, Light, Time* – and a mark of appreciation for these facets following the turmoil of the past year, as well as to the foundations of painting. This ensemble of works, all sculpted paste on aluminum with pure pigment, were created by the artist in his studio in Portugal.

Martin has gained renown for his thick impasto, gestural paintings that challenge our perception of two and three-dimensionality by occupying space beyond the panel itself, balancing on the precipice between painting and sculpture. Since studying at Goldsmiths College in London in the early 1990s, the artist has pushed the boundaries of painting to its limits, at times even pouring paint beyond the borders, surpassing the confines of the panel. Previous works have been characterised by the single sweeping brushstroke, but here Martin adopts a more visceral, fluid approach using his hands rather than a tool and created flat as opposed to on the wall. While the earlier oil works, derived from Minimalists such as Robert Ryman and Frank Stella, bore a certain chance encounter, these paintings reference Yves Klein and Lucio Fontana in their primary concern with colour as well as the presence of the body; Martin leaves a physical echo in his works through the evident trace of his hands.

Three works are presented in the first room of the gallery: the first two in Oriental blue and Cobalt violet, and the third, on the far wall, an Ultramarine blue tondo. Here we see the artist's manipulation of the medium, sculpting the surface into dense abstract layers, with edges, curves and folds. With conceptual roots in the genre of landscape painting, the works have a dialogue with figuration, evoking the expanse of the raw and rugged landscape beyond Martin's studio, and serving as a relic of the natural world. These works illustrate the core of Martin's practice, yet depict the ever-evolving pursuit of an artist exploring new and unique ways to handle the medium, and the scenes that emerge.

As you walk through the space, a series of fluorescent red and pink works greet you: *Untitled (Fluorescent flame red / Rosso laccato)*, *Untitled (Fluorescent pink / Rosso laccato)*, *Untitled (Permanent red)* and *Untitled (Fluorescent pink / Titanium white)* (all 2021). On the opposite wall, Martin's larger-scale painting, rendered in a luminous Quinacridone scarlet shade, completes the exhibition. These works see Martin focus on the beauty of impervious, rich colour, creating hypnotic swirling forms. Beyond oil and pigment, the artist has explored varying materials in his work – from the opulent, mirrored surfaces of gold, silver, nickel and copper to the intensely terrestrial use of graphite. Instead of the flux witnessed in some of Martin's earlier work, these new paintings emit a contemplative yet joyful vitality – the use of colour suggesting a desire to escape the melancholy and start anew.

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About the artist

Jason Martin channels a minimal approach to painting through an expansive yet controlled use of colour, brush and medium. Working in pigment, acrylic, oil paint, graphite and cast metal, Martin interrogates the fundamentals of painting, veering from epic and luscious compositions of swirling forms (such as *Oceania*, 2006) to pared-down and muted abstractions in precisely blended tones. Structured according to the harmonic relationships between these hues (included in the titles, such as *Davy's Grey Deep/Graphite Grey/Titanium White*, 2017), the paintings manifest as parallel strata, their horizons exploring suggestions of landscape and atmosphere through the viscosity of oil or the granular texture of other material added to the paint. Albeit with the occasional intervention of chance, moments of happenstance and the unexpected whorl of chaos, this process of repeated, sweeping gestures has been honed over the years since Martin attended Goldsmiths College in London in the early 1990s. These early works saw Martin dragging skeins of oil or acrylic gel across hard surfaces such as aluminium, stainless steel or Plexiglas with a fine, comb-like tool.

Martin also does away with paint altogether in his wall-mounted casts of gold, rose gold and silver, whose surfaces are unctuous but frozen – fluctuating between sculpture and painting. In monochromatic, pure pigment works, vivid colour is applied to moulded panels, whose baroque contortions appear like extreme close-ups of a painter's ridged and furrowed palette. Uniting his practice is an attempt to further the language of abstraction through discrete and measured interventions, which both disrupt and activate the surfaces and spaces he inhabits.

Jason Martin was born in Jersey, in the Channel Islands, in 1970 and lives and works between London and Portugal. He has a BA from Goldsmiths, London (1993). Solo exhibitions include Thaddaeus Ropac, France (2018); Schauwerk Sindelfingen, Sindelfingen, Germany (2017); Museum gegenstandsfreier Kunst, Otterndorf, Germany (2016); Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy (2009); Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma, Majorca, Spain (2008); Kunstverein Kreis Gütersloh, Gütersloh, Germany (2007); and Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (2005).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York, one in Shanghai, as well as temporary spaces opened in 2020 in East Hampton and London's Mayfair district. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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