

MAUREEN PALEY.

press release

AVIS NEWMAN

Watching the Map

1 June – 30 July 2023

private view: Thursday 1 June 2023, 5 – 7:30pm

the artist will be present



Maureen Paley is pleased to announce a new exhibition by Avis Newman. This will be her second with the gallery and her first at 60 Three Colts Lane.

“The work presented in this exhibition forms part of a larger ongoing series entitled *Thirteen Chapters*, which is a meditation on notions of conflict. This is a reflection on the writing of Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* and the lasting significance of the poetry of the German/French poet Paul Celan. The limits of language and what cannot be said has had a great effect on me as a visual artist and the notion that the image is beyond language has always been a truism for me. This conundrum has been ever present.

There are such incomprehensible events in the world, near impossible to classify or comprehend, where experience and embodied trauma are so compressed and overwhelming, that it exceeds comprehension. In this context, speech is reduced to a stutter. Imaginary strategies of engagement, depicted in encoded signs and inscriptions, attempt to bring to the mind of the viewer different modalities of collective social meaning and the autonomy of the individual. The work endeavours to become an arena for the viewer’s deliberation on the nature of being and an exploration of the ‘imaginary’ that art embodies. It is integral to how I see and understand the past in the present moment and the workings of memory.

The exhibition takes its title, *Watching the Map*, from the installation in the second of the two gallery spaces, and reflects on the ancient Chinese notion of ‘the ground as square and the sky as a dome’ - a conceptual construct that has been familiar in many different cultures as symbols of the universe. Here the viewer is invited to consider the idea of ‘watching’ as an active mapping of change. In the main gallery, the large unstretched canvases allude to emblems, banners or scrolls. The movement of paint and the irrefutable effect of gravity on liquidity attempts to ground the viewer in the here and now.

The work is conceptually rooted in a Modernist notion of the white page as an infinite space in contrast will forces of materiality and incorporates works on paper, stretched and unstretched canvases and objects, where ‘assemblages of interchangeable elements, layered, hung, and partially overlapped, are arranged in sets or sequences that resist an absolute fixity.’¹

Language has always been integral to my thoughts and I have looked to poets and thinkers who have questioned narrative as a linear progression, reflecting my interest in mobile states of thought and unconscious processes. My work since 2007 brings together layered references where meaning is not absolute - existing as a myriad of interpretations, taking the form of multiple elements collectively referred to as *Configurations*.” – Avis Newman, 2023

¹ Catherine de Zegher, *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010 pp. 108-109

image: Avis Newman, *Strategies of Engagement VI (Thirteen Chapters)*, 2018/2022, acrylic and chalk on unstretched cotton canvas, 1. 192 x 183 cm, 2. 20 x 20 cm

Avis Newman (b. 1946) lives and works in London. Selected national and international exhibitions include: *The Weight of Souls I*, Maureen Paley: Studio M, London, UK (2021); *A Very Special Place: Ikon in the 1990s*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2021); *Meticulous Observations and Naming the Money*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK (2017); *More Light*, 5th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia (2013); *Mobile Relations*, The Gallery, Norwich University of the Arts, Norwich, UK (2013); *On Line: Drawing Through The Twentieth Century*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (2010); *Drawing of the World*, World of Drawing, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea (2010); *Between Metaphor and Object: Art of the 90’s from the IMMA Collection*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2009); *Questionmark, Wait, Error, Understood*, National Museum of Art, Kaunas, Lithuania (2004); *Descriptions*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (2003); *Contemporary Art: The Janet Wolfson de Botton Gift*, Tate Britain, London, UK (1999) and *Blocking Light*, Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (1996). She was recently shortlisted for The David and Yuko Juda Art Foundation Award, 2022.

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