

Katharina Grosse is known for the vibrant palette and exuberant gestures of her large-scale canvases and raucous installations which merge painting, sculpture, and architecture. Wielding a spray gun instead of a brush, Grosse often paints directly on the walls, floors, or facades of her exhibition sites, altering the logic and scale of architecture itself. In an effort to liberate her works from the Euclidian space of wall and floor, Grosse also incorporates into her multidimensional paintings a variety of unexpected objects, including beds, clothes, balloons, shaped canvases, and soil. Joining these incongruous elements in a continuous flow of color, Grosse opens up a new path for painting while rearranging conventions, hierarchy, and our very habits of seeing.

At MASS MoCA the artist has applied her atmospheric veils of paint to four mounds of soil which seem to spill from the upper balcony into the enormous space below. Stacks of Styrofoam shards rise out of the seductive mountains of color, mirroring the white of the gallery walls -- the metaphorical canvas of Grosse's tremendous painting. While the sprawling installation provokes associations with a psychedelic, glacial landscape, Grosse's work is not representational. Her electric, sometimes dissonant palette is meant to temper the impulse to read the work as a recognizable image. Instead, the anarchic work embraces a state of ambiguity that allows for alternative ways of processing what is seen - whether in the installation's vast changes in scale or the shifting identities of its components in which mountains become piles of raw pigment and sliced Styrofoam appears tectonic.

The work's most salient connection to geography lies in the viewer's ability to walk by, around, and above Grosse's undulating fields of color as they unfold over time and space. Traversing the galleries, visitors are given the opportunity to understand Grosse's painting from multiple vantage points both outside and inside the work itself and, as the exhibition's title obliquely implies, stumble toward a higher plane of perception. Working in both real and pictorial space simultaneously, the artist emphasizes the instability of what we know as reality and the potentiality in what lies beyond the limits of conditioned sight and thought.

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