

December 12, 2024–February 23, 2025

# Megan Marrin: Austerity

Aspen Art Museum

*Austerity* is the first institutional solo exhibition by Megan Marrin (b. St. Louis, MO), an artist based in New York City's East Village. Across five paintings, Marrin summons Jean-Michel Frank (1895–1941), a French interior designer (or, more appropriately, *ensemblier*) whose domestic environments evince a fixation with simplicity, perfection, and stripped-back elegance. Frank is credited with signaling a break from the dense, saturated living spaces of the Victorian era, and instead embracing a “passion for absence” that became celebrated among the aesthetes of the interwar period in Europe and influenced subsequent generations of tastemakers and designers, including Jacques Grange and the late Jed Johnson, after his rediscovery in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

Frank's worldview is distilled by Marrin, who presents scenes from a Frank-designed bathroom, bedroom, and a careful study of a wardrobe. Sites where the body is controlled and conditioned are of interest to Marrin, who is recognized for stark paintings of antique showers, Pilates equipment, and punishment devices. In *Austerity*, Marrin contemplates the mysterious, troubled psyche of Frank, who approached his rooms as sanctuaries within a harsh and unforgiving world. Born in ill health and beset by family tragedy and the horrors of the Holocaust, Frank, who was Jewish and a cousin of Anne Frank, fled Paris for Buenos Aires in 1940, ending his life in New York City in 1941. Frank was prolific in his creative output, generating radical, opulent retreats, and frequently collaborating

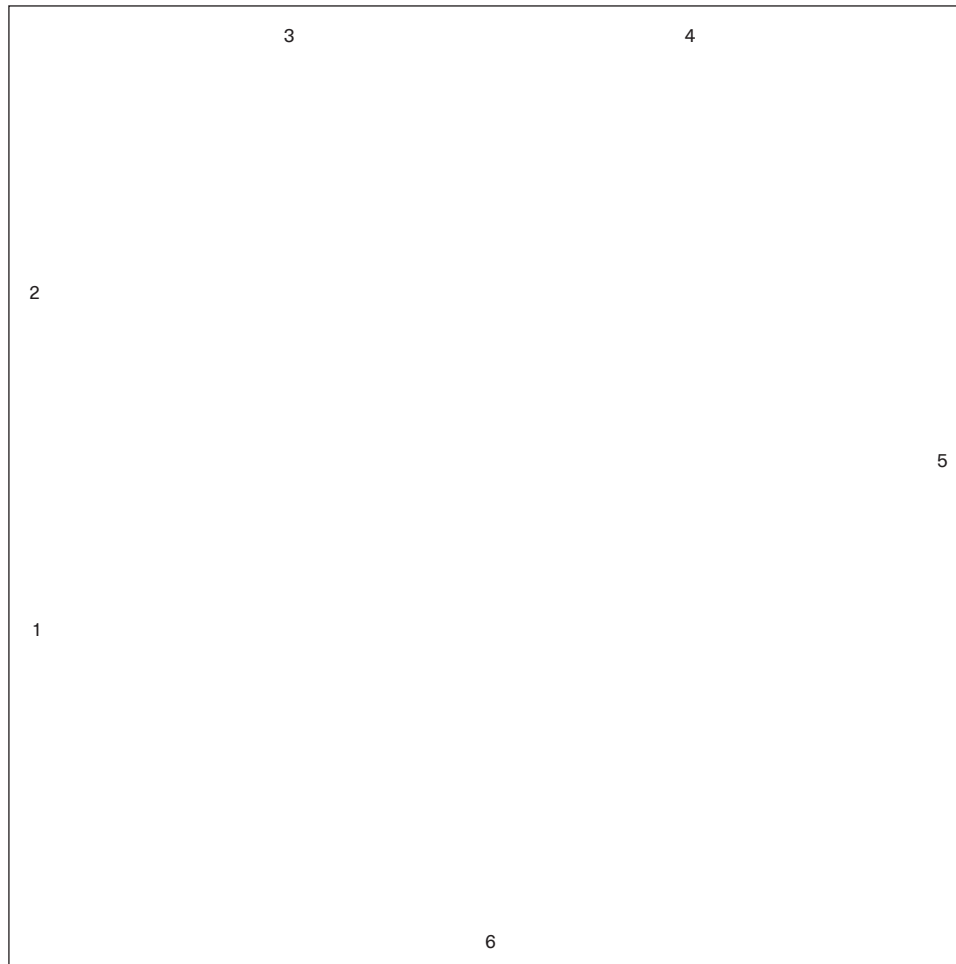
with artists from his social set, including Salvador Dalí, Man Ray, Christian Bérard, and the Giacometti brothers. These environments were typified by unconventional materials including mica, parchment, shagreen, glass, and gleaming metals. Harmony and perfect proportions, rather than the messiness of human life, were of paramount importance to Frank, who would say upon completing a job, “Voilà, my work is done. Now you can start ruining it.”

Marrin emphasizes the fragile, salve-like quality of these rooms in her paintings where surfaces shine and seduce. With a devotional precision that parallels Frank's, the artist further preserves these places in which life was still. Cork lines the Museum gallery walls, dampening sound and alluding to Frank's predilection for wall coverings, and his own Proustian infatuation. The exhibition's fifth painting amplifies a detail of an etching by Alberto Giacometti, created for the cover of a René Crevel novel, which Frank framed in mica and burnt wood. In it, a skeleton hovers in a porous cage vis-à-vis a seahorse. The surreal scenario foregrounds the yearnings for frictionless security that course through the exhibition.

<sup>1</sup>Pierre-Emmanuel Martin-Vivier, *Jean Michel Frank: The Strange and Subtle Luxury of the Parisian Haute-monde in the Art Deco Period* (Rizzoli, 2008), 11.

Megan Marrin (b. St. Louis, MO) lives and works in New York. She received her BFA from the School of Visual Arts New York City. She has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at Swiss Institute, New York (2022–23), Dépendance, Brussels (2022), Ordet, Milan (2022), Den Frie, Copenhagen (2021), Efremidis, Berlin (2021), Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2021), *Queer Thoughts*, New York (2020), Sadie Coles HQ, London (2019), *Svetlana*, New York (2018), David Lewis, New York (2017), Mitchell Alpus Gallery, New York (2016), and WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2014).

## List of works



Left to right

**1. *Putting My Foot In It*, 2024**

Oil on canvas

13¾ × 17½ in.

**2. *Putting My Foot In It (Giacometti)*, 2024**

Oil on canvas

88 × 48 in.

**3. *Guerlain Apartment*, 2023–24**

Oil on canvas

91½ × 71½ in.

**4. *Crocker Basin*, 2024**

Oil on canvas

84½ × 48 in.

**5. *Sherfesee Room*, 2023–24**

Oil on canvas

75½ × 72 in.

**6. *Crocker Shower*, 2024**

Oil on canvas

76½ × 48 in.

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 1979, the Aspen Art Museum is a thriving and globally engaged non-collecting contemporary art museum. Following the 2014 opening of the museum's facility designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Shigeru Ban, the AAM enjoys increased attendance, renewed civic interaction, and international media attention. In July 2017, the AAM was one of ten institutions to receive the United States' National Medal for Museum and Library Services for its educational outreach to rural communities in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley and its fostering of learning partnerships with civic and cultural partners within a 100-mile radius of the museum's Aspen location.

## Aspen Art Museum

637 East Hyman Avenue  
Aspen, Colorado 81611  
aspenartmuseum.org  
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Hours  
Tuesday–Sunday, 10 AM–6 PM  
Closed Mondays

Admission to the AAM is free courtesy of Amy and John Phelan.

Megan Marrin wishes to thank Emanuel Rossetti, Dmitry Komis, Nancy Graves, and Daniel Merritt.

This exhibition is organized by Daniel Merritt, Director of Curatorial Affairs.

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