

Tour de Madame is the first major retrospective dedicated to the painting of Jutta Koether (*1958, Cologne, Germany). Long associated with writing, music and performance, Koether's painterly oeuvre shown in this densely sweeping presentation highlights her pictorial and conceptual approach to painting over four decades. Koether's painting constantly confronts the conditions of its own production, as a site of reflection on the act of looking and the perspectives such an act might bring to bear according to who is looking, how and when. The exhibition crucially highlights the historical significance of Koether's oeuvre as a counter-history to the (male-dominated) canons of modernism and post-modernism, and the understanding of painting in our contemporary world as part of a dynamic set of historical, cultural and social relations.

The exhibition at Mudam is organised as three moments. In the west gallery, a retrospective view of 45 paintings created between 1983 and 2016 is presented in a salon style of double hanging that references collectors' cabinets, and the memory of the first retrospective exhibition staged by Pablo Picasso in Paris in 1932. Presented in the east gallery is the eponymous *Tour de Madame*, a cycle of 15 paintings made by Koether for the exhibition. In the pavilion gallery, Koether presents her creative universe as a dynamically orchestrated audio-visual environment.

The installation of paintings in the west gallery spans Koether's beginnings in Cologne in the 1980s, her move to New York in the 1990s, and paintings from the 2000s. The evolution from the small format, tightly composed canvases to more graphically lyrical and open pictorialism on a large scale is evident, as are recurring narrative, pictorial and conceptual themes. They include the use of colour, a dialogue with the history of painting and its conventions, music and the performative dimension of painting, together with motifs such as the sphere, stars and planets, the bruised grid, and the human body.

From 1987, Koether used the colour red as a conceptual prism through which she explored female representations in art, popular culture and media. *Ganz (100% Malerei-Niemand ist eine Frau)*, 1991, presents several symbols that are emblematic for the artist: a woman's face projected on to a globe emerging from a bountiful composition made of conflicting energies.

The large-scale paintings presented in the centre of the gallery, beginning with *The Inside Job* painted in 1992, mark Koether's arrival in New York and that was followed by a series of important exhibitions at the Pat Hearn Gallery. Their gestural exuberance and densely worked surfaces give way in the second half of that decade to the monumental unstretched canvas paintings (*Lappenbilder*) in which motifs of explosive stars and waterflows are rendered in yellow, gold and black. The chromatic emphasis on particular colours, such as red, but also yellow, and black finds

continued refrain in works of varying scales and facture in paintings such as *WB I (William Burroughs)*, 1997, and *Unganzheitsymbole: K (Hommage an Kenneth Anger)*, 2004.

In these as in many of Koether's paintings, language, in the form of words or annotated phrases, is omnipresent, an allusion to the importance of both writing and drawing for the artist, as well as to the idea of painting as a form of script or text. Music is another important influence for Koether who visually transposes rhythms borrowed from rock and jazz, song titles and lyrics that evoke the aesthetics of Heavy Metal, Techno and Punk music, in the so-called 'Liquid Glass' paintings that combine fashion accessories and chains caught in layers of poured resin.

Throughout her career Koether has engaged in an evolving dialogue with the history of painting, its narratives and its formal conventions. Subjects and compositional motifs from classical and modern painting are present in paintings dating from the 1980s through to the more recent works of the late 2000s and 2010s. An insight into these sources and their juxtaposition with images from contemporary culture and Koether's direct life experiences is revealed in the multi-channel projection in the pavilion gallery. A quasi-architectural moment of pause in the installation, the '*Bruised Grids*' serve as motifs for micro-contemplation within Koether's larger compositions and continue her dialogue with a more recent history of painting, in particular, the grids of Agnes Martin as a form of 'storing time'.

In the east gallery, Koether's most recent cycle of 15 paintings, *Tour de Madame*, offers a retrospective view of her painterly practice and resumes preoccupations that characterise her oeuvre since the 1980s. The intersecting curved, glass supports for the paintings are a reference to the disposition designed by Cy Twombly for the permanent installation of his painting cycle *Lepanto* in the Brandhorst Museum, Munich, reflecting Koether's interest in the presentation of the conditions of painting. The transparent layering of support and canvas relates to painting under the digital conditions of our image-flooded present. The title plays on the word 'tour' which has literary associations for Koether with the 16th century writer Michel de Montaigne, and to the idea of making a tour – the Grand Tour, that was part of the necessary formation for any European painter in the 18th century, and the movement of ideas, bodies and of course painting, across space and time.

The multichannel installation *Cosmos of Images* presents reproductions of Koether's painting series *Fresh Aufhebung* (not presented at Mudam), a video of the performance, *Touch and Resist*, made with Amy Granat, and digitised images, preparatory sketches, texts, and photographs from Koether's notebooks. Together, they offer insight into Koether's creative universe.

Jutta Koether was born in Cologne in 1958. She lives and works in Berlin and New York. Her work has been the subject of recent exhibitions at the Museum Brandhorst in Munich (2018), PRAXES Center for Contemporary Art in Berlin (2013), Arnolfini in Bristol (2013), Dundee Contemporary Arts in Dundee (2013), the Moderna Museet in Stockholm (2011), the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (2009), among others. Her works are part of collections displayed at major international museums, such as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the MoMA in New York, the MOCA in Los Angeles, the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, the City of Paris' Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago and Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean.

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