

HAUSER & WIRTH

Press Release

Rita Ackermann

Splits

Hauser & Wirth New York, 22nd Street
2 May – 26 July 2024

Splits: Printing | Painting

Hauser & Wirth New York, 18th Street
2 May – 26 July 2024



New York...On 2 May, Hauser & Wirth will present Rita Ackermann's latest series of paintings and prints in simultaneous exhibitions spanning the gallery's two West Chelsea locations. At 542 West 22nd Street, the artist will debut a suite of new canvases expanding upon the techniques, themes and imagery she has explored over the course of her career since the early 1990s, while at 443 West 18th Street she will unveil a series of complex large-scale silkscreens. Heralding a significant leap in her artistic practice, these prints represent a dramatic convergence of the technical processes of printmaking with Ackermann's sustained exploration of form, movement and erasure.



Dr. Pamela Kort on Rita Ackermann's exhibitions:

Splits

Titled 'Splits,' Ackermann's latest paintings mark a pinnacle in the artist's ongoing concern with the creation of dynamic, moving images. In these canvases, forms cascade downward and upward, at times merging seamlessly into one another. To optimize the potential of such chance transformative processes, Ackermann conceptualized the canvas as divided into three screens, as she aptly calls them. This enabled her not only to guide the flow of line and paint, but also to forestall the coalescence of drawing and painting. No sketch prefigured the images that surfaced, except those carved into the recesses of her memory. Instead, Ackermann allowed an instinctive force to guide her hand as it moved across the fields before her.

The fluctuation between the screens she populated with diaphanous lines and those carrying weightier, gestural strokes of color also conspired to infuse the paintings with an unexpected rhythm. In 'Shut Eye' (2023), for example, two screens brimming with fragments of drawn shapes entice the eye to actively pull open the middle register and thereby show more of the painted forms within. This occurs even as the upper and lower screens seem to press inward, creating a dynamic tension between revelation and concealment. To enhance this impression, Ackermann occasionally used luminous yellow pigment to further instill in these paintings a sense of lightness and transparency.

Composed as a sequence of stacked-up semi-translucent frames, these canvases can also be seen as the visual equivalent of images imprinted on a film strip. Ackermann, in fact, draws parallels between the transformative essence of the images in the 'Splits' and the dynamic permutations observed when montaged photographic images are projected in a cinema. In both mediums, meaning opens in the infinitesimal split between what the eye sees and the elusive. There, a unique motion also unfolds, one that oscillates between appearance and truth. In all these paintings, there is mystery, one that hints at the presence of the profound and unknowable. Through their enigmatic allure, the 'Splits' encourage the viewer to ponder the ineffable, reminding us that while transcendence eludes sight, its essence can nonetheless reveal itself.

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In the thick of bringing to canvas the metamorphic forms that would become the 'Splits,' Ackermann embarked on a new artistic endeavor, delving into the realm of printmaking. In the resultant seven large-scale silkscreens, which she produced in collaboration with master printer Keigo Takahashi, her concern with making manifest such images became imbued with a related objective: the transformation of paintings into prints, without recourse to the reproduction of a model. Though these silkscreens diverge from the compositional principles of the 'Splits,' like them they probe the boundaries of optical perception. To emphasize this, the exhibition includes two recent paintings. One of these—'The Rule of Nature' (2023)—which belongs to the 'Splits,' even bears the marks of Ackermann's concern with combining monotype printing with painting. Viewers who perceive that will nevertheless find it difficult to distinguish between the look of the other painting—'Misfit' (2023)—and the silkscreens.

This visual feat owes just as much to the artist's decision to approach the making of these silkscreens as though she were working on a canvas, as to any sleight of the hand enabled by their production. Ackermann began by layering drawings onto paper and then gradually superimposed gestural brush strokes, color stains and delicate droplets of pigment onto the underlying drawings, welcoming the occurrence of accidents through this process. This not only made the contrast between emerging and disappearing forms integral to many of her paintings visible, but also conveyed a sense of the centrifugal motion that frequently ensues in them. As such, those who contemplate these first silkscreens by the artist may well find themselves questioning whether the alleged split between printmaking and painting is, in fact, purely theoretical.

About the artist

Born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1968, Rita Ackermann currently lives and works in New York.

Ackermann's recent solo exhibitions include: 'Hidden,' MASI Lugano, Switzerland (2023); 'Vertical Vanish,' Hauser & Wirth Downtown Los Angeles (2023); 'Mama '19,' Hauser & Wirth New York, 22nd Street (2020); 'Brother Sister,' Hauser & Wirth Zurich, Switzerland (2019); 'Movements as Monuments,' La Triennale di Milano, Italy (2018); 'Turning Air Blue,' Hauser & Wirth Somerset, England (2017); 'KLINE RAPE,' Hauser & Wirth New York, 22nd Street (2016); 'The Aesthetic of Disappearance,' Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden (2016); 'Chalkboard Paintings,' Hauser & Wirth Zurich, Switzerland (2015); 'MEDITATION ON VIOLENCE-HAIR WASH,' Sammlung Friedrichshof, Burgenland, Austria and Sammlung Friedrichshof Stadtraum, Vienna, Austria (2014); 'Negative Muscle,' Hauser & Wirth New York, 69th Street (2013); 'Fire by Days,' Hauser & Wirth London, Piccadilly (2012); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami FL (2012); 'Bakos,' Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary (2011); and 'Rita Ackermann and Harmony Korine: ShadowFux,' Swiss Institute, New York NY (2010).

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Rita Ackermann

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Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Shutters

Acrylic, oil and carpenters pen on canvas

238.8 x 218.4 cm / 94 x 86 in

Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

27 Takes

27-color screenprint on Saunders

Waterford watercolor paper 425gsm

Ed. of 15 + 5 AP

141 x 121.9 cm / 55 1/2 x 48 in

Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Shut Eye

Oil and carpenters pen on canvas

238.8 x 218.4 cm / 94 x 86 in

Photo: Thomas Barratt

Mouchette's Manners

Oil, acrylic and carpenter's pencil on canvas

233.7 x 218.4 cm / 92 x 86 in

Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Misfit

Acrylic and oil on canvas

279.4 x 264.2 cm / 110 x 104 in

Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer