Riflemaker
Available works by
MARTA MARCÉ
Further Reaches (Pt. 1)
5 AUGUST – 12 SEPTEMBER

PREVIEWING
MARTA MARCÉ
new paintings throughout August 2015

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Marta Marcé is a Catalanian born, Berlin-based artist whose work is inspired by both the appearance and the process of games. The shapes, colours and sections of the artist’s multicoloured canvases are often arranged and placed much like pieces on a gameboard or puzzle. Marcé (b. 1972 Vilafranca del Penedes, Spain) says:

‘My use of games is like a metaphor for the structure and development of life itself, an activity with an uncertain outcome. The act of painting functions in a similar way - there are the boundaries of the canvas, the limitations of paint, the conceptual constraints of actually making a painting, and finally the environment in which they are shown’

This series of new works was inspired by the artist’s recent journey to Guatemala, where she learned about Mayan cosmology (the origin of the cosmos) and its symbols, as well as readings of the philosopher and mystic, Ibn ‘Arabi.

The Mayan philosophy was believed to have been animatistic, meaning that objects we consider to be inanimate, to the Mayan people, had spirit. Ibn ‘Arabi was a 13th century Andalusian Sufi mystic, poet and philosopher who is regarded as one of the world’s great spiritual teachers. His writings had an immense impact throughout the Islamic world and beyond. The universal ideas underlying his philosophical thinking are as relevant today as they were when he first wrote them down 800 years ago.

The artist seeks to express a desire, a necessity even, to acknowledge living energy in her work. Marcé’s paintings are visual representations of the dialogue between the most basic energy of life and its interconnection to all things. It is a dialogue that the artist believes enhances existence and she seeks to illustrate this through creating works that are shaped by visual rhythms of colour and geometric patterns that are also aesthetically beautiful. The intertwining of symbols within the works represent a type of consciousness - whether it be the artist’s, ours or indeed those from so long ago that have echoed across the centuries and inspired this series of new works.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

2007  ‘Is This Abstraction’: Camden Arts Centre, London. (Residency)
Marta Marcé

*Now and Ever #36 (2015)*

acrylic on canvas, 250 x 140 cm

‘She treats the process of painting as a series of Moves’
Barry Schwabsky, *Art Forum*
Marta Marcé
Now and Ever #33 (2015)
acrylic on double canvas, 41 x 67 cm (diptych)
Marta Marcé

Now and Ever #32 (2015)

acrylic on canvas, 50 x 40 cm

The paintings are bright, poetic objects abundant with an intuitive playfulness. In Marcé’s world, the result is a sort of joie de vivre’

Sherman Sam, Camden Arts Centre
Marta Marcé

Now and Ever #29 (2014)

acrylic on linen, 70 x 105 cm
Marta Marcé

Now and Ever #45 (2015)

acrylic on canvas, 140 x 225 cm

‘She turns the principles of modern painting on their heads’

Rebecca Geldard, *Time Out*
Marta Marcé

*Now and Ever #57* (2015)

acrylic and oil on canvas, 75 x 70 cm
Marta Marcé

Now and Ever #41 (2015)

acrylic on canvas, 50 x 40 cm

‘Marta Marcé paintings don’t namecheck anyone, or picture anything, or evoke a mood…a painting resembles a Scalextric set…I kept coming back to it, and it looked better every time’

Jonathan Jones, The Guardian
Marta Marcé

*Now and Ever #38* (2015)

acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm
Marta Marcé

*Now and Ever #39* (2015)

acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm

‘Marta Marcé’s work is a highpoint in the show of work by artists shortlisted for the Jerwood Painting Prize’

Charles Darwent, *The Independent on Sunday*
Marta Marcé

*Now and Ever #35 (2015)*

acrylic on canvas, 67 x 60 cm
Marta Marcé

*Flowing in Brown* (2009)

acrylic on double canvas, 135 x 390 cm (diptych)
Marta Marcé

*Flowing in Black* (2009)

acrylic on double canvas, 170 x 400 cm (diptych)
Marta Marcé

*Flowing in Fluo* (2010)

acrylic on canvas, 195 x 128 cm
Marta Marcé

*Flowing in Yellow* (2010)

acrylic on canvas, 195 x 128 cm
'I am interested in the idea of play as a metaphor for how society operates. We live in an era where daily life is becoming ever more structured, planned and controlled. It feels as if there exists a complex group of games with rules and laws to follow while at the same time there are rule-breakers and alternatives to the system.

I am exploring how games can function in a similar, parallel way and the relationship of that idea to my work. As well as in painting, games have space and time limitations, decision-making and chance are also involved. I investigate how these diverse elements can inform my creative production of art.

Rules can provide a basis for painting, issuing instructions and outlining strategies. At the same time decision-making, chance and judgment allow the breaking of the system, hopefully enjoying fresh and direct creative actions, opening up new possibilities for the outcome.

The use of basic geometric shapes reinforces a universal understanding; while at the same time these are not rigid painted shapes. I also use non-geometric shapes, suggesting more the human activity in the artwork. Colour and its different qualities are an important aspect of my practice. I treat colour as an evolving experimentation within our cultural and visual context.'

- Marta Marcé
ARTFORUM Review

A collage on a large white paper support bore several painted papers of different weights in colors of coffee, beige, and pink. By suggesting the general shape of a dancer's skirt, it materialized the previous image in three dimensions.

What distinguishes Robert's engagement from a detached formalism is the playful and inventive way his work opens up categories of identity—including those of race and gender. One collage from 2007 contains the typed text ÉROTISME NOIR (black eroticism), lending a suggestive theme to the exhibition at large. While a couple of his collages' images do show attractive black male figures, the very prominence of Robert's representations—his mimetic ability to appear elsewhere, as it were—renders that racial category untenable in its redutucness, and its meaning consequently uncertain. Robert's tropes evoke a dynamic mobility from static images, just as they provocatively reimagine the body. In another piece, dated 2005, a piece of light-brown cardboard-like paper supports a small image affixed to its center. Subtle and stylish, it shows a man's beige suit jacket highlighted with a pink scarf—evidently a magazine image, judging by its thin stock. All signs of the wearer have been excised, yet the jacket still seems to enclose a body. Its collar frames a photograph of a branch of cherry blossoms playing the role of skirt. Robert, too, sitting on those pieces of white paper at the opening, had been a collage of sorts, just as his torso became a décollage—a further step in his transformative life of forms.

—T. J. Demos

Marta Marce
RIFLEMAKER

To inaugurate its new second space in the House of St. Barnabas-in-Soho, an important eighteenth-century building on Soho Square, Riflemaker chose Marta Marce's “Diadem Paintings," which the artist began last year while on residence at Camden Arts Centre and completed in her studio in Barcelona. The unusual way the paintings were presented, emphasizing their merely temporary occupation of the space, underlined the potential incongruence between contemporary abstract painting and a Grade One-listed regency hall where nothing can be affixed to the walls: Two of the paintings, Floor 1 and Flow 2 (all works 2007), consist of panels laid out on the floor, while the remaining nine paintings were displayed leaning against the walls, either from ledges that are part of the period décor or else lifted off the floor on sawhorse-like wooden stands. The mismatch worked perfectly: The resultant mix of laid-back informality and ceremonial embroidery suited Marce's casually formalist aesthetic to a tee.

The Catalan painter, who now divides her time between Barcelona and London, has long cultivated an analogy between games and painting. At times she has made the connection representationally, in paintings that resemble game boards, but the comparison bears out most compellingly when she instead treats the process of painting as a sequence of "moves" bound by specific rules, albeit rules broad enough to allow for a certain degree of "play" within the structure. In the present instance, Marce was inspired by the tangram, a Chinese puzzle that incorporates five triangles, a square, and a parallelogram. She employed a similar system of movable sections to make the two floor works, expanding the number of pieces from seven to nine. More important, she added simple curves, both concave and convex, to the original game's strictly rectilinear vocabulary. The elements in Floor 1 are all monochromatic—either painted or covered with colored fabric—except for one that is covered with a diamond pattern; in Floor 2, three pieces, either painted a single color or not at all, have been overlaid with simple patterns of grids or parallel lines. Presumably, the configurations shown in the gallery are arbitrary, as the segments could have been combined in any number of ways. The artist speaks of "geometry as a live creature that constantly changes, each time giving us quite different random shapes and ideas that make up our real world."

These combinations became the starting point for the wall-oriented works, eight single panels of diverse format and one diptych. The types of shapes found in the floorbound works, with their distinctive combinations of straight lines and curves, are here elaborately concatenated, sometimes filling up the whole panel but more often silhouetted against a colored surround. Thus the anticompositional strategy embodied in the floor works became a compositional source for the paintings, whose mood is a curious mix of exuberance and restraint. They are painted with thin, watery colors, mostly not too bright—even, strangely enough, when they border on the fluorescent. Marce seems to avoid highly active optical combinations or the drama of Hans Hofmann-esque push-and-pull; her use of color is refined. As a result, one senses in those paintings an energy that is absorbed, yet in some way constrained. The game being played here is really, after all, a form of solitaire—which always has something melancholy about it. In this, the floor pieces are rather different. With their movable segments, they evoke a potential collaboration with the work's receiver, they bring out the social side that complements the solitude of the artist's studio works.

—Barry Schwabsky

PARIS

Falke Pisano
BALICE HERTLING

In 1925, Iceland-born architect and designer Eileen Gray began work on a minimalist villa, E-1027, in the southern French commune of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. In collaboration with Jean Badovici, Gray conceived the innovative project as a dynamic marriage of rigid forms and flexible spaces. Gray's contemporary, Le Corbusier, quickly developed a fierce admiration of the house, and in 1938 and 1939, he painted a series of murals on its interior walls. Using Gray's clean, reductive architecture as a canvas on which to project his own vision, Le Corbusier went beyond the role of engaged spectator. His intensified relationship with Gray's work, his almost aggressive gesture, demonstrated the power of the viewer to trigger an object's desintegration.

In her first solo show in Paris, Dutch artist Falke Pisano loosely referenced the volumes and shapes as well as the formal destruction of E-1027, located not far from Nice, where she was recently an artist-in-residence at Villa Arson. In her sculptural practice, shaped by a particular concern for abstraction, Pisano confounds aesthetic expectations by situating instantly seductive objects and photographs within a nuanced investigation of vision, production, and language. Pisano focuses on the roles of artist and spectator, carefully examining the encounter, creation, and ultimate breakdown of an object's autonomy in its complex relationships to its producer, viewer, and context.

The video installation Object and Disintegration (the object of H Bar) (all works 2008) dominated the center of the space, snugly
Climbing, framed

While some types of art may unintentionally have you climbing the walls, "Games & Theory" at the South London Gallery positively encourages it. Helen Sampson gets stuck in.

There's been a softening over the past few weeks, and at the South London Gallery's current exhibition, "Games & Theory," that's quite evident. It's a collection of works by various artists, including video installations, interactive pieces, and a large-scale sculpture. The exhibition is a playful and slightly disorienting environment.

"The exhibition is a model of how one can do a public space in a playful and slightly disobedient way," says curator Simon Morley. "It's a space that encourages people to move around and interact with the art." The exhibition's theme, "Games & Theory," is inspired by the idea of how games can be used to explore social and political issues.

"Games & Theory" is a collection of works that explore the concept of games and their role in society. The exhibition features works by a variety of artists, including video installations, interactive pieces, and a large-scale sculpture. The exhibition is a playful and slightly disorienting environment that encourages people to move around and interact with the art.

For art enthusiasts, "Games & Theory" is a must-see exhibition. The South London Gallery, located in the heart of London's art scene, is a great place to explore the latest trends in contemporary art. The exhibition is open daily from 10am to 6pm and is free to the public.

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Marta Marcé during her Camden Art Centre residency
Selected Exhibitions
10 shows Art World recommends

1. Games and Theory
   South London Gallery, London
   until 7 July
   www.southlondongallery.org
   "New international artists with an interest in games will be shown in an exciting interactive play area designed by a team under the direction of the Swiss artist Verena Tievsky. Visitors will be encouraged to interact closely with the exhibited art in a fresh way. Taking the line play of young children as a model of resistance to sporting or social rules, the exhibition will include: Fort Hoag, a drawing through the crowd on a Mumbai subway; Dan Ships' kaleidoscopic modernist abstracts; football and basketball having played simultaneously in a video by Galina Antin; and Mario Merz's abstract games.

2. Harold Cohen
   Bernard Jacobson Gallery, London
   until 14 Aug
   www.bernardjacobson.co.uk
   "California-based Harold Cohen, who died in 2009 aged 88, was well known in Britain in the 1970s for his graphic sequence of hand-drawn photographs, which were to bring life and energy to the surface, but his work is probably the most recognisable example of a similar approach to visual art. This show culminates in Cohen's 50th birthday with a new work which continues the sequence he began in 1992, when he moved into a senior living home. These new works, made in 2010, are his first major piece of art since the 1970s, and the show is linked to his daughter's current exhibition at the Barbican Centre.

3. Annaliesse Stroba
   Portrait Museum, Bermondsey
   A Survey of Art, Contemporary Art
   "This Swiss artist is best known for her series of 'snaps' in the early 1960s, celebrating the cultural and social changes of that time. Her work is a visual record of the cultural and social changes of the period, and has been deeply influenced by the work of Swiss artist Gotthard Ephraim. This show features a selection of her works, including a number of her early pieces, which highlight the artist's ability to capture the essence of a moment and the emotion it evokes.

4. Nathan Coley
   De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea
   "The artist's latest exhibition explores the relationship between art and the viewer, focusing on the idea of the audience's role in shaping the experience of an artwork. Coley's work is a commentary on the human condition, and this exhibition is no exception. The artist's use of language and imagery is powerful, and his themes are relevant to contemporary issues. This show is a must-see for anyone interested in contemporary art.

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1. Games and Theory
2. Harold Cohen
3. Annaliesse Stroba
4. Nathan Coley
Marta Marcé

“Games are a metaphor for life, in a way. They have all the same elements: a system, an order, a set of rules.”

Marta Marcé’s vibrant abstract paintings deal with rules, the structure of games and the opposing elements of chance and destiny in everyday life. Although more monumental in scale, they are clearly influenced by the abstract paintings of pioneering Modernists, such as Paul Klee, whose work explored similar themes. Marcé recently spent two months as artist in residence at Camden Arts Centre, London, where she conducted talks and events centered on the question: Is this abstraction?

INTERVIEWER: Pater Goor

Where does your first name come from?

From Santa Marta – my family are Catholic. She was the sister of Magdalene, who cleaned the feet of Jesus, though I’m not quite sure what Marta’s role was...

Are you a practicing Catholic?

No, no...

Games and the notion of play are essential to all your work. Why do games interest you so much?

Games are a metaphor for life, in a way. They have all the same elements: a system, an order, a set of rules. Then there’s the decision-making and the element of chance when you play with the dice. I think it’s a good metaphor. I’m trying to balance order and freedom. At the same time, I see parallels with the physical structure of games and the structure of paintings. Games are spatially limited – they have a board – and there’s a time limit. The act of painting functions in the same way – there’s the boundary of the canvas, the limitations of paint.

In the game mikado, after which you’ve named a series of paintings, players throw sticks in order to read their destiny. Do you believe in destiny, or do you think everything is down to chance?

I think we’re responsible for the decisions we make and the chance we take. We use it in the near that we decide what to take and what not to take.

How much of your own work is planned and how much of it is spontaneous?

It depends on what series and what rule systems I’m working on. Sometimes there are strict rules and other times I allow myself more freedom. Sometimes I use sketches just to develop the idea, but I don’t necessarily follow the sketches.

Do you play board games yourself?

Oh yes, I have a big collection, actually. And I like computer games, too. I used to play Scaletric a lot when I was a child, and I did a series of paintings based on the Scaletric.

What games do you play now?

I like Tangram. I have a friend in Barcelona who designs games and he developed a game inspired by one of my paintings. It’s a kind of Tangram, but not quite. I’ve got it at home. It’s really beautiful.

Your recent Banner series includes the use of collage. Why did you decide to introduce elements of representation to the work?

I wanted to try to bring something of the real world into my paintings. But, obviously, I take elements of reality all the time, like the games. Often there’s a fragile boundary between what’s representation and what’s abstraction. I took the collage pictures out of context, so they became more abstract.

Which artist has had the biggest influence on your work?

So many artists have influenced my work, somehow. Perhaps I can mention Eva Hesse, who was a minimal artist, but also very sensual and sensitive. Maybe Mary Heilmann; her abstraction is much more about her life, it’s more personal. Her paintings are like textiles. I could mention Sonia Delaunay, Paul Klee, Asp. Barnett Newman...

 Mondrian never used green. Are there any colours you would never use?

I use all the colours of the spectrum. Colour is neither pure or opaque, neither beautiful or ugly, for me it’s a bit like cooking: you try all sorts of pigments to get a different balance.

You travelled to China in 2004 for a two month residency. How did that visit impact on your work?

I stayed in Kunming, in the Yunnan province. It wasn’t like staying in Hong Kong or Shanghai – it was very provincial. Not many people spoke English. Funny enough, on every street corner you’d find people grouped together playing Mah Jong. I was so fascinated to see that. And the experience did influence how I use colour. Before, I never used gold, but afterwards I used lots of it because you see so much there.

How do you ensure abstraction doesn’t become more decoration? Do you worry about this?

It has worried me a lot in the past, actually. Since there’s always an issue of abstraction becoming decoration. But I can’t stop people just seeing what’s superficially there. It’s about believing in what the work means to you, that it’s got something behind it. I want the paintings to have an intense energy, at once vibrant and full of humanity. I’m trying to express, in a visual way, my fears, my feelings, my desires.

Do you listen to music while you’re working?

I go through periods where I just listen to Radio 4, though it’s mainly in the background – I don’t really focus on what’s being said. But, I really like listening to house music when I work. It’s kind of abstract.

You come from Barcelona, you’ve lived in London for 19 years and you’ve spent time in Paris, Berlin, Lima and Kunming. Where would you most like to live?

Probably somewhere further south. I miss the sun. I don’t know if I’m going to stay in London forever, but if I lived in Spain again I would probably have to fly to London quite regularly. I’d miss the culture and the artistic community. I need that. It would be quite interesting to live in Berlin for the same reasons. There’s such a strong artistic community there.

If you could live with any artwork ever made, what would it be?

Probably something by Paul Klee. They seem very simple, but are actually quite complex. They’re elaborate and rigorous, but at the same time seductive.
Simon Schama in front of Marta Marcé’s painting at the Government Art Collection, London 2011