

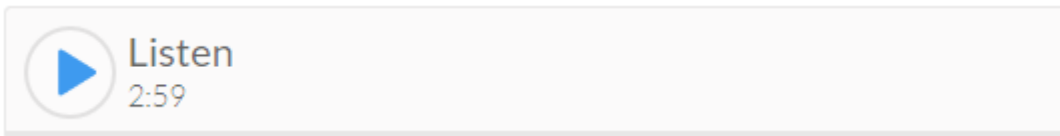


Life In Berlin: Julie Mehretu

By Monika Müller-Kroll (August 25, 2015)



Invisible Sun (algorithm 7, spell form), 2015, by Julie Mehretu.
Photo: Tom Powel Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York



American painter Julie Mehretu was born in Ethiopia. She grew up in Michigan and also spent some time in Zimbabwe as a teenager. Traveling is part of her life. Berlin has become one of Mehretu's regular stops since her fellowship at the American Academy in 2007.

"Somehow Berlin bends time to make it longer," says Mehretu, "you can do more here."

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

Berlin's architecture, the amount of open space in the city, left an impression on her:



The artist Julie Mehretu. After a fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin in 2007, she counts Berlin as one of her favorite cities in which to paint.
Credit Teju Cole

"You really feel this shift of types of political and social implications on a geography and on a city. So for me a lot of that infiltrated the work in a major way. I started to really work with the erasure as a form and as a force in a work."

Mehretu is known for her large-scale works. Paintings composed of layers of architectural and geographical elements made with different media. She works with acrylic paint, marking pens, and ink in an effort to collapse space and time on her canvas. The American says each painting emerges from a particular idea.

"For example: for the Documenta, I used the public squares that emerged after the Arab Spring, and after the African Spring and the Occupy movement in New York, in the United States."

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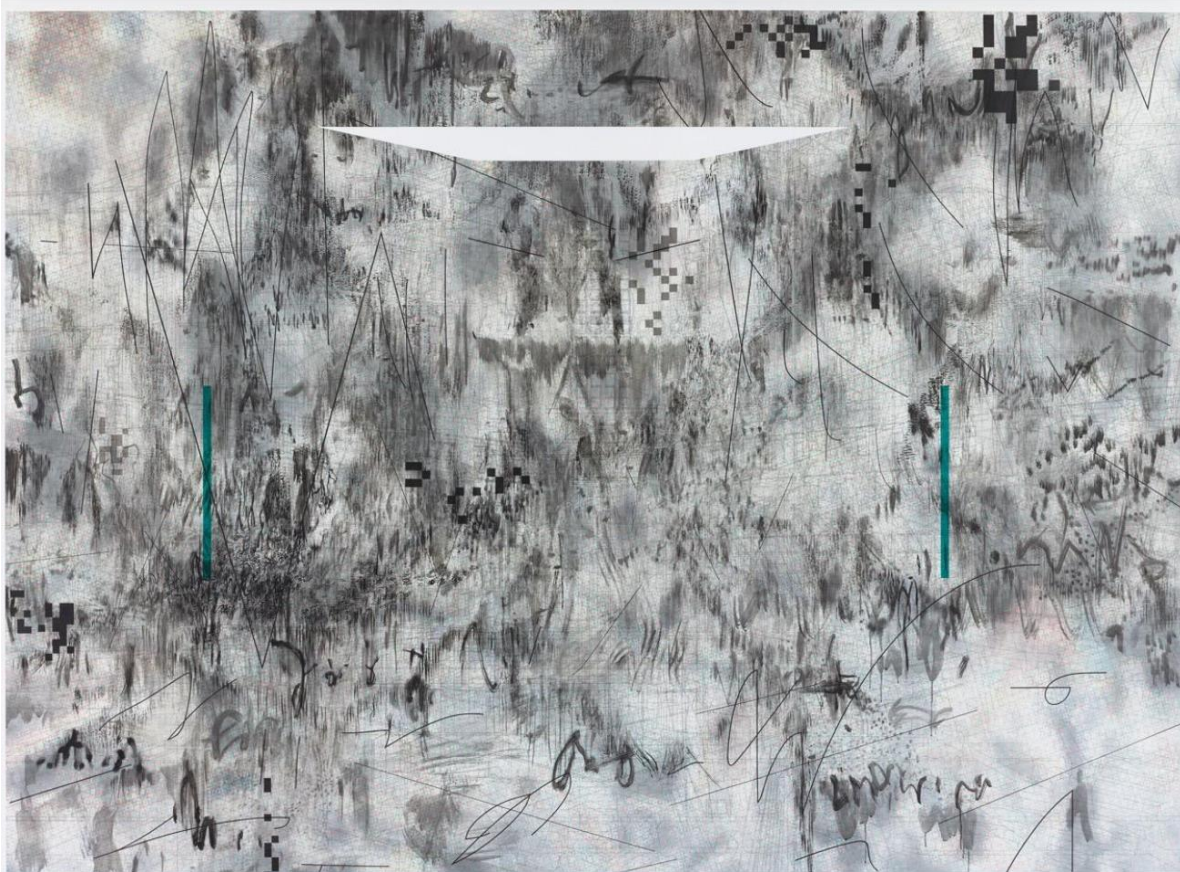
Mehretu explains. "These types of protests that were taking place across the world, and those were the buildings and the forms I was looking at for those paintings."

One of her largest works so far was created in Berlin. A commission for the lobby of Goldman Sachs in New York.

"It was a painting 23 feet tall by 80 feet wide and I needed to make it as one piece and make it inside, so I worked here and I hired a lot of artists from here who worked in the studio with me and it was a really fantastic time."

For her painting titled "Mural" she looked into the history of finance, the architecture of finance and markets.

"While working on the painting here in Berlin in 2008 we had the financial crisis," Mehretu says. "It was kind of incredible to me working on this as everything fell apart and Goldman Sachs was part of that narrative and became publicly part of that narrative. So it was even more charged, an experience working on the painting."



Insite, 2013 by Julie Mehretu.

Credit Photo: Tom Powel / Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

The 45 year old says she welcomes challenges and works hard to focus on her artistic process. But this time around, rather than a place to create, she is here simply to relax and experience Berlin.

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"Enjoy some friends who are here and spent time with my children in a different way in the city, but also take this break. Because I was really wanting to have a different element come into the work, by giving some space and taking space from the painting, that can happen."

Julie Mehretu's next exhibition will be in autumn at the Marian Goodman Gallery in her hometown: New York.

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