

Large Print Guide

Melissa Gordon: Liquid Gestures

16 October 2021 – 30 January 2022

Room 1:

Enter the round and turn left.

Melissa Gordon: Liquid Gestures

Melissa Gordon (b. 1981) is an American and British artist who lives and works in Brussels, Belgium. Her painting practice, which is concerned with the histories and behaviours of gesture, incorporates printmaking techniques, readymade objects, writing and publishing.

Liquid Gestures is an exhibition that furthers Gordon's interest in modern art histories, ideas of authorship, voice and the appropriation of certain gestures. In addition to her paintings, Gordon has introduced light steel structures to the exhibition, this framework is based on the architecture of the historic studio apartments of Elsa von Freytag- Loringhoven and Janet Sobel. The live/work spaces of these artists are brought into dialogue with Gordon's working environment through a life-size rubbing, also known as a frottage, of her studio building.

Paintings from the Female Readymade series explore a variety of gestures, from thin washes of pigment and pools of colour to the stiff

texture of paint mixed with marble dust, which holds visible traces of brushstrokes. Working through ideas of figuration and abstraction, the incidental mark making on Gordon's studio walls and drawings by her children are re-painted and reproduced on canvas with an almost forensic examination of gesture.

Motifs such as a grid, mesh, or chain-link fence are silkscreened directly onto the canvas, creating a framework that plays host to an array of intriguing references. Silkscreen prints of clothing, tools and domestic items are composed on the paintings alongside readymade objects, playing with the idea of what is real and what is represented. The range of gestures extends to cutting the canvas and puncturing holes – creating openings and ways of seeing through one surface, while also revealing the supports and structures beneath.

Gordon's paintings are a site of investigation where evidence is assembled in the form of archival images, essays, letters and blown-up details of artworks. Three of the Female Readymade paintings recognise the remarkable practices of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874 – 1927), Janet Sobel (1893 – 1968) and Marlow Moss (1889 – 1958).

It has been said that Dadaist artist and poet Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who worked with found objects, may be the original author of Fountain, the iconic urinal sculpture attributed to Marcel Duchamp. The artist Janet Sobel exhibited in Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery in 1945, where she showed paintings made by dripping paint on canvas and paper. The tracery, drip technique and 'all-over' painting style that she pioneered in her work is distinctly underrepresented in the history of American Abstract Expressionism.

Furthermore, British artist Marlow Moss, a peer of Piet Mondrian, was fully engaged with ideas of Neoplasticism in the 1930s but Moss's work was relatively unknown in the UK until recent years.

Gordon's work continues to ask questions of who has a voice, who can be abstract, who is supported and who is represented. These questions inform her practice and reveal a more fluid lineage of certain gestures through art history.

If you would like to learn more about Melissa Gordon and the artists mentioned above, there are further resources available in the Reading Area at the entrance to Gallery 3.

Turn right to the metal structure.

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Rope, belt, Attie's drawing, wood shape, lingerie, intestine, gesture painting), 2019

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, painting (50cm x 50cm) on raw fabric on canvas

Gordon's paintings often combine playful, varied methods of creating painterly gesture. In this work, rehearsals for these gestures can be seen in a smaller painting attached to the canvas. Silkscreen photograms of clothing, an offcut of wood from another artwork and a copy of a painting by her young daughter, Attie, are shown on large colourful pools of paint.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Turn around and cross the room to the wall on the left of the entrance doors. Move around the room in a clockwise direction.

Melissa Gordon

Make a Mess, Clean it up, 2018

Silkscreen on raw canvas

Gordon makes her large-scale works by mopping thick paint onto surfaces, such as kitchen counters or, in this case, an art gallery hallway, using household cleaning tools including sponges, mops and brooms.

These performance-like paintings are then photographically exposed onto silkscreen and printed onto raw canvas, revealing her gestures at scale.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Target, Attie's painting, rope, holes, erasures, scarf, Fall Girls), 2020

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, marble dust, rope on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Intestine cut-outs, bra, 'What's the hook, what's the handle?' painting with handle), 2020

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, marble dust, painting (50cm x 50 cm) with handle on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Scarves, speech bubble, digital erasures, 'Exhaust Price' cut-out), 2019

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, marble dust on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Rubbing of Studio Façade, 2021

Printed wallpaper

For this exhibition, Gordon made a life-size rubbing, also known as a 'frottage', of her studio, a technique which references archaeology and ideas of time and memory. The wallpaper also brings her working environment into dialogue with the historic studio apartments of the artists Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Janet Sobel – signified by the metal architectural structures in the gallery space.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Elsa 1917/2017, 100 miles of string, Hat of Rrose Sélavy, large erasure, Duchamp's models of the Fountain (1933), Persistence makes me sad, sweater, evidence in Duchamp's studio (1917), 2020

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, marble dust on canvas

Printed onto this work are two photographs of small handmade models of the urinal sculpture Fountain. Duchamp created the replicas 20 years after the original sculpture was lost, and they point to Gordon's investigations into the complex history of Fountain and the relationship between Marcel Duchamp and Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Both artists dressed in drag as Dadaist acts – acknowledged here with the feathered hat of Duchamp's female alter ego Rrose Sélavy.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Rope, paint paddle, intestine cut-out, lungs, digital erasure, scan painting with Anadin), 2021

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, Epson print mounted on aluminium on raw canvas

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Turn left and enter the metal structure to view the artwork straight ahead.

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Fat Chance cut-out, scarf, 'Material Evidence' painting, hanger, jumbo stud wall), 2018-2019

Acrylic, silkscreen, marble dust on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Turn right to enter into the next room.

Room 2

Turn right and move clockwise around the room.

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Pollock's shed, photos of Janet Sobel, Letter from Mark Rothko, keys, wire cutters, 'Blow Up' detail of Pollock painting and of Sobel painting, chain, smoking gun, p.218 of 'American Type Painting', gestures), 2021

Frottage, acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, marble dust on raw canvas

The artist Janet Sobel, long overlooked, was a painter who exhibited in 1945 at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, where she showed paintings made by dripping paint onto canvas and paper. To investigate the mythology of the 'drip' painting, Gordon includes details of a Sobel painting next to a work by Jackson Pollock, and a quote by art historian Clement Greenberg describing an encounter he and Pollock had with Sobel's work before the 'seminal' breakthrough discovery of the 'drip'.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Large spill, Film 'Liquid Crystals' by Jean Painlevé, quote from Esther Leslie's 'Liquid Crystals', rope, film strip, wires), 2021

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, LCD monitor with Liquid Crystals (1978) by Jean Painlevé

Filmmaker Jean Painlevé created abstract scientific films investigating subjects in the natural world including liquid crystals, which notably respond to touch and led to their use in liquid crystal display (LCD) television screens. Gordon combines the display of a Painlevé film with a quote from Esther Leslie's book *Liquid Crystals* (2016) that describes the mechanical movements of the human eye, questioning how biology influences the way in which we see and read imagery.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Liquid Crystals (1978) courtesy of Archives Jean Painlevé, Paris

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Two holes, tights, vase, Baubo, Hermaphrodite
Aphrodite, Siren, Kassandra, Furies, notes from Anne Carson, still from
'Not I', fence, rope), 2021

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe on canvas

In much of Gordon's writing, she focuses on the question of 'who gets to speak', and this painting furthers that enquiry. Prompted by poet and academic Anne Carson's essay on gender and voice in ancient Greek poetry and mythology, Gordon gathers images of these 'loud' and terrifying mythical characters, assembling them on fences with multiple holes and openings.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Hat of female comedian, microphone, belt, chair, Attie's painting, stockings, rope, scarf), 2020

Acrylic, silkscreen flashe on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Make a Mess, Clean it up, 2021

Silkscreen on raw canvas

Playing on the concept of the modern 'flatbed' or 'drip' painting, Gordon uses paint to reveal the edges of an architectural space, using a technique developed to display the liquid nature of paint. The works are printed on raw canvas and hung like a tapestry, becoming a wall surface for other paintings and art works to hang on.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (Intestines, Mabel's painting, sleeve, hole, test painting, large erasure), 2019

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe, pink sleeve on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Melissa Gordon

Female Readymade (X ray of Mondrian painting, sticks from Marlow Moss paintings, re-painting of 'The Sea of Ice', Colette, house on the Dutch dunes, boots, 'The Waves' cover, riding crop, bungee cord, wind vane, fishing net, cut-out 'Fluid Concept', digital wave erasure), 2021

Acrylic, silkscreen, flashe on canvas

British artist Marlow Moss was a peer of Piet Mondrian and they both spent time on the Dutch seaside in Groot-Valkenisse. In this painting Gordon considers the role of the horizon and sea, and a fluid history of early modernism, displaying elements of Moss's life alongside images of other women who were interested in non-binary understandings of gender and form.

Courtesy of the Artist, Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Stigter Van
Doesburg, Amsterdam

Please return this guide to the holder after use. Thank you.