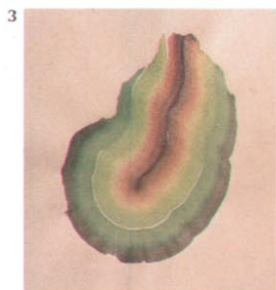


Jason Martin

“I ruminate for hours to identify the absolute meaning of a work. Each painting has a very specific emotional identity”



1 **Babe** (1995)
oil on linen, 12 x 12 x 10cm
2 **Mexican Girl** (2005)
ink on paper, 59.4 x 42cm
3 **Paw Paw St. Lucia** (2007)
ink on paper, 23 x 23cm
Opposite **Untitled** (2007)
oil on aluminium, Church of the
Apostles, Gütersloh, Germany,
300 x 200cm

JASON MARTIN has been pushing, dragging and smearing thick, richly coloured paint across a range of surfaces since the mid-1990s. His seductive monochrome works are resolutely non-figurative, but the gestures of Martin's body are increasingly evident in the sweeping marks that he shapes on the differing surfaces, and other organic and human forms are hinted at in the manipulated mass of paint. The paintings' effects shift radically as you move around them, and their powerful sculptural presence is particularly acute in works made on unusually shaped supports. Martin's enticing objects demand the viewer's physical, as well as ocular, interaction. **INTERVIEW: Ben Luke**

Being a painter named Martin, you are part of a small but noble tradition. But is Agnes more to your taste than John?
John Martin's paintings impressed me first when I was a teenager and his extraordinary vision remains great. But Agnes would be my first choice; she was a spiritual athlete.

Over time, you've increased the fluidity of the movement in your paintings – how have you achieved this?
I have adapted brushes that are flexible and I can control lateral movements with much greater freedom than with a rigid brush.

There has always been a sense of your body in your work, but how do you account for it becoming increasingly graceful as the work has progressed?
The movements and compositions serve to further animate my whole body. Rather than being confined to a reach from the shoulder, the movements I can now investigate are more physical and choreographed.

There is a tension between colour and format in your paintings. How long does it take to get a successful combination?
Some works challenge you for many hours but some are more forgiving and succeed in a relatively short time – less than an hour. Colour and format have to be resolved through the intense and uninterrupted emotional journey of making the work. This often demands a shift in strategy and pace along the way, but a successful piece is always reached in one sitting. It takes a lot of hard work to make things look easy.

You've worked on a variety of shaped supports. What challenges do the differing shapes present?
The irregular panels present unpredictable compositional challenges. There is also a danger that the identity of the work spills over into wall sculpture, and I try to keep the frame of reference predominantly painting.

You use supports like aluminium and stainless steel, as well as Perspex. How do you choose which to use, and what do the different surfaces bring to the works?
The varied supports contribute to the pictorial space of the works. Reflective grounds offer varied depths of field, and implied spaces become active through the oil, acrylic or mixed media I use. When I make decisions about the support or ground, transparency and opacity are the most immediate concerns. The painted surfaces vibrate very differently depending on the ground, and the absorbency and resistance of the surface contribute to the painting's final temperament or mood. A painting on a wooden panel traditionally prepared with gesso will feel radically different from one on lacquered, polished stainless steel.

How do you name your pieces?
I find the titles through a poetic exchange, searching for a work's specific character and personality. I ruminate for hours – often much longer than the actual physical investment of making the piece – to identify the absolute meaning of a work. Each painting has a very specific emotional identity.

How much of a role does chance play?
Chance and intention are both ever-present in my work. All vital painting relies on chance and a temperance of deliberation and abandon. Without risk and chance, painting is empty.

The works are so tactile – do you have problems with viewers touching them?
Touch completes the sensory experience. The surfaces invite you to get closer and closer – I have had plenty of works damaged.

In your drawings of 2005, there were clear allusions to a naked female form. Do these inform the paintings, or do you see them as autonomous works?
I make drawings, sketches or studies as a means to connect further with different

genres, so still life, landscape, and the figure become integrated into my paintings. The sketches allow me to absorb the natural world and respond to spaces, places and people, and this is belatedly distilled in the paintings. I further the story of abstraction while recognising the real and emotional warmth of figuration. I like to bring the viewer close to the work without the burden of a fixed identity.

One can see the influence of Rothko, Newman and Serra in your work – but who is the greatest influence on you?
Pollock, as he invested his entire body in the process. This was, and remains, truly radical.

What do you read, and does it inform your work at all?
At present I am reading about the arguments for and against God, crossovers of Christian and Muslim faith. I just hung a painting in a church in Gütersloh in Germany; it's part Islamic diamond shape and part cross [right]. The exhibition is called For God's Sake and deliberately challenges how you read those words; as expletive, blasphemy, as an answer to a question or as blatant matter of fact.

Do you listen to music while you paint?
I listen to an eclectic mix on a playlist that I change every now and then. The playlist is very specific and I will play it for months, allowing the computer to shuffle the order.

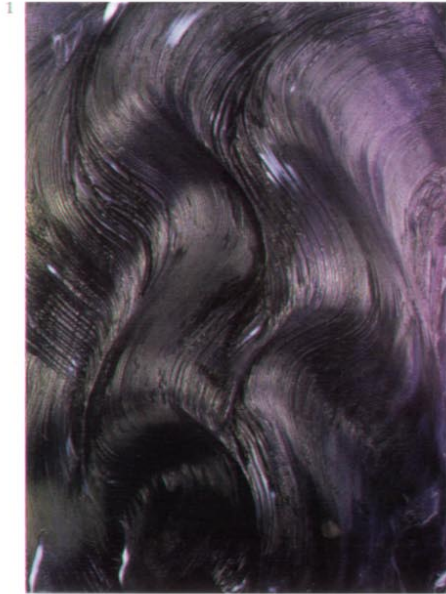
Where would you most like to live in the world?
India or Thailand half the year, and the rest I can't quite decide – I'm still working on it. At the minute, I am building a studio in Portugal, surrounded by 200 olive trees.

Finally, if you could live with any work of art ever made, what would it be?
Cape Arkona [1806] by Caspar David Friedrich, in the Albertina in Vienna. ⁴
Exhibition: 'Nomad', a solo exhibition at CAC Malaga, Spain, until 6 Apr.

CV Born: 1970, Jersey, Channel Islands Studied: Chelsea School of Art, London; Goldsmiths College, London
Lives and works: London Represented: Lisson Gallery, London; LA Louver, Venice, CA; Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris and Salzburg

Images courtesy of Jason Martin and Lisson Gallery, London © Jason Martin, 2007





1 **Torch** (2007), gel on stainless steel, 173 x 123cm

2 **Root** (2007), oil on aluminium, 300 x 220cm

3 **Feral** (2007), oil on aluminium, 180 x 400cm





Pulse (red) (2007), oil on stainless steel, 173 x 173cm