

# ARTFORUM



Jason Martin, *Untitled (Permanent Yellow/Madder Lake)*, 2017, oil on aluminum, 86 5/8 x 70".

## **Jason Martin**

MIMMO SCOGNAMIGLIO ARTECONTEMPORANEA

With his most recent show, "New Oils," Jason Martin introduced a new chapter in his investigation of the fundamentals of painting. The artist, who divides his time between London and Lisbon, received worldwide attention with his participation in the 1997 exhibition "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection" at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He is known for monochrome paintings on aluminum, stainless steel, or Plexiglas

grounds, in which dense and expressive brushstrokes project outward, creating dynamic tension. In his recent works, Martin has applied the paint, which has a saturated and viscous materiality, in parallel bands arranged in one direction. The linearity of the backgrounds' marks, however, is constantly and irregularly interrupted and enriched by chromatic agglomerations—thickenings generated via the application of paint or by the force of gravity at work on the still-wet substance. In this way Martin unites control, through the repetition of the gesture that structures the surface, with chance, which frees the material to express a more complete sense of its corporeality.

For Martin, every new work is a physical experience that elevates his energy and concentration and translates them into the painting; he puts himself into a relationship with the dense, voluminous material of these pieces through a continuous manipulation of the pictorial surface, aiming to create an effect of perpetual and uninterrupted movement. It is precisely this marriage of the intensity of each painting's basic structure with the lightness with which its dynamic tensions are articulated that ends up delineating a new phase in his investigation of painting and its constituent elements—in this case including oil paint. Every detail of these surfaces draws attention directly to the physicality of the action that has defined them, continuously juxtaposing the image and its underlying dynamism. Each work is defined by its title: an exact description of the basic pigment from which it is made, emphasizing the artist's investigation into material, which determines the resulting image.

Martin approaches each new surface as a stage in a continuous mutation, in which we see—as when viewing an abstract landscape in uninterrupted and agitated flow—moments of life and concentrations of energy, in a constant and inevitable engagement that is both physical and sensory. What is surprising in these new works is the renewed monumentality and decisiveness of their brushstrokes, their extraordinary occupation and articulation of space, above all through the dialogue that the artist created between the works throughout the exhibition's rooms. The intense and variegated tones, like individual chromatic bodies (yellows, grays, reds, blues, blacks), thus resulted in the creation of a sort of energy path that, snaking from one room to another, transported viewers back to Martin's act of painting. The sheer force of these surfaces, incisive and vital in the almost sculptural way they unfurl, urges viewers to delve deep into the mechanisms of painting, to confront the stratification and concentration, accumulation and rarefaction, and clashes and distensions of material. But compared with the gleaming baroque effects that characterize Martin's earlier works, with their textural volumes and waves of colored matter, a new sensibility seems to be revealed in his latest efforts, characterized by a process that is in a certain sense more analytical and that even tends, in places, toward a decantation of the material. In these works, one comes face-to-face with the spreading of the paint, opening outward and moving, sometimes emphatically, sometimes intermittently, to form a pictorial landscape of the mind.

—*Francesca Pola*

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*