

**Julie Mehretu**  
**Drawings and Monotypes**  
**22 January – 24 March 2019**

Julie Mehretu is best-known for her densely-layered large-scale paintings, which incorporate architectural blueprints, diagrams or found photographs, overwritten by gestural and graphic marks.

Her paintings ask us to transform how we look in a world saturated by images: they suggest contemplation and focus, understanding rather than knowing.

Mehretu has made a new series of works for Kettle's Yard, comprising drawings and monotype prints arranged in a grid.

These untitled works are made with ink on acrylic panels, which are printed onto paper and painted. The series is an investigation into composition and mark-making; each sheet is both distinct and a product of the same process. Like letters in an alphabet or elements in a periodic table, the works are singular but systemic. These monotypes reward close looking: as you look at the surface of the works, depths of texture, print and imprint emerge like a series of veils.

Julie Mehretu (b.1970) was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and now lives in New York. She is among the foremost artists of her generation. As well as the works in the gallery, a small number of new drawings by Mehretu are located in the Kettle's Yard House during the exhibition.

Activity Starting Points

Lots of Julie Mehretu's past works have been made by painting, which is a very different process to print making.

In painting, an artist works directly into paper or canvas with a paint brush. In printmaking, the production has different stages, first drawing into an acrylic screen, and then pressing it onto paper. Mehretu then adds a final layer of paint by air brushing.

Layers

In the galleries, the house or back in the classroom, make a sketch of something that catches your eye. Place a layer of tracing paper on top, and trace over the first drawing with a different medium – perhaps a thick graphite stick, charcoal, chalk or pastel. Now add another sheet and build up a final layer with a third medium.

Look at the final work with all three layers on top of each other, and then spread out the three sheets and look at them as separate works. How has the work changed each time? What has stayed the same?

Now consider, how could you use one of them as the starting point of a new piece entirely?

## Repetition

Working with monoprint means each print is unique every time, and yet in this series Mehretu explore what happens when you do a unique process repeatedly. What patterns and similarities emerge? What new ideas are sparked by the process of doing the same thing again and again?

In the galleries, find a cluster of works and look at them carefully. What similarities can you see between them? What differences? Looking at this, can you imagine what order they might have been created in, to move from one to the next to the next?

## Experimentation

By exploring how the particular technique of monoprinting shapes a work, Mehretu is able to think about other art techniques, including painting, in new ways.

Take a picture that you are working on. Try exploring some of the same shapes, images or ideas in a totally different medium. Now come back to the first picture. What ideas or features can you bring from your experiment to transform this work?

## Monoprinting Activity

Spread out a layer of printing ink onto an acrylic sheet using a roller.

Gently lay a piece of paper on top, and draw into it. Watch out that only the pencil touches the paper, and not your hand, as every pressure put on the paper will make a mark underneath!

When you have finished, lift the paper carefully off the sheet to reveal your own unique print.

Roll out more ink and start again...

You can also try working into the acrylic screen itself, using a cocktail stick, pencil or clay tool.

Kettle's Yard can offer a full print-making workshop in our studio using a range of different techniques to respond creatively to Julie Mehretu's work, with a professional artist facilitator. To book please email [learning@kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk](mailto:learning@kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk)

## Curation

These works by Julie Mehretu were made specifically for Kettle's Yard, and the artist and curators are excited by how they come together as a series in the gallery spaces.

In groups of four, bring together all the works that you have done inspired by Julie Mehretu. How can you arrange them to bring out patterns across the different pieces?

Now reshuffle them – what different things can you see now?

Give your final choice of arrangement a title.