



GEMINI G.E.L. ^{AT} JONI MOISANT WEYL

Julie Mehretu: *Myriad, Only By Dark* (2014)

Julie Mehretu has created a second extraordinary, tour-de-force etching in collaboration with the Los Angeles-based artists' workshop, Gemini G.E.L. Titled *Myriads, Only By Dark*, the monumental four-panel etching will be on view February 12 through March 28, 2015 at Gemini G.E.L. at Joni Moisant Weyl.

Following the creative and critical success of her first Gemini project, *Auguries* (2010), Mehretu returned to the Gemini workshop to collaborate once again with Master Printer Case Hudson. *Auguries* is a 12-panel composition measuring 7 by 15 feet, and it seemed unimaginable that it could be equaled or surpassed. And yet, with *Myriads, Only By Dark*, the artist has done it, challenging the technical and visual limits of both herself and the workshop.

The four panels comprising *Myriads, Only By Dark* each measure 81 1/4 x 44 1/4 inches, and each have visible plate embossments that establish 3 sections, determined by the size of the copper plates. The project began when press-bed limitations established this visual device, and, in fact, the original concept was that 3 separate sheets of paper would abut, the approach used with *Auguries*. During the proofing session, however, the workshop acquired a larger press where no divisions would have been necessary. Nevertheless, Mehretu elected to maintain the aesthetic of the division, with thin white embossments that divide the print into thirds and evoke the kind of folds that one would make to an oversized map.

All of the imagery – except for the portion that was spit-bite directly onto the copper plates – was created on tall sheets of Mylar. The color lines, created using Adobe Illustrator, came first, and guided the artist as she painted imagery on subsequent Mylars. The inking of the lines is “à la poupée,” in which multiple ink colors are hand-applied and blended on one plate to create a multicolor appearance within a single etched line, and the other imagery is printed in a range of silver, gray and black inks. Mehretu employed a variety of drawing techniques, including airbrush and transfers from the patterning of paper toweling which suggest a newsprint image-pixilation. The handprints and even some of the graphic “swipes” that are apparent on several of the panels are the result of Mehretu dipping her hands and her forearm in India ink. In all, the artist created multiple Mylar layers, and the four panels have anywhere from 12 to 18 plates that go into the final composition.

The mark-making in this quartet of etchings is loose, with elements suggestive of graffiti and hand-prints that evoke the passion stirred by the Arab Spring revolution and its aftermath, which to some extent inspired this project. Starting left to right, there is a push-pull of intensity as the core of the imagery on each panel opens up; in the fourth, far-right panel, a dynamic, central voided shape with a hint of brilliant color effectively creates a window into what the future bodes.

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