

Painter Katharina Grosse to Create Ambitious Installation in MASS MoCA's Signature Building 5 Gallery

(North Adams, MA) MASS MoCA visitors will experience painting from a new perspective when Katharina Grosse's most ambitious U.S. project to date opens on December 22, 2010, at the museum in North Adams, Mass. The artist's sprawling installation, titled *One Floor Up More Highly*, plays with the scale of MASS MoCA's massive Building 5 gallery while liberating painting from the canvas. Connecting a variety of incongruous objects and sculptural as well as architectural elements with a continuous flow of paint, the artist brings painting into the interior space of a room and transforms a purely optical experience into one that is also spatial and cerebral. In her new work for MASS MoCA, Grosse will create an immersive environment where mounds of earth become towering landscapes of color, and veils of paint become the building blocks of an atmospheric architecture.

One of the most significant and innovative painters working today, Grosse is known for her vibrant palette, large-scale works on canvas and paper, and explosive installations which merge paint, sculpture, and architecture in unexpected ways. Using a spray gun instead of a brush, she paints directly on the walls, floor, or ceiling of the gallery, as well as on cut-out canvases, balloons, furniture, and other objects. Transforming her exhibition sites into three-dimensional paintings, Grosse's work alters visitors' expected experience. Viewers move between looking at the work from a distance and actually stepping on the painted surface, becoming engulfed in the color and its movement.

In the main gallery Grosse will apply her exuberant, yet carefully plotted, sprays of paint to four variously-sized mounds of soil. Suggesting massive piles of paint pigment at first glance, these colorful, textured mountains straddle the boundaries between painting, sculpture, and landscape. The installation will unite and emphasize the different levels of the building while creating dramatic shifts in its scale. Soil will appear to spill down the back wall of the main gallery, joining the balcony with the main space below (which is itself on the museum's second floor – a fact obliquely referenced in the show's title). Boulders of soil embedded within the larger mounds will give viewers the impression that they have shrunk in size in some Alice-in-Wonderland-like transformation. Monumental white Styrofoam shards rise out of the dirt, bringing to mind both quarried marble and melting icebergs, furthering the allusion to landscape. Influenced by Robert Smithson and his work with earth and mirrors, Grosse examines the divide between

the real and the image while inviting a dialogue between her own accumulations of soil and the legacy of American Land Art -- bringing its staggering scale inside.

The installation will also include Grosse's two new immense torqued and painted forms. One of these forms will sit on the gallery floor, curving away from its linear surface, while the second will be installed in relation to the soil mound on the balcony. These elements – which measure 20 and 30 feet long – expand on ideas Grosse introduced in her 2009 exhibition of painted elliptical forms at the Temporäre Kunsthalle in Berlin. Made from a laminated, light-weight surfboard-like material, these unusual fragments appear as cut-out parts, extracted from some larger context. “The shapes,” comments Grosse, “function both as the support for very different paintings and as organic architectural elements that negotiate the space in a non-Euclidian way.” The forms also remind the viewer of the limits of perception and the notion that he or she is always seeing just a small part of a larger whole.

In the smaller ground floor gallery at the far end of the main space, Grosse will paint the walls and floor in her dynamic style. In the gallery above, the artist will present work on canvas, illustrating her engagement with a more traditional format and its role in her practice. While the raw energy of Grosse's work often brings comparisons to graffiti artists as well as that of the Abstract Expressionists, her work is influenced by a wide range of painters including Simone Martini, Pierre Bonnard, Max Beckmann, and Lovis Corinth. Complicating the traditional figure-ground relationship like many of these predecessors, Grosse works in both real and illusionistic space simultaneously. By doing so, she challenges the viewer to reconcile two opposing ways of seeing and, ultimately, opposing views or ways of thinking.

Rejecting the usual distinctions between abstraction and representation, and freeing paint from its traditional modes of presentation, the artist liberates her medium from the architectural logic of the building. Much as Dan Flavin did with light, Grosse erases the junctures between floor and wall (or wall and ceiling) with swathes of paint that do not follow the lines of the existing architecture. Her animated applications of color transform the viewer's perception and navigation of the space while suggesting an alternative direction for painting. Simultaneously embracing and rethinking the traditions of her medium, Grosse's work invites viewers to do the same.

About the Artist

Katharina Grosse (b. 1961, Freiburg, Germany) has been creating large installations consisting of bright acrylic colors sprayed onto both interior and exterior walls, ceilings and floors since the 1990s. She also works extensively on canvas in conjunction with her installation practice. The artist has exhibited in distinguished spaces around the world, including the Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst (Denmark), Miami Art Museum, Denver Art Museum, Galeria Civica di Modena (Italy), the New Orleans Biennial, Queensland Art Gallery (Brisbane, Australia), the Renaissance Society (Chicago), Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati), De Appel (Amsterdam), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Contemporary Arts Museum (Houston), and

the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles). Grosse currently lives and works in Berlin. She is working on a new publication planned for release later this year.

Sponsors

Major support for this exhibition is provided by the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, with additional support from the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Support for the artist has been provided by The Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

The exhibition is curated by Susan Cross.

Opening Reception

MASS MoCA members are invited free to a celebration with the artist on Tuesday, December 21st from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Not-yet-members may purchase tickets to the reception for \$8

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) is one of the largest and most active centers for contemporary visual and performing arts in the country and is located in North Adams, Massachusetts, on a restored 19th-century factory campus. MASS MoCA's galleries are open 11am –5pm every day except Tuesdays. Gallery admission is \$15 for adults, \$10 for students, \$5 for children 6 – 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members admitted free year-round. For additional information, call 413-662-2111 or visit www.massmoca.org.

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