

BORCH

NIELS BORCH JENSEN

Julie Mehretu | *Epigraph, Damascus*

Pre-opening: 28 April 2016, 6 - 9 pm

Opening: 29 April 2016, 6 - 9 pm

Exhibition: 30 April – 4 June 2016

Niels Borch Jensen Gallery & Editions are excited to present the print shop's first collaboration with American artist Julie Mehretu. Opening 29 April 2016, the monumental work entitled *Epigraph, Damascus* will see its inaugural exhibition in Berlin.

Julie Mehretu's points of departure for *Epigraph, Damascus*, her first project with Niels Borch Jensen Editions, are layered architectural drawings of buildings in Damascus, Syria. Columns, arches and porticoes, shown from multiple perspectives, are among the many depicted architectural details of the war-torn city. While political and social elements are unavoidably tied to these architectural forms, Mehretu once described her works as 'story maps of no location', manifestations of an imagined rather than actual reality. Deconstructed elements, symbols, from well-known places get fused, and new meanings emerge.

The complexity of the subject matter is reflected in the work's technique: The piece consists of six individually framed panels; the size of the complete work amounts to about 250 x 575 cm (app. 8.2 x 18.9 ft). Despite its dense, many-layered composition, *Epigraph, Damascus* was printed from just two plates: A framework of architectural drawings forms the basis for the first direct gravure plate, which was then composited together with a layer of gestural mark-making made on large sheets of mylar. The second plate features Mehretu's signature painterly gesture: dark, yet soft and light-handed brush strokes, made in spit bite, sugar lift and open bite directly on the copper plate. All these elements are brought together in the proofing and printing process, creating a work with unique physical and tactile presence.

Printmaking has long been an important part of Mehretu's oeuvre, precisely because it allows such radical experiments with the construction of images. The various processes allow Mehretu to take the many elements of the work apart, looking at them individually, in a way impossible in painting or drawing. In *Epigraph, Damascus*, Mehretu has developed a practice and vocabulary that has allowed her to build deep, dark density, combined with an effortless flow, in a composition that goes far beyond traditional printmaking.

Julie Mehretu was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In 2015 she received the US State Department's 'National Medal of Arts'. Among her other awards are the 'Berlin Prize' from the American Academy in Berlin (2007) and the 'MacArthur Fellowship' from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (2005). Her work is shown in many of the world's most renowned institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the British Museum, London; the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark; the Albertina Museum, Vienna and the Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin. She participated in the Biennals of Istanbul, São Paulo and Sydney and participated in Documenta XIII. Julie Mehretu lives and works in New York City.

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