

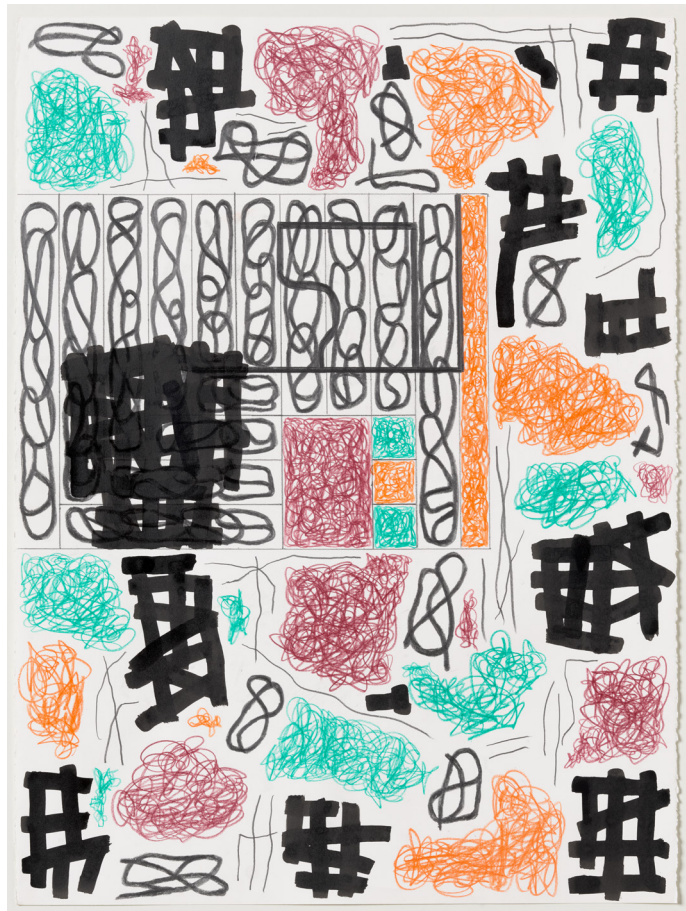
Press Release

Jonathan Lasker

Painting and Drawing

27 January—13 March 2024
Opening Saturday 27 January 2024, 11 am—1 pm

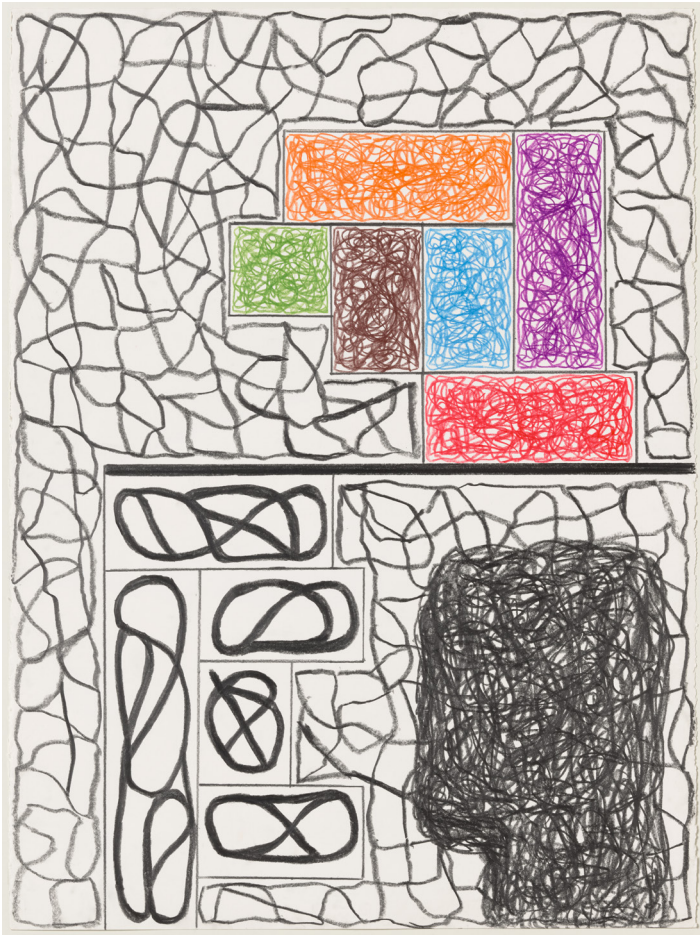
Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Jonathan Lasker, *Untitled*, 2012.
Graphite, Colored Pencil and India Ink on Paper. 76 x 56.5 cm (29.92 x 22.24 in)

Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg presents a series of Jonathan Lasker's rarely exhibited pencil and ink drawings. Created autonomously from his painting practice, these works on paper reflect Lasker's characteristic visual vocabulary of geometric gestures and patterns in a delicate and immediate way. Presented alongside this group of drawings are four recent paintings, the very first works to come out of the artist's newly established studio in Munich. A significant

change from the energy and noise of New York City, this unfamiliar environment facilitated an experimental atmosphere for the artist and served as a unique source of inspiration for him at this time. The dialogue established between the two distinct series of paintings and drawings opens up a new perspective within this exhibition, highlighting the breadth of the American artist's work.



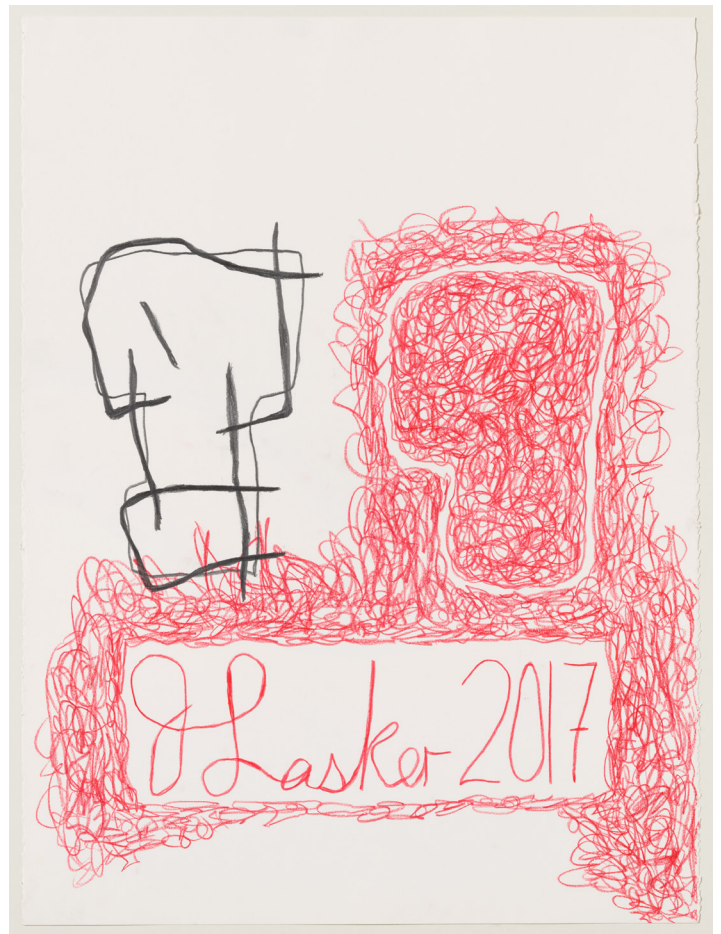
Jonathan Lasker, *Untitled*, 2012. Graphite and Colored Pencil on Paper.
76 x 57 cm (29.92 x 22.44 in)

Lasker's unmistakable painterly language is based on a distinctive mark-making process, initially conceived during his studies at the California Institute of the Arts in the late 1970s, where prevailing conceptual tendencies declared painting dead. His focus lies on an intuitive approach to artmaking, evident in the works on view through the palpable sense of dynamism and playfulness that they achieve, despite resulting from a carefully controlled process. His motifs include hovering, cloud-like circular fields of scribbles, structural grids, and graphic lines juxtaposed with colourful, relief-like impasto forms created through the vigorous application of paint. Like interlocking pieces of a puzzle, these elements form the core of his conceptual framework.

For his paintings and also this new series of drawings, exhibited for the first time, Lasker's creative process commences with sketches, intuitively capturing basic shapes as raw inspiration on paper. 'I do a lot of sketching in my spiral-bound sketchbooks, and that is usually where the works start,' he explains. These initial outlines, often realised freehand in a stream of consciousness, serve as the foundation for his thought-out compositions.

'The making of a picture, to me, is not necessarily improvisational. The origins of what it's going to be get imagined and improvised, but the act of making the paintings tends to be more strategic. They are preconceived and no mistakes are allowed.' The paintings and drawings materialise this synthesis of spontaneity and intentionality.

Evoking perceptions of surface and depth, Lasker's works convey a sense of figurative presence despite the viewer's inability to truly identify the pictorial content. At first sight, the backgrounds are surface bound, but on closer inspection the compositions feature indications of linear perspective, hinting at conceptions of space such as horizon lines. 'Even though my works are abstract, I still consider them to be pictures, and they inspire recognition,' the artist explains. Rejecting the idea of a passive artwork-viewer relationship, the often colourful, diagrammatic compositions oscillate between intuition and analysis, encouraging viewers to connect the disparate elements that constitute the work to find their own associative sense of meaning and narrative. As Lasker explains, 'I always think of the viewer as completing the picture.'



Jonathan Lasker, *Untitled*, 2017. Graphite, Colored Pencil on Paper.
76 x 57 cm (29.92 x 22.44 in)



Jonathan Lasker

About the artist

Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, in 1948, Jonathan Lasker currently lives and works between New York and Munich. He initially pursued a career as a musician before studying at the School of Visual Arts in New York and the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Santa Clarita.

He began developing his highly self-reflexive pictorial language in the 1970s as a student at CalArts, where the prevailing approach to art was Conceptualism, the mentorship of Susan Rothenberg and Richard Artschwager encouraged Lasker to forge his own path and mount a challenge to the status quo. He created a unique way of painting based on the vocabulary devised by the minimalist painters that preceded him. Curtailing himself to basic marks and lines, Lasker established his figure-ground relationship in this period 'In a way, it was good for me,' he remembers, 'because it forced me to shape my reasons for making paintings. It also forced me to make paintings that had reasons for being paintings.' As art critic Richard Kalina describes, 'Each image [in the picture] becomes a thing itself, an element to be examined, experienced

and categorised; a component of the larger grammatical structure that Lasker has built.'

Lasker's early solo exhibitions include a show at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia in 1992 and a retrospective that travelled to the Kunsthalle Bielefeld; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; and Kunstverein St. Gallen, between 1997 and 1998. These were followed by exhibitions at the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham; Forum for Contemporary Art, St. Louis; and The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto. A major retrospective of Lasker's work was held in 2003 at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. In 2015, the exhibition *Jonathan Lasker: Paintings 2001–2014* was shown at the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain in Saint-Étienne.

A retrospective exhibition of the artist's work will be on view at the Museum of Recent Art (MARE) in Bucharest, opening 20 February 2024.

For press enquiries:

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