

Press release

# Martha Jungwirth

## *Der letzte Tag ist der schlimmste*

12 April—31 May 2025  
Opening Saturday 12 April 2025, 11am—1pm

Thaddaeus Ropac  
Salzburg Villa Kast  
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2020.  
Oil on paper on canvas. 157 x 241.2 cm (61.81 x 94.96 in).

The exhibition *Der letzte Tag ist der schlimmste* (*The Last Day is the Worst*) presents works by Austrian artist Martha Jungwirth, created over the last five years. The paintings on view reflect her distinctive visual language while highlighting subtle variations within her practice. Discernible figural elements emerge in some works, while others

remain more resolutely rooted in abstraction. This periodic engagement with figuration highlights the fluidity of Jungwirth's approach, wherein structure and intuition are held in delicate balance. For the artist, impressions of the world around her trigger the fleeting inner impulses that guide her practice. This most recent series of works relates to the

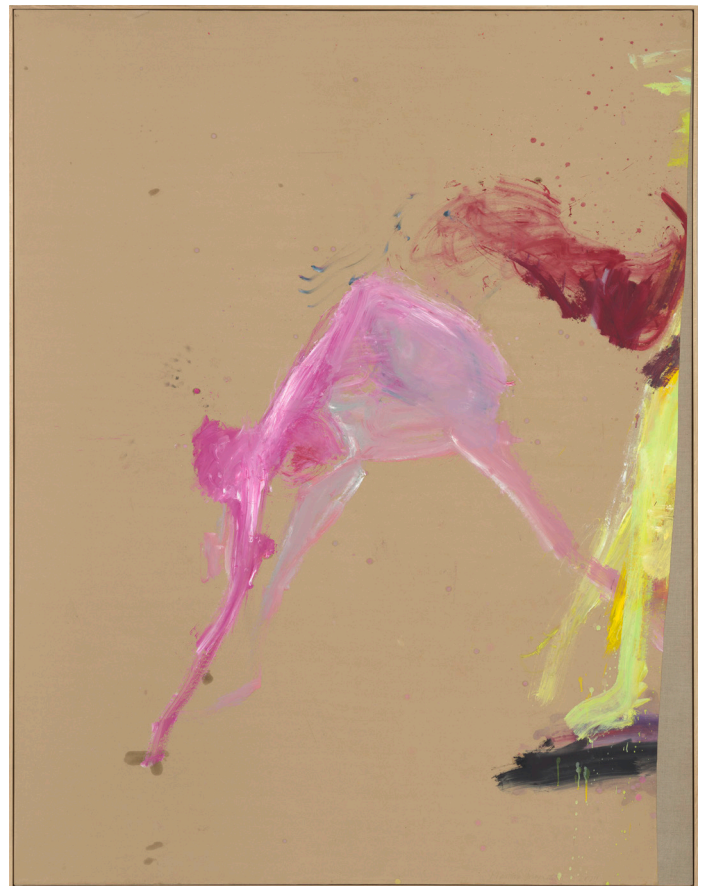


Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2024.  
Oil on paper on canvas. 242.3 x 168.4 cm (95.39 x 66.3 in).

turbulent developments in current world affairs, and the exhibition's title references an article recently published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which reported on the dire conditions of a Ukrainian mortar unit. 'My works are recordings of my emotions,' says Jungwirth.

Fascinated by the way images convey cultural meaning across time, Jungwirth looks to current photographs collected from newspaper clippings, as well as reproductions of varying artworks or architectural elements and affixes them to her studio walls for visual reference. Known for a colour palette that dwells in a corporeal and sensuous register of pinks and reds, some of these latest works feature bold, bright yellows and turquoise hues. 'My main focus lies on red tones in all the variations that are available. Sometimes, however, I have to expand this colour palette. This yellow colour, for instance, suggests something aggressive, almost vicious,' explains Jungwirth.

Although firmly grounded in abstraction, her compositions sometimes hint at motifs, such as elements of the Old Master paintings that have been influential to her practice. Body-like forms appear to materialise from a cascade of passionate streaks, smears and splatters. The composition of one of her untitled works (2024), for example, stretching over two metres, is reminiscent of a marquee – or the hoop skirts in Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. However, as is characteristic of her work, Jungwirth only distantly references the historical motifs, detaching them from any imminent symbolism or meaning. As with all her subjects, the forms remain beyond the easily identifiable, shifting between the realms of the real and imagined, the embodied and transcendent.



Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2024.  
Oil on paper on canvas. 241 x 187.3 cm (94.88 x 73.74 in).

For her compositions that oscillate between abstraction and figuration, the untouched surface of the painting ground is of great importance, as is the balance between the 'controlled and the uncontrolled,' as the artist describes it. Areas of ground are left bare, allowing the texture of her cardboard supports to appear. 'Jungwirth has consistently sought liberation in her engagement with



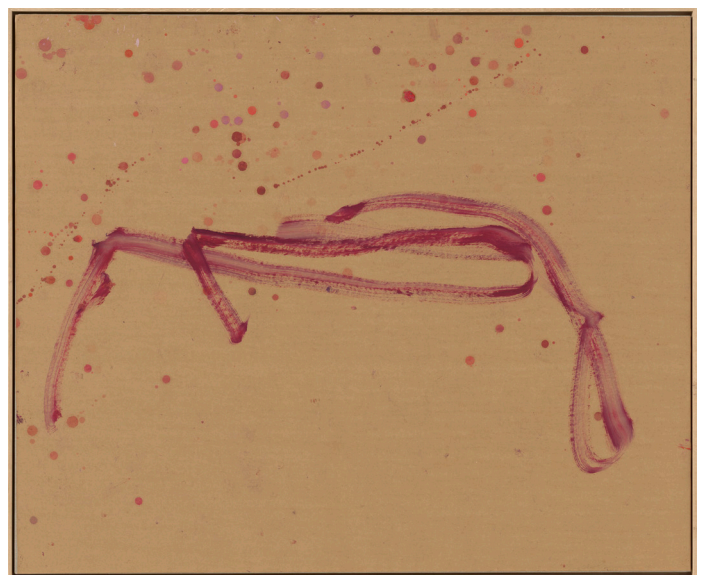


unconventional materials that defy the conventions of traditional artistic repertoires,' writes Lekha Hileman Waitoller, curator of the retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. The rough, absorbent surface creates a specific effect, emphasising the openness and materiality of Jungwirth's painterly gestures. Her paintings bear traces of her movement: finger marks, scratches and even shoeprints are an intimate index of the artist's presence. She describes her painting process as an 'adventure' driven by a direct rhythm involving the body, during which images unfurl, grow and reveal themselves. 'My painting is action and passion: a dynamic space.'

In contrast to the rational principles of Minimalism and Conceptualism that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, Jungwirth's paintings convey a palpable sense of self. 'My art is like a diary, seismographic,' Jungwirth says. 'That is the method of my work. I am completely related to myself. Drawing and painting are a movement that runs through me.' The exhibition shows expansive, large-format works that are characterised by a 'flowing painting process.' As the artist states: 'When you work on a large format, there is less density, you have the feeling that all the possibilities remain open to you.'

## About the artist

Martha Jungwirth was born in 1940 in Vienna, where she continues to live and work. She was a co-founder and the only female member of the Viennese collective *Wirklichkeiten (Realities)*, whose work was exhibited at the Secession, Vienna, in 1968. The group exhibited together from 1968–72, and in 1977, Jungwirth was included in documenta 6 in Kassel. More recently, an entire room was dedicated to her work in the exhibition curated by Albert Oehlen for the Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg, in 2010. A career retrospective spanning five decades was shown at the Kunsthalle Krems in 2014, followed by an exhibition focusing on her watercolours at the Kunstmuseum Ravensburg in 2018. That same year, she received the prestigious Oskar Kokoschka Prize awarded by the Austrian state, accompanied by an extensive solo exhibition at the Albertina in Vienna. A retrospective at the Museum Liaunig in Neuhaus marked the occasion of the artist's 80th birthday in 2020. The following year, Jungwirth was awarded the Grand Austrian State Prize, the republic's highest commendation for an outstanding life's work in the field of art. In 2022, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf celebrated her work with an extensive solo exhibition spanning from the 1970s until today, and in 2024, her works were shown at Palazzo Cini in Venice. The same year, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presented a major career retrospective. In 2025, her works were exhibited at the Long Museum in Shanghai, and a major solo exhibition is currently on view at Museum Jorn in Silkeborg.



Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2025.  
Oil on paper on canvas. 137.8 x 166.7 cm (54.25 x 65.63 in).

For press enquiries:

Dr. Patricia Neusser  
Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg  
[patricia.neusser@ropac.net](mailto:patricia.neusser@ropac.net)  
Telefon: +43 662 881393 0



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