

Martha Jungwirth

Geh nicht aus dem Zimmer

22 January—28 February 2026
Opening Thursday 22 January 2026, 6pm—8pm

Thaddaeus Ropac
Paris Marais
7, rue Debelleyme, Paris, France



Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2025. Oil on paper on canvas. 242 x 340.6 cm (95.28 x 134.25 in)

Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais presents an exhibition of works by Austrian artist Martha Jungwirth. The exhibition centres around a remarkable large-scale 131-part installation of drawings and paintings on paper and cardboard interspersed with pages cut from newspapers – described by Bernard Blistène as a ‘great frieze of unruly images’ – created over the course of five years between 1987 and 1992. This monumental work will be accompanied by a group of the artist’s recent paintings, as well as a selection of watercolours, the earliest of which date from the 1980s.

As Jungwirth has described, ‘My art is like a diary, seismographic. That is the method of my work. Drawing and painting are a movement that runs through me.’ The mo-

numental work at the heart of the exhibition exemplifies the artist’s diaristic approach to abstraction. She made its component drawings half-looking at the paper in an instinctive process resembling automatic writing, and they are hung on the wall page-by-page like an unbound, unravelling journal, stacked four high. In some, thoughts seethe across the page in the form of furtive notes and annotations in the artist’s hand. There is a striking sense of confidentiality in Jungwirth’s work; a sense that we are privy to a secret.

The title of the exhibition, *Geh nicht aus dem Zimmer* (*Don’t leave your room*), manifests this diaristic introspection. It refers to a poem by Russian-American poet Joseph Brodsky that bears no title but is known by these opening words. Impassioned yet obstinate, it implores the reader:



Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 2025
Oil on paper on canvas. 92.3 x 120 cm (36.34 x 47.24 in)

'Don't leave your room. Pretend a cold in the head. / What could be more exciting than wallpaper, chair and bed?' It relates directly to the private and deeply personal painting process behind the 131 intimate works on paper, many of which Jungwirth made at twilight in front of the television. More than 30 years after their creation, Jungwirth has assembled them into a single composite artwork in order to confront herself once again with the transient impulses that generated them.

Jungwirth works intuitively, making works that convey a palpable sense of self, yet are far from absolute introspection. Though created in a context of sublime solitude, the narrative that unfolds on the wall is grounded in the real world, as testified to by the pages Jungwirth has cut out from the culture sections of newspapers to intersperse with her own drawings and paintings. They start art-historical conversations within the frieze itself – with the sewn-up scars of a fabric Louise Bourgeois head, or Rogier van der Weyden's sorrowful *The Descent from the Cross* – but also invite the viewer to imagine Jungwirth flicking through the newspaper as she works. Current affairs are among her key inspirations.

In this multipart work, across a variety of media – ink, charcoal, watercolour, oil paint – figuration appears from amidst abstraction, before being concealed again. Faces, torsos, limbs and the digits of hands and feet surface from within flurries of lines: 'insistent lines – a combination of erasures and crossings-out [...] which scar the surface of the paper as figures emerge', as curator Blistène describes in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition. Among the proliferation of drawings we find small paintings in which pools of colour are 'magmas, impastos that muddy the surface, interrupt the narrative and come to obliterate it.'

Jungwirth's watercolours are just as elusive. Watercolour, the medium with which the artist commenced her painting career, is represented in the exhibition with a small group of works from the 1980s and 1990s. It is possible to understand Jungwirth's watercolours from this period, as curator and critic Thomas Mießgang has written, 'as a phenomenological approximation of those things which remain fleeting and evasive in their time-bound lack of contour.' Shapes and lines cluster together at the centre of the paper as if constructing something that never quite solidifies. They are both evasive and evasions: as Blistène writes, 'Jungwirth says that her paintings invite an escape: 'Malfluchten'. Listen to the sound of the word, don't look for a literal meaning. 'Flüchten' means 'to flee' in English.'

'There are frugal artists who make do with five cans of paint', Jungwirth says. 'That's not my way. I'm all about the nuance of color.' Her most recent paintings in oil testify to this, diving ever deeper into the subtleties of her signature palette of vivid pinks and bruised magentas while also investigating other tonal registers: cooler lilacs and blues; earthy greens, browns and oranges. 'I want to create out of abundance', Jungwirth explains, a position that aligns her approach to colour with her distinctive markmaking, where accumulating gestures remain like an index of her process. That same impulse finds its fullest expression in the central frieze, whose richness arises from acts of gathering, amassing and assembling.

A catalogue illustrating the installation and featuring an essay by Bernard Blistène will accompany the exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais.



Martha Jungwirth, *Untitled*, 1994
Watercolour on paper. 209.5 x 163 cm (82.48 x 64.17 in)



Martha Jungwirth, portrait of the artist.
Photo: Markus Huber.

About the artist

Jungwirth was born in 1940 in Vienna, where she continues to live and work. In 1961, while still a student at the Academy of Applied Arts (1956–63), she was awarded the Msgr. Otto Mauer Prize, followed by the Theodor Körner Prize (1964) and the Joan Miró Prize (1966). Having studied under Professor Carl Unger, she later taught at the Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna for a decade from 1967–77. She was a co-founder and the only female member of the Viennese collective *Wirklichkeiten* (Realities), alongside Wolfgang Herzig, Kurt Kocherscheidt, Peter Pongratz, Franz Ringel and Robert Zeppel-Sperl, whose work was shown in the exhibition at the Secession, Vienna in 1968, curated by Otto Breicha. The group exhibited together from 1968–72 and, in 1977, Jungwirth was included in *documenta 6* in Kassel.

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, Martha 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 autumn 2022, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf celebrated her work with an extensive solo exhibition spanning from the 1970s until today. In 2024, her works were the subject of a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, followed by an exhibition at Long Museum, Shanghai, in 2025.

For any enquiries:

Marcus Rothe
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris
marcus.rothe@ropac.net
Telephone +33 1 42 72 99 00
Mobile +33 6 76 77 54 15



Share your thoughts with:

@thaddaeusropac
#thaddaeusropac
#marthajungwirth

All images © Martha Jungwirth / Bildrecht, Wien 2025
Photos: Ulrich Ghezzi