

## Gallery 1

*Transcending: The New International*, 2003

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2003

Mehretu's paintings are often created through a multistep process: ink and/or paint are applied to the canvas in successive layers—sealed by coats of transparent acrylic—and then strategically sanded down, allowing individual elements to rise or recede. As the works develop, the surfaces accumulate into almost geologic strata. In *Transcending: The New International*, Mehretu drew the foundational layer (rendered in India ink and acrylic paint) from the plans of every African capital city, including Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital and Mehretu's place of birth. Subsequent layers include drawings of both colonialist architecture and modernist buildings erected during and after the various liberation movements of the twentieth century. Finally, Mehretu adds drawings of the plazas built to commemorate independence throughout the continent with the idiosyncratic markings she calls "characters." Collectively, the layers form a sort of collapsed timeline of African sovereignty, from the optimistic decade of liberation in the 1960s to the utopian ideals of the 1970s—and the derailed promises and struggles of the 1980s and 1990s.

## Gallery 1

*Apropos*, 1998  
Ink and acrylic on canvas  
Private collection

*Untitled (yellow with ellipses)*, 1998  
Ink and acrylic on canvas  
Private collection

*Untitled (yellow with ellipses)* presents an aerial view of a landscape occupied by neighborhoods, waterways, and graphic elements linked by various ellipses. While the work appears as a map, the absence of a legend decoding its symbols and determining its parameters suggests the fluidity of spatial relationships and political boundaries.

Mehretu describes early experiments with the social aspects of abstraction.



*Untitled 2*, 1999  
Ink and acrylic on canvas  
Private collection; courtesy White Cube, London and Hong Kong

## Gallery 1

*Map Paint (white)*, 1996  
Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection

*Untitled (two)*, 1996  
Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection

*Migration Direction Map*, 1996  
Ink on mylar

Private collection

*Untitled (sketch)*, 1996  
Graphite on paper

Private collection

*Migration Direction Map (large)*, 1996  
Ink on mylar

Private collection

Gallery 1 (VT-01)

*Inkcity (small 3)*, 1996

Ink on paper

Private collection

*Inkcity (chart)*, 1996

Ink on paper

Private collection

*Inkcity (ellipse)*, 1996

Ink on paper

Private collection

*Inkcity (circle)*, 1996

Ink on paper

Private collection

Gallery 1 (VT-01)

Clockwise from top left:

*Conflict Location Index, 1997*

Ink on mylar

Private collection

*Index of Integrated*

*Character Settlement, 1997*

Ink on mylar

Private collection

*Character Migration*

*Analysis Index, 1997*

Ink on mylar

Private collection

*Timeline Analysis of*

*Character Behavior, 1997*

Ink on mylar

Private collection

Gallery 2

*Looking Back to a Bright New Future, 2003*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection

*Renegade Delirium, 2002*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection; courtesy White Cube, London and Hong Kong

*Untitled 2, 2001*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection; courtesy Salon 94, New York

*Dispersion, 2002*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Collection of Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn and Nicolas Rohatyn

## Gallery 2

*Retopistics: A Renegade Excavation*, 2001

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas 2013.28

*Retopistics: A Renegade Excavation* is the introductory work to Mehretu's first painting cycle, an approach she adopted in the early 2000s wherein loose narratives connect across different individual works. It is also her first large-scale, wide-angled perspective on a dynamic, invented space. In the artist's words, this painting shows "a staircase ascending here, another descending into tops of a tent city there; it's all drawn diminutively, from multiple perspectives and aerial views, with super, super tiny clusters of civilizations, worlds and cities inside this infrastructure of this other meta-space." *Renegade Delirium* and *Dispersion* (both 2002), also on view in this gallery, conclude the cycle. The characters in the former seem to be spinning within an imploding system, while those in the latter are propelled off the edges of the canvas, representing the aftermath of the collapse.

Hear the artist speak about transit, migration, and urban space.

*Babel Unleashed*, 2001

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2001

Gallery 2 (VT-02)

*drawings (new constructions) #8, 2003*  
Graphite, colored pencil, acrylic, and ink on paper  
Private collection

*Untitled (2005 drawings), 2005*  
Ink and graphite on paper  
Private collection

*Untitled (2005 drawings), 2005*  
Ink, graphite, and colored pencil on paper  
Private collection

*Untitled (2005 drawings), 2005*  
Ink, graphite, and colored pencil on paper  
Private collection



## Gallery 3

*Stadia II*, 2004

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; gift of Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn and Nicolas Rohatyn and A. W. Mellon Acquisition Endowment Fund 2004.50

Mehretu discusses the stadium's form and its link to global politics.

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*Black City*, 2007

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Pinault Collection

In the aftermath of the war on terror and Hurricane Katrina (2005), Mehretu increasingly called attention to the forces of imperialism in contemporary culture by using militaristic, sports, national, and corporate iconography. *Black City* contains imagery related to the military-industrial complex, including stars from generals' insignia and depictions of specific wartime installations such as the Nazis' Atlantic Wall bunkers. Ultimately, Mehretu visually connects the spectacle of modern wars to colonialism, patriarchy, and power, suggesting the erosion of democratic ideals and order in the twenty-first century.

Learn about Mehretu's "characters" and the space around them.

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## Gallery 3

*Berliner Plätze*, 2009

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Deutsche Bank Collection, Berlin

*Berliner Plätze* features superimposed buildings—many of which were destroyed by Allied bombing during World War II—that emerge from a hazy gray ground. While living in Germany in 2008, Mehretu grew critical of American foreign affairs, particularly the Iraq War and the war on terror. In Berlin, surrounded by the visible scars of the Holocaust and Cold War, Mehretu began to question her role as an American who opposed the war in Iraq but nonetheless felt responsible for the horrors inflicted there. Seeking to develop a counternarrative to both historical and contemporary warfare, she began to use techniques of erasure, opacity, and overwriting. Here, she overlays drawings of long-demolished Berlin buildings to the point of illegibility, conjuring a partially visible city that may have existed had World War II never erupted.

Hear about Mehretu's approach to the layered history of Berlin.

*Aether (Venice)*, 2011

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection; courtesy White Cube, London and Hong Kong

Gallery 3 (VT-03)

*Untitled, 2006*  
Watercolor on paper  
Private collection

*Untitled, 2006*  
Watercolor on paper  
Private collection

*Untitled, 2006*  
Watercolor on paper  
Private collection

*Untitled, 2007*  
Watercolor on paper  
Private collection

## Gallery 4

Wall: Marina Gray (BM 1599)

Label is white

**Tacita Dean**

b. 1965; Canterbury, United Kingdom

*GDGDA*, 2011Two 16mm films, color, silent; 4 min. and 3 min. loops;  
projected side by side

Edition 3 of 4

Courtesy the artist; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris; and Frith Street  
Gallery, London

With: Julie Mehretu and Erika Fortner, Cormac Graham, Eric Kuhl, and Damien Young; camera: Tacita Dean; assistant: Ariane Pauls; rushes: Geyer, Berlin; neg cut: Reel Skill Film Cutting Ltd; first printed by: Soho Film Lab, London, with thanks to Len Thornton; installation: Kenneth Graham, KS Objectiv; originated on: Kodak Motion Picture Film; with thanks: Julie Mehretu and her studio assistants, Jessica Rankin and Mathew Hale; filmed on location at Julie Mehretu Studio, Ludwig Loewe Höfe, Berlin

In *GDGDA* fellow artist and friend Tacita Dean captures Mehretu and her assistants working in the studio, offering viewers a glimpse into a labor-intensive practice that often goes unseen. The camera peers over Mehretu's shoulder as she works deliberately and intensely on *Mural* (2009), a monumental canvas commissioned by Goldman Sachs for the lobby of its headquarters in Lower Manhattan. "GDGDA" translates to "wall" or "mural" in Amharic, one of the Semitic languages of Ethiopia. With this and similar works, Dean creates a new kind of biographical film, based on observation rather than narration, while simultaneously extending the tradition of artists documenting one another in the act of creation.

## Gallery 5

## Wall: Shoreline (BM 1471)

*Mogamma (A Painting in Four Parts) (1 of 4), 2012*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

Learn how the 2011 uprising in Tahrir Square prompted these works.

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Mehretu made this four-part painting in direct response to geopolitical tensions that emerged in the wake of the Arab Spring, pro-democracy uprisings that began in Tunisia in late 2010 and soon spread to Egypt, Libya, and Syria, among other nations in the region. In Egypt, the Mogamma in Cairo's Tahrir Square—a government building that symbolized the nation's modernism and liberation from colonial occupation when it was first built in 1949, and later signified corruption and bureaucracy—was one of many sites occupied by millions of protesters calling for the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak. The square, an “accidental” city center, is a leftover space shaped by earlier structures built in neo-Mamluk, Islamic, European colonial, and Cold War styles—emblematic of the layered histories of Egypt. In these paintings, Mehretu connects it to a shared global experience of uprising and occupation of public space. Improvising on the fact that Tahrir Square was formed from a variety of architectures, Mehretu draws a layered web of charged sites of protest, conflating the Mogamma with the amphitheater stairs and spiraling lights of Meskel Square in Addis Ababa, the midcentury high-rise buildings surrounding Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan, and the similarly iconic buildings of Red Square in Moscow, Tiananmen Square in Beijing, the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana, and Firdos Square in Baghdad.

## Gallery 5

## Wall: Shoreline (BM 1471)

*Mogamma (A Painting in Four Parts) (2 of 4), 2012*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

High Museum of Art, Atlanta; purchase with funds from Alfred Austell Thornton in memory of Leila Austell Thornton and Albert Edward Thornton, Sr., and Sarah Miller Venable and William Hoyt Venable, David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Fund, Dr. Lurton Masee Jr. Endowment for Contemporary Art, the Blonder Family Acquisition Endowment Fund, Robert O. Breitling, Jr. Acquisition Endowment Fund, WISH Foundation Fund of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and through prior acquisition from Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Liberman, Anne and William J. Hokin through the 20th Century Art Acquisition Fund, Henry B. Scott Fund, Jean Cloupsy, Mrs. Elizabeth Fisher, Charles Green Shaw, Jean Gorin Estate, David Kenney, 20th Century Art Acquisition Fund, Judith Alexander, Dr. Milton Mazo to mark the retirement of Gudmund Vigtel, Sidney Singer, Mr. and Mrs. L. Slann, Southeastern Annual Exhibition Purchase Award, Patricia N. Whitlow, Doris Caesar, Mrs. Edith Flynn, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald D. Kohs, J. J. Haverty Memorial Fund for the J. J. Haverty Collection, Scientific-Atlanta, Inc., through the 20th Century Art Acquisition Fund, William Quinn, Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Allison, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Amisano, Mr. and Mrs. Overton A. Currie, Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Steed, and Mr. and Mrs. G. Kimbrough Taylor, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. Gilbert J. Rose, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hahn, Friends of Jon Carsman, Mr. Andrew J. Crispo, Dean Gardens, Wellington Management/Thorndike Doran, Paine and Lewis Collection, Friends of Contemporary Art, Bruce and Lisa Stein, Rich's, Andres J. Escoruela, Lawrence Fox for the Ralph K. Uhry Collection, Friends of W. Dean Gillette, Benjamin Elsas, Glenys and Kermit Birchfield, Friends of Henry Toombs, Atlanta Watercolor Club Annual Purchase Award, Jose Pinal, Estate of Theresa B. Oppenheimer, Chester and Claudia Carter, Shirley and Victor Kramer through the 20th Century Art Acquisition Fund, James Twitty, through prior acquisition from Lewis Beck, funds from Kidder, Peabody & Co., Inc./GE Capital Corporate Finance Group through the Kidder, Peabody & Co., Inc. Regional Purchase Program, Dr. Lawrence Rivkin, Jova/Daniels/Busby in celebration of their 20th anniversary, and Joseph Felice Brivio 2013.31

Hear Mehretu discuss the process of making *Mogamma*.



## Gallery 5

Wall: Shoreline (BM 1471)

*Mogamma (A Painting in Four Parts) (3 of 4), 2012*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Tate; purchased with funds provided by Tiqui Atencio Demirdjian and Ago Demirdjian, Andreas Kurtz, and the Tate Americas Foundation, 2014

*Mogamma (A Painting in Four Parts) (4 of 4), 2012*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund 2013.458

## Gallery 6

*Untitled, 2014*

Ink on paper

Private collection

*Untitled, 2013*

Graphite on paper

Private collection

*Algorithms, Apparitions and Translations, 2013*

Etching with aquatint, spit bite, soft ground, hardground, drypoint, and engraving

Number 3 of 5 prints in the suite

Los Angeles County Museum of Art; purchased with funds provided by Allison and Larry Berg M.2019.214.3

Printed by Burnet Editions, New York

*Untitled, 2012*

Graphite and acrylic on canvas

Los Angeles County Museum of Art; promised gift of Ann Colgin and Joe Wender

*Root of a Dream, 2014*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection



## Gallery 6

*Invisible Sun (algorithm 4, first letter form), 2014*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection

*Invisible Sun (algorithm 7, spell form), 2015*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection

*Being Higher I, 2013*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Tiago Ltd: "The Tiqui Atencio Collection"

*Being Higher II, 2013*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Collection of Susan and Larry Marx; courtesy Neal Meltzer Fine Art, New York

In the aftermath of 2012's Hurricane Sandy, Mehretu began to work on the two paintings that would become *Being Higher I* and *II*, reflecting directly on nature's force, life cycles, and our physical vulnerability. Moving away from her use of architectural drawings, Mehretu here incorporates human-scaled figures into her compositions. They emerge in the hints of heads and legs and in the execution of the work itself: Mehretu used her bare hands and arms to drag, pull, and slap the ink and paint onto the canvases.

Mehretu recounts working at home during Hurricane Sandy.

## Gallery 6

*Epigraph, Damascus, 2016*

Photogravure, sugar lift aquatint, spit bite aquatint, and open bite on six panels

Edition 13 of 16

Los Angeles County Museum of Art; gift of Kelvin Davis and Hana Kim through the 2018 Collectors Committee M.2018.188a-f

Printed by BORCH Editions, Copenhagen

*Epigraph, Damascus*, Mehretu's largest print to date, emerged at a moment when architecture had otherwise become less present in her drawings and paintings. The work's monumental scale suggests the enormity of events affecting Syria's capital, which since 2011 has been the epicenter of a terribly destructive civil war following pro-democracy protests during the Arab Spring. Working with master printer Niels Borch Jensen in Copenhagen, Mehretu used photogravure—a nineteenth-century technique that fuses photography with etching—to composite blurred photographs of Damascus with hand-drawn linear and gestural imagery; she then used the intaglio processes of aquatint and open bite to create different tones and incorporate other marks. By contrasting large, washed areas with precise architectural drawings, Mehretu pairs “the skeleton of the ghost of Damascus” with “the blur, or breakdown, of the ongoing civil war.”

## Gallery 7

## Wall: Shoreline (BM 1471)

*The Seven Acts of Mercy*, 2004

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection

*Cairo*, 2013

Ink and acrylic on canvas

The Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles

Mehretu painted *Cairo* in the days following Egypt's first democratic presidential election in June 2012. The work takes Tahrir Square, the center of the Egyptian Arab Spring protests, as its focus. Mehretu presents the square from multiple vantage points, using photographs, aerial views, and bus maps. Her sweeping, dynamic brushstrokes vibrate and spin, suggesting the passage of time and the movements of the millions of people who participated in the 2011 uprising—and the resulting shifts in the political landscape.

## Gallery 7

## Wall: Shoreline (BM 1471)

*Invisible Line (collective)*, 2010–11

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Pinault Collection

In *Invisible Line (collective)*, Mehretu presents a densely layered perspective of New York, combining historic, present-day, and unbuilt structures with pedestrian and aerial views of the city. By melding these buildings and sight lines, she condenses the metropolis into an indeterminate haze, connecting ruins to modern architecture and suggesting the blur and enormity of history and time. Mehretu's work on this painting coincided with the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. She worked feverishly on it over the eighteen days of the uprising, which she followed in her studio via an Al Jazeera news livestream. She was especially inspired by the massive public protest that brought down Hosni Mubarak, one of Africa's longest-ruling dictators. Mehretu channeled this energy into her work: "Within the revolutionary impulse there typically exists an idealism and a desire for the impossible. These core aspects are processed in my studio . . . [to] build something entirely different: an unknown."

Hear how this painting embodies multiple places and perspectives.



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## Gallery 8

*Conjured Parts (eye), Ferguson, 2016*

Ink and acrylic on canvas

The Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles

*Conjured Parts (eye), Ferguson* offers a meditation on the human form during times of violent sociopolitical unrest, specifically the protests that took place in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014 following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by police there. Conceiving the *Conjured Parts* series in part as a memorial, Mehretu took inspiration from ancient Babylonian and Egyptian stelae—large, inscribed commemorative slabs often used as gravestones. The “conjured parts” here suggest the body, associating sites of violence with dispersed human anatomy. “Bodies appear inside the painting and outside the painting,” Mehretu has said, “disembodied and disregarded.” As a starting point for this painting, she used digital tools to blur a photograph of an unarmed man with his hands up facing a group of police officers in riot gear; Mehretu then added layers of screenprinted, spray-painted, and handmade marks. The smoky spray of fuchsia, green, and orange could suggest tear gas and fire, alluding to the haziness, distortion, and confusion that can accompany times of political turmoil.

Mehretu describes working with a photograph from protests in Ferguson, Missouri.



## Gallery 8

*Hineni (E. 3:4)*, 2018  
Ink and acrylic on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle; gift of George Economou, 2019

In many of her recent works, Mehretu confronts extreme global events and their impact on our senses of time, space, and belonging. She based *Hineni (E. 3:4)* on images of the 2017 Northern California wildfires and the burning of Rohingya homes in Myanmar as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing. The word “hineni” translates to “here I am” in Hebrew. It was Moses’s response when Yahweh (God) called his name from within the Burning Bush to tell him he would lead the Israelites to the promised land. In linking these three types of fire—environmental, intentional, prophetic—Mehretu explores the complex meanings of a single elemental force.

*Indigene/Origine (overture)*, 2018–19  
Ink and acrylic on canvas

Collection of Andy Song

*Of Other Planes of There (S.R.)*, 2018–19  
Ink and acrylic on canvas

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from Anna and Matt Freedman and an anonymous donor 2021.12

Hear about this painting’s link to the early Trump administration.



## Gallery 8

*Stelae 3 (Bardu)*, 2016

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Collection of Lisa and Steven Tananbaum

*Sun Ship (J.C.)*, 2018

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Pinault Collection

*Haka (and Riot)*, 2019

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Los Angeles County Museum of Art; gift of Andy Song M.2020.65a–b

The foundational images for this diptych are press photographs taken inside detention facilities in Texas and California, where undocumented migrant children have been held after separation from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border. Mehretu blurs and abstracts the images with numerous layers of digital and physical drawing, painting, airbrushing, and screenprinting, creating a distorted and riotous space that alludes to the “riot” of the work’s title.

The title also references the *haka*, a ceremonial dance or challenge performed by the Māori people of New Zealand.

## Gallery 8 (VT-04)

*Mind-Wind Fusion Drawings #4, 2019*

Ink and acrylic on paper

Private collection

*Mind-Wind Fusion Drawings #3, 2019*

Ink and acrylic on paper

Private collection

*Mind-Wind Field Drawings (quarantine studio, d.h.) #1,  
2019–20*

Ink and acrylic on paper

Private collection; courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris

*Mind-Wind Field Drawings (quarantine studio, d.h.) #2,  
2019–20*

Ink and acrylic on paper

Private collection; courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris



## Gallery 9

Wall: Shoreline (BM 1471)

<TITLE TBC>, 2020–21  
Ink and acrylic on canvas

Private collection; courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris

Hear how Mehretu made this new painting with this gallery in mind.



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