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MARCIA HAFIF

Opening March 5, 2020, 7–9pm
March 6 – May 9, 2020

The task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.

John Dewey, *Art as Experience*

Marcia Hafif (1929–2018) is highly regarded for her œuvre of monochromatic paintings, being associated with minimal and process art and the *Radical Painting* group. After graduating from Pomona college in 1951 she travelled to Italy and settled in Rome, living there for almost ten years, producing a cohesive body of work, titled as *Italian Paintings*. In 1969 she returned to the United States and accomplished an MFA at UC Irvine in California, beginning to experiment with photography, video, film and sound. In 1971 she moved to New York—in a moment when painting seemed to be irrelevant as artistic medium—where she began to deal again with painting. In her essay “Beginning Again”¹ she undertakes a deconstruction of the medium—accentuating her as *vivisector of painting* in a crucial moment of its history.

Her understanding of painting as a tactile, visual, retinal *object*; considering the *factors* of making a painting; acknowledging it as *historical statement*; and as a *form of thought*—transmitting philosophical experiences—reveals the conceptual aspect of her work². “The painter contributes/incorporates his body”, said Paul Valéry and Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote about a certain way of *active seeing*³, which cannot be reduced to a thought process and can only be experienced in doing so. Both descriptions very much apply to Marcia Hafif as an artist—mentioning that the strokes of a brush stop “serving an intention”, whilst becoming “the intention itself.”⁴ Each brushstroke is not in a representational relation but becomes a necessity of an interaction between the painter and an experience.

Only a few exhibitions in recent time started to shift the focus from her painting to the remaining, mostly overlooked body of work. Screenings of her videos/films at the Tate Modern (2019) and Lenbachhaus Munich (2018), as well as *A Place Apart* a show at Pomona College Museum of Art (2018) highlight Marcia Hafif’s work as thinker, writer, maker and the more intimate aspect of her works on paper.

Since her moving to New York, drawing and writing have played an important role in her breakthrough as an artist in 1972, e.g. the *Mass Tone Paintings*, shown 1974 at Sonnabend Gallery; in 1976 she was part of the inaugural show *Rooms* of MoMA PS1 with her piece *Schoolroom*—consisting of a pornographic

¹ Marcia Hafif, *Beginning Again*, in: Artforum, September 1978, see: <https://www.artforum.com/print/197807/beginning-again-35927> (last access: February 15, 2020).

² Ibid.

³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *Das Auge und der Geist*, in: *Das Auge und der Geist. Philosophische Essays*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 1967, S. 13-43.

⁴ Marcia Hafif, *Getting on with Painting*, Art in America, April 1981.

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text written on the former school boards and a mural painting in shades referring to murals in Pompei. “I have always been a reader, a painter, a writer.”⁵—proving her approach across different media and her refusal of a singular narrative.

Looking closer on her diverse œuvre crystallizes out the influence of place and time on her practice. Each media and practice bears relation to a specific environment. *Roman Paintings*, *TGGT Paintings*, the photographs of *Pomona Houses*, videos like *Vienna Suite*, architectural work like the *Lusthus Wanås* or the designs for the museum *A Place Apart*, etc. are all characterized by an indexicality of space and time. This thorough examination is also displayed in a very distinct conceptualization of the difference between repetition and series.⁶ *Vienna Suite*, a series of photographs taken in Vienna (exhibited at Galerie Hubert Winter in 1998) and a video made out of these photographs—set to the *musique d’ameublement* of Erik Satie—highlights especially what she mentions as *cinematic way*⁷ and shows her critical engagement in how we are used to see images and narratives.⁸

At the core of Marcia Hafif’s artistic practice, across all the different media she has used, lies a particular constant: “[...] the isolation of an element from a context and its focusing in depth through a technique which provides the lucid perception of an experience. A visual experience though, which becomes by force of intensity and attention to all data of life, a trope of ‘conscience’.”⁹ This obviously implies a phenomenological quality of Hafif’s work, which is grounded in the importance of the incidental, the awareness of one’s situatedness, the experience of everyday life and its bridging with philosophical thought. Combined elements of Eastern philosophies¹⁰, Husserl’s phenomenology¹¹ and poststructuralist thought like deconstruction¹², her comprehensive knowledge of art history and her analytic eye, lay the foundation for her study and analysis of presence and temporality.

The totality of her work—spanning over a period of more than five decades and the implementation of a variety of media (painting, drawing, video, film, photography, architectural designs and writing)—has to be considered in its entirety to render the underlying conceptual approach of Marcia Hafif intelligible in order to broaden the reception of her work, which is still mainly focused on her monochromatic painting. This exhibition is the first posthumous one at the gallery in cooperation with the Estate.

⁵ Marcia Hafif in email to Rebecca McGrew on February 22, 2018. Rebecca McGrew, *Drawing Places Apart*, in: *Marcia Hafif—A Place Apart*, Pomona College Museum of Art, 2018, p. 9.

⁶ “[...] a differentiation should be made here between repetition and series. In order to go into one area in depth the artist may indeed repeat work knowing that repetition leads to a similarity and not to the same. This is very different from extending permutations, working in series.”, Marcia Hafif, *Beginning Again*, in: *Artforum*, September 1978.

⁷ *Around Painting—Marcia Hafif in conversation with Michael Ned Holte*, in: *Marcia Hafif—The Inventory: Painting*, Laguna Art Museum, 2015, p. 217.

⁸ loc. cit. FN1.

⁹ Marisa Volpi Orlandini, *Marcia Hafif*, see: http://www.artslab.com/data/img/pdf/013_74-76.pdf (last access: February 23, 2020).

¹⁰ Andreas Pinczewski, *Before Art Comes Art*, in: *Pencil on Paper: Marcia Hafif*, Galerie Michael Sturm, Stuttgart 2003.

¹¹ loc. cit. FN4.

¹² loc. cit. FN1.

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MARCIA HAFIF

Installation view. Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna. 2020

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MARCIA HAFIF

The Grill

1998

7 gelatin silver prints on baryta. Edition 1/3.

35 x 24 cm / 24 x 35 cm each

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MARCIA HAFIF

Vienna Suite I

1998

10 b/w-photographies. Edition of 10
25.4 x 20.3 cm each

Vienna Suite

1999

video, sound

20 min

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MARCIA HAFIF

Transparent Painting: Lamp Black

1984

oil on canvas

152.4 x 152.4 cm

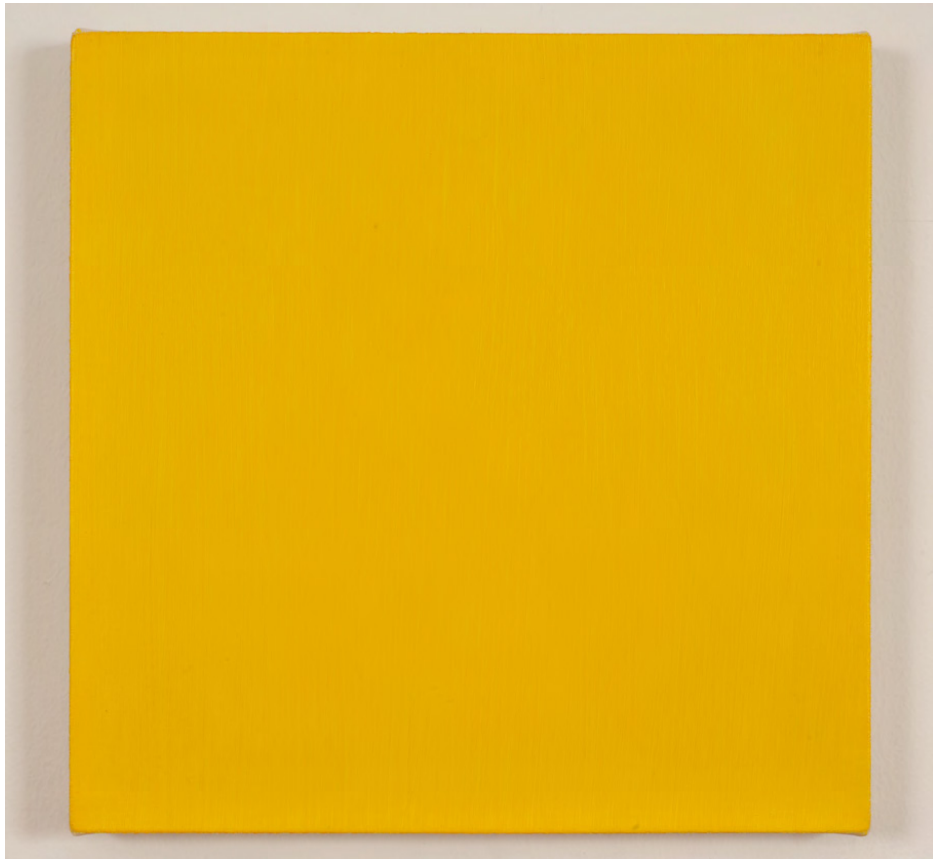
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MARCIA HAFIF
Glaze Painting: Medium Yellow
1997
oil on canvas
35 x 35 cm

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MARCIA HAFIF

Ink Drawing: Pelican Drawing Ink (Mai 21, 1975)

1975

ink on paper

77 x 66 cm

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MARCIA HAFIF

Pencil on Paper: Shape Drawing (June 11, 1976)

1976

pencil on paper

63.5 x 101.6 cm

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MARCIA HAFIF

TGGT.21 NY

2006

oil on canvas

46 x 46 cm

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MARCIA HAFIF

Splash Painting: Cadmium Orange (NY)

2010

oil on canvas

147 x 147 cm

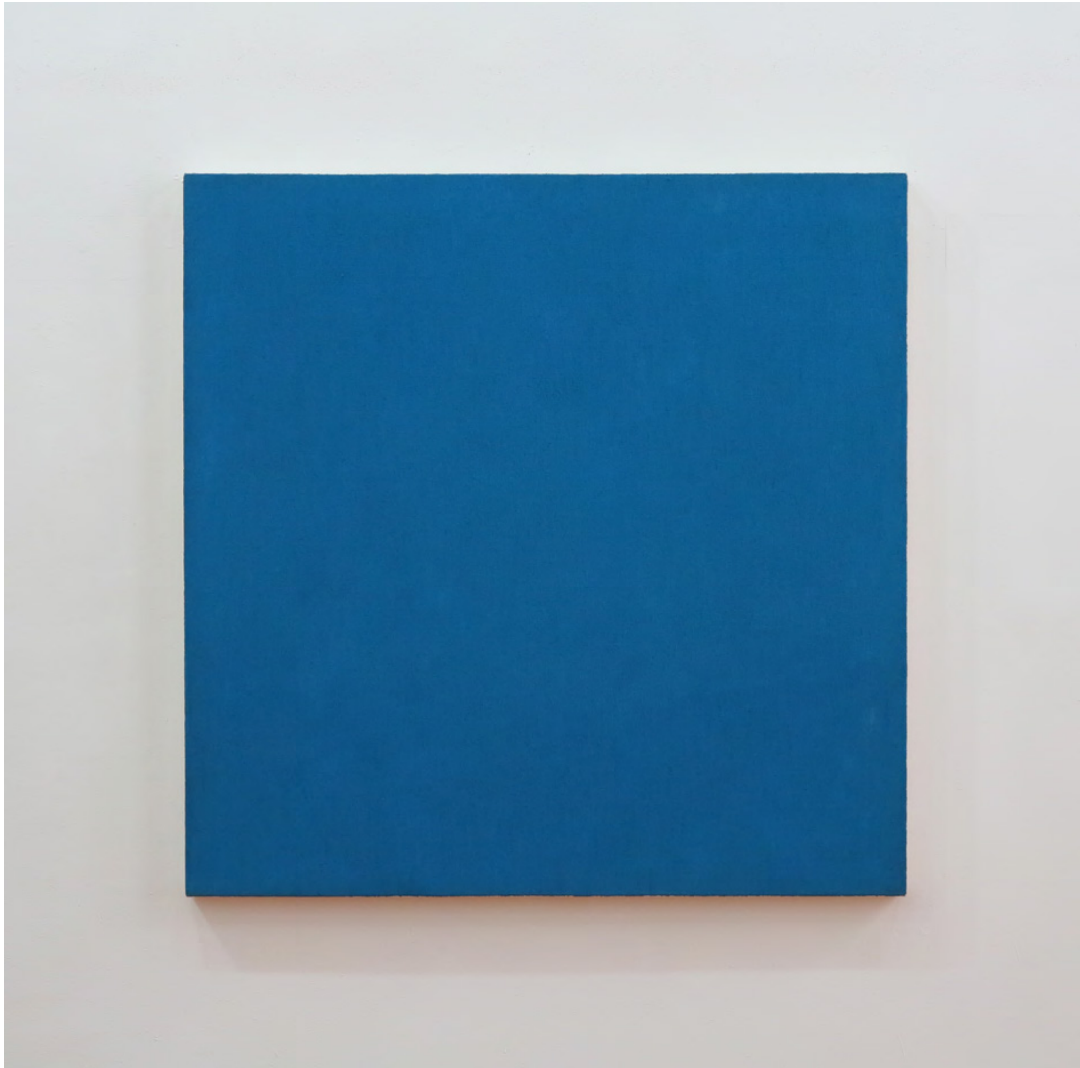
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MARCIA HAFIF

Cerulean Blue (from Mass Tone Paintings)

1974

oil on canvas

86 x 86 cm

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