

Julie Mehretu (American, b. 1971 – Artist Resources)



Mehretu, 2009
Photograph: Nicole Benjiveno
The New York Times

[Mehretu at the Marian Goodman Gallery, New York](#)

[2005 Recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship \(MacArthur “Genius” Grant\)](#)

“I refrain from trying to explain what’s going on in the paintings because they’re not these rational descriptions or efforts to articulate something in that way. I’m not trying to spell out a story,” [Mehretu told Art21 in a 2009 video interview](#) on identity, influence, and process as her studio prepares for upcoming exhibitions and installations. Mehretu wants to “make you feel the painting. The reason you read the mark is because you also feel the mark.”

[2008 interview with Art21](#)

Speaking with [indie arts publication ARTSATL in 2014](#), Mehretu explains the immersive quality of her work: “because of their scale, they still require you to physically negotiate with them and move through them and travel through them, but it’s not as if you can ever get a full perspective...[if you] think of painting as a kind of time-based experience, a time-based media, then you can really participate with it.”

[Listen to Mehretu’s 2016 interview with Yale University Radio](#)

In November 2019 Mehretu’s first comprehensive retrospective, a mid-career survey, [debuted at LACMA](#). It is scheduled to tour nationally through 2021.

[Review LACMA debut, December 2019](#)



Mehretu at work in San Francisco on *HOWL, eon (I, II)*, 2017
Photograph: Nathan Bajar, The New York Times

In 2017, Mehretu embarked on [an unprecedented commission of two monumental site-specific works at SFMoMA](#). Titled *HOWL, eon (I, II)*, the multi-media paintings explore and express the inextricable relationship between history, politics, and landscape painting. “There is no such thing as just a landscape,” she tells [Art21 in a video interview](#), “the actual landscape is politicized through the events that take place on it.” Watch her [artist talk](#) at the unveiling.



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Six Bardos: Luminous Appearance, 2019

Two-panel aquatint

Private Collection; L2019:136.1

Born in Ethiopia, Julie Mehretu studied in Dakar, Senegal, and Michigan before receiving her MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. She now lives and works in New York. In the paintings and drawings for which she is best known, Mehretu explores history, geological time, social identity, and the psychology of space by combining abstract gestures of color and line with careful studies inspired by archival maps, city grids, and architectural plans.

Six Bardos: Luminous Appearance is from a three-year series made in collaboration with master American printmaker Case Hudson after Mehretu visited China. Each print refers to one of the six transitional states of consciousness, or *bardos*, that the soul moves through between death and rebirth as described in the *Bardo Thödol* (known in the West as the Tibetan Book of the Dead). Luminosity is the fifth state, *Chönyid bardo*, which occurs the moment after death and manifests in auditory and visual phenomena accompanied by sensations of profound peace and awareness. Mehretu's complex colorful interpretation can be seen as a blueprint for viewers to explore who or what they might become through their own cycles of physical and spiritual renewal.

On view February 26 – May 31, 2020

More resources for this work

[2019 Exhibition of Six Bardos Series at the Los Angeles artist workshop Gemini G.E.L.](#)

[Case Hudson and master printer collaborations](#)