

GAGOSIAN

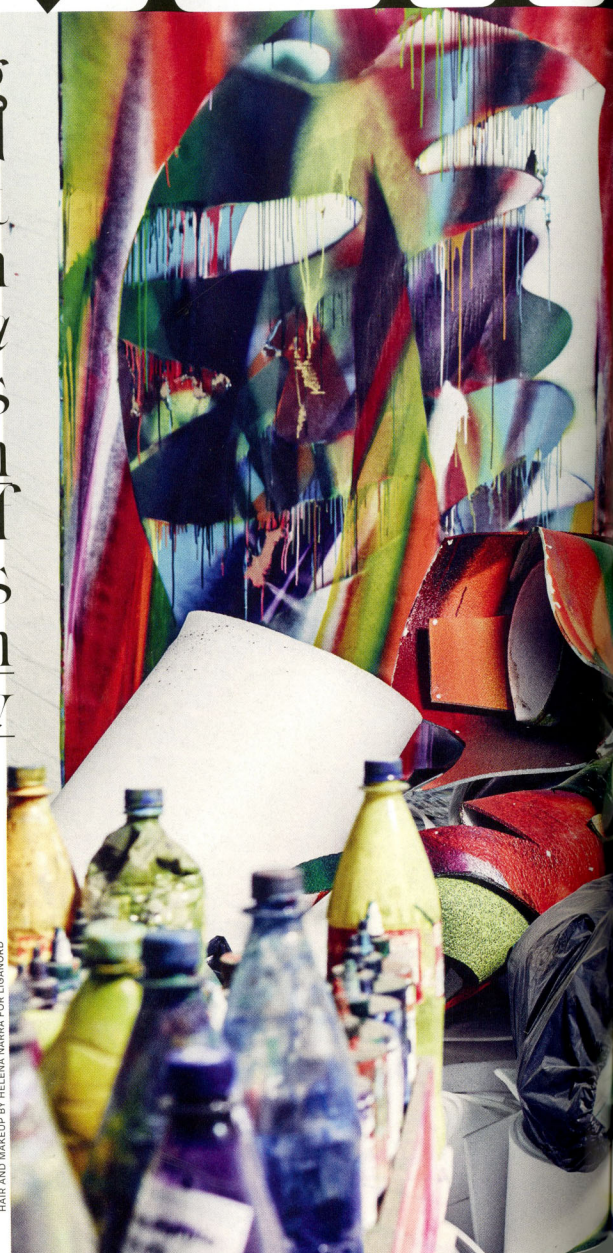
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

PAINT TH

After soaking cities and sand in radiant color, German artist *Katharina Grosse* takes Manhattan with a show of new canvases at Gagosian Gallery

TEXT BY JULIE L. BELCOVE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARKUS JANS

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY HELENA NARDA FOR L'ORÉAL



GAGOSIAN

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

E TOWN



ARTIST KATHARINA GROSSE
POSES IN HER BERLIN
STUDIO AMID THE FOAM
STENCILS USED TO MAKE
HER VIBRANT PAINTINGS.
A SHOW OF HER LATEST
WORKS OPENS AT GAGOSIAN'S
24TH STREET GALLERY IN
NEW YORK ON JANUARY 19
(GAGOSIAN.COM).

GAGOSIAN

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



LEFT FOR HER 2016 INSTALLATION *ROCKAWAY*, GROSSE TRANSFORMED A DERELICT BUILDING AT A QUEENS BEACH INTO A TECHNICOLOR SHOWSTOPPER. RIGHT PAINTINGS IN PROGRESS AT HER STUDIO.



German artist Katharina Grosse is famed for working on a monumental scale. Using industrial-strength spray-paint guns, she's applied screaming colors onto railroad corridors, piles of debris, and other emblems of urban decay—creating huge sculptures and public installations that look like earthworks graffitied by Abstract Expressionists. For her most recent site-specific piece, *Rockaway*, she spent a week at Fort Tilden beach in Queens, New York, splashing red and white pigment on a derelict building, as well as the sand that had piled up around it since Hurricane Sandy blew out the windows and doors in 2012.

"The building was stripped down to the basic bones," says Grosse in her Berlin studio. "It was just an open structure, which made it very abstract. You didn't know, Is it going to emerge from the sand? Or is the sand about to cover it?"

But for her next big project she is going small—relatively speaking. After joining Gagosian's star roster last summer, she will make her debut on January 19 with a show of new canvases, some nearing 13 feet in height, at the gallery's West 24th Street space in Manhattan. Awash in layered hues that swirl, bleed, and drip, the paintings, like her outdoor installations and sculptures, are unabashedly about color, a facet of art often dismissed as secondary in this concept-heavy era.

"Color is very intimate," Grosse says. "It triggers your responses right away. I also use it to retrace my thought structure, which is what I think a painting basically is."

Though the studio works also incorporate her signature spray-gun technique, the most obvious difference between them and her installations, Grosse notes, is time. "The intensity with which I do the site-specific pieces is always very strong, because I work, like, ten days straight; there is nothing that interferes with my activity," she says. In the studio, on the other hand, she may have 15 canvases at various stages of completion, allowing her to develop each one gradually over the course of months—often with the

aid of stencils made from foil, foam, and cardboard.

Grosse describes herself as a late bloomer. At 20, directionless, she went on an outing to the countryside with some artist friends of her mother, printmaker Barbara Grosse. "I was sitting in a field, and I painted a willow tree," Grosse recalls. "It took about eight hours." Hooked, she spent the next year with a brush in hand, eventually entering the famed Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Even after graduating, in 1990, she worked her way through the "whole panorama of art history" before finding her voice in abstraction. Then, in 1998, Grosse started using spray paint, which she says allowed her physical gestures to mimic sight. "The way the eyes move up, look down, grasp the space—spray paint is very equal to that movement."

Another shift came in 2004, with an intensely private, site-specific work: her Düsseldorf bedroom. "I spray-painted everything—the bed, the clothes, my writing desk, my music, an open suitcase," she says, adding that it was the first time she incorporated found objects into her paintings.

The American art world took note in 2008, when, as part of the inaugural Prospect New Orleans triennial, Grosse turned an abandoned house in the Hurricane Katrina-ravaged Lower Ninth Ward into a shocking-orange buoy among the rot. Curator Klaus Biesenbach, the director of MoMA PS1, remembers how the piece uplifted him. "She painted a painting onto the house," he says. "She didn't paint the house."

After Hurricane Sandy hit New York, Biesenbach knew he wanted to tap Grosse for a project. At Fort Tilden, the red-and-white motif of *Rockaway* not only popped against the sand, sea, and sky but also evoked both a lifeguard's uniform and the magenta sunsets that light up that beach.

Damaged beyond repair, the building will have been razed by the publication of this story—but Grosse is not dejected. "This happens to a lot of the works I do," she says. "They have a certain life span. They disappear. It's part of it." ▀

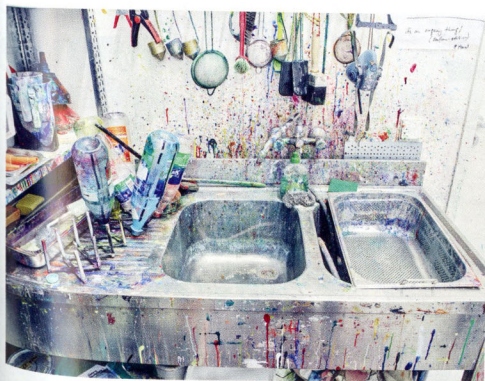
NEELI WINTERMAN: ROCKAWAY; PAOLO ENRIQUEZ; KATHARINA GROSSE AND VIG BILD-KUNST; MONTY BRADSHAW: ROCKAWAY; GROSSE: KATHARINA GROSSE

GAGOSIAN

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



“Color is very intimate,” says *Katharina Grosse*. “It triggers your responses right away.”



ABOVE GROSSE'S 2013–14 INSTALLATION *JUST THE TWO OF US* CLUSTERED 18 SCULPTURES AMONG THE TREES OF BROOKLYN'S METROTECH COMMONS PLAZA. LEFT A UTILITY SINK AT HER STUDIO REVEALS TRACES OF HER SIGNATURE BOLD PALETTE.