



Mary Grigoriadis, *Isfahan*, 1973
Oil and acrylic on raw linen
66 x 66 in. (167.6 x 167.6 cm)

52 WALKER ST | JUN 22 – JUL 28, 2023

Mary Grigoriadis

James Cohan is pleased to present an exhibition of works by New York-based artist Mary Grigoriadis (b. 1942, Jersey City, New Jersey), on view at the gallery's 52 Walker Street location from June 22 through July 28, 2023. *Mary Grigoriadis* is organized in partnership with Accola Griefen Fine Art, New York, and features paintings and works on paper from the late-1960s through the mid-1990s.

For over four decades, Mary Grigoriadis pushed the bounds of oil painting by pursuing new approaches to composition, color, and ornament in her works on raw linen and canvas, which reveal an orchestration of concise brushstrokes. Bridging multiple art movements in mid-century New York, Grigoriadis was a founding member of A.I.R., the first women's art gallery in the United States, and exhibited as part of the Pattern and Decoration (P+D) group. P+D elevated the motifs of decoration to fine art, and Grigoriadis married these references with the formal, exacting sentiments of a minimalist painter. Within this historical context, her painterly language and style demonstrate a unique approach to art-making—one that considered rigorous, process-based painting alongside the liberatory initiatives of her time.

Grigoriadis devised her methodical approach during the 1960s, when she worked at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. There, she was front row to the development of the 1966 exhibition *Systemic Painting*, which included works by Agnes Martin, Frank Stella, and Robert Ryman, among others. Their conceptual works involved self-imposed limits and a controlled handling of paint, and Grigoriadis took these ideas to her own experiments on the canvas.

In her Upper West Side studio, which she has occupied for over sixty years, Grigoriadis has reckoned with the spatial conditions of her building and her body. She rarely made work taller than herself, not only to ensure they

could fit in her elevator, but also to have a 1-to-1 relationship with her surfaces. Within these confines, she found that standardizing her process opened the door for endlessly generating new ideas.

Her paintings from the 1970s comprise glistening shapes in earthtones, which sit in stark contrast to exposed raw linen. These unmarked areas act as the paint's foil, with the raised swaths of color appearing suspended and sculptural. *Isfahan* (1973) and *Tutankhamen's Repose* (1976) feature symmetrical arrangements of geometry, and nod towards the iconography she encountered as a child in the Greek Orthodox Church. In later works like *Ravena Eye* (c. 1979-80) and *Byaz* (1980), asymmetrical formations of chevrons, triangles, and rectangles bleed off the picture plane to suggest tilework and cornices part of larger, unseen, architectural structures.

In her "portal paintings" from the 1980s, made after the death of her father, Grigoriadis centered a rectangular headstone at the bottom of each canvas. From this, forms radiate upward into shapes framed by other shapes in saturated black and neon hues. In *Dragon Slayer* (c. 1985), these comprise a terraced precipice, which brings to mind both a sculptural mausoleum and a portal's expansible bounds.

Throughout her oeuvre, Grigoriadis pushed the material qualities of paint to create works that are distinctly her own. In her words, the intention of her textured, impasto application was "*to create an opulent surface where the physical properties of oil paint are explicitly conveyed, particularly its wetness, flow, and skin.*"

Mary Grigoriadis has exhibited in museums in the United States and internationally, including The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; the Brooklyn Museum, NY; the Aldrich Museum, CT; the Queens Museum, NY; the U.S. Embassies in Belgrade, Pretoria, Cape Town and Athens; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki, Greece; the Kresge Art Museum, MI; and The Bronx Museum, NY. In 2019, her paintings were included in the seminal historical survey of P+D artists, *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972-1985* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), Los Angeles and The Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson, NY. Her work is represented in public collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Virginia Museum of Fine Art, VA; Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at MSU, MI; Chase Manhattan Bank Art Collection, NY; Parrish Art Museum, NY; U.S. Embassy Annex in Athens; Vorres Museum, Greece; Derfner Museum, NY; Guild Hall Museum, NY; Smithsonian Museum, Washington, DC; and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC.

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