VAN GRINTEN
DER GALERIE



Ruth Marten

The Moon's Mirror

20.11.2021–30.01.2022

The Moon's Mirror is the fourth Ruth Marten solo exhibition at the Van der Grinten Galerie, and we are thrilled that the New York artist will be coming to Cologne to attend the opening in person'.

The period from the spring of 2020 up through summer of this year was an unnerving and extraordinarily challenging time – certainly a major watershed for us all. In New York City,

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where Ruth Martens lives and works, the situation was extremely dramatic from the start – seeming at times insurmountable. Though contact with friends and associates near and far was maintained by phone and all manner of digital technology, otherwise there was nothing for it but to explore the accumulated strata of one's own space: opening long-closed boxes and books, binders, folders and portfolios, rediscovering and reenergizing everything down to the tiniest piece of paper in the process.

About her experience of this time Ruth Marten writes: *"While living in enforced solitude, I nonetheless felt very connected to my community and the lives we had invented together. The phenomenon of connectivity played out in the drawings and I was surprised to see how the 'devices' reminded me of perpetual motion machines. Also, some pictures are jammed with information while others are quite barren. I love these children equally and try to be sensitive to their hatching."*

The works on paper were created in an ongoing process of alternation, and they form a very diverse group – explosive and microscopic; enigmatic and in-your-face; vulnerable and ferocious; at times somber, but nevertheless pulsating with irrepressible humor.

Thinking back to the Ruth Marten retrospective in 2018-2019 at the Max Ernst Museum in Brühl we recall the astounding' insight it gave into the artist's multifaceted 40-year-plus oeuvre. Now, surrounded by these latest works, we experience them as a progression of the dynamics of Ruth Marten's artistic journey.

In the exhibition *'The Moon's Mirror'* we are again treated to the familiar spectrum of Marten's compelling technique – India ink, aquarelle, gouache, collage, the use of 18th century prints and 19th and early 20th century photographs. So it is all the more exciting to see the broad scope of expression that this single group of works encompasses: some of the pictures display surreal, puzzling-poetic scenarios that offer a wonderful launchpad for flights of fancy. An example: targeted interventions made on old small-format photo portraits gives rise to an inimitable Surrealist portrait gallery à la mode Ruth Marten. Another portion of the work group is on a different quest, striving for the liberation that comes of basting through and obliterating the compositional comfort zone. These are ultra-reduced compositions with sparse ink-drawn or collaged creations that float, almost like foreign bodies, across the empty field of paper. Balance is maintained by sheer dint of artistic instinct. In contrast, other works are laden with layers of paint and other elements,

venturing a bold mosaic-like mixture of the abstract and the figurative that demands careful contemplation.

The work of Ruth Martens is represented in numerous private and institutional collections in Europe and North America.