



Press release:

American Friends of Zeitz MOCAA receives major work donation by Dr. Anita Blanchard and Mr. Martin Nesbitt



Julie Mehretu

Femenine in nine, part 6

2023

Ink and acrylic on canvas

84 x 96 in. (213.4 x 243.8 cm)

By kind donation of Dr. Anita Blanchard and Martin Nesbitt

For immediate release: American Friends of Zeitz MOCAA announces a major donation by philanthropists and art collectors Dr. Anita Blanchard and Mr. Martin Nesbitt. The significant contribution to the Zeitz MOCAA permanent collection is *Femenine in nine, part 6* (2023), a painting by globally acclaimed Ethiopian American artist Julie Mehretu.

Living and working in Chicago, Dr. Blanchard and Mr. Nesbitt have built an incomparable art collection including many artists of the African diaspora and of African descent. Their dedication to empowering Black and diasporic practices continues with their support in acquiring Mehretu's signature artwork for Zeitz MOCAA's permanent collection. Now in its 8th year, the inclusion of this work - within the dialogue defined by Africa's premier contemporary art institution - is especially pertinent.

Dr. Anita Blanchard shares, "For the past 35 years, Marty and I have built an art collection including African and African diaspora artists who self-define in their practice and who build complex understanding and appreciation of Black identity. We are so proud to contribute to a contemporary art museum located in Africa and for Julie Mehretu's work to in many ways return to the continent. It is an incredibly exciting time for Zeitz MOCAA with Koyo Kouoh taking the helm of the 2026 Venice Biennale, and we look forward to supporting her and the museum during this historical time."

Femenine in nine, part 6 is one in a suite of nine canvases within which Mehretu's characteristic marks find themselves adrift in deep chasms of darkness. Depending on the viewer's position, the colors of the paintings appear to shift from one angle emitting a verdant green and from another a shocking, metallic pink. Much like an oil slick, the marks and scrawls possess an iridescent quality that morphs with each incremental change in position.

This past year punctuated Mehretu's career already heralded with multiple international exhibitions and illustrious accolades. The artist debuted her design of the BMW M Hybrid V8 Art Car at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. "Ensemble", the largest European exhibition of her work was shown at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice. *Uprising of the Sun*, an 83 ft. x 25 ft. commissioned work, was recently installed on the north facade of the future Obama Presidential Center's Museum Building in Chicago.

Today, Mehretu's artworks boast the highest sale price for an African-born artist. An early supporter of Zeitz MOCAA, Mehretu is a founding member of the museum's Global Council, advocating for the directorial and curatorial vision of Executive Director and Chief Curator Koyo Kouoh and her team.

With Zeitz MOCAA's major exhibition *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting* travelling from Basel to Brussels, and later to Stockholm, as well as her appointment as the 2026 Venice Biennale curator, Kouoh is internationally omnipresent. Yet her central prerogative is to see Zeitz MOCAA, and the African and African diasporic creative art canon, continue to be deepened and expanded.

Koyo Kouoh explains, "The importance of an African museum originating critical dialogue from and about the continent cannot be underestimated. With groundbreaking contributions such as this major gift by Anita and Martin and the support of thought leaders like Julie, we are rewriting and recontextualizing an art canon of our own."

Facilitated by White Cube Gallery, *Femenine in nine, part 6*, travels to the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia for Julie Mehretu's solo exhibition before finding its home at Zeitz MOCAA in 2025.
