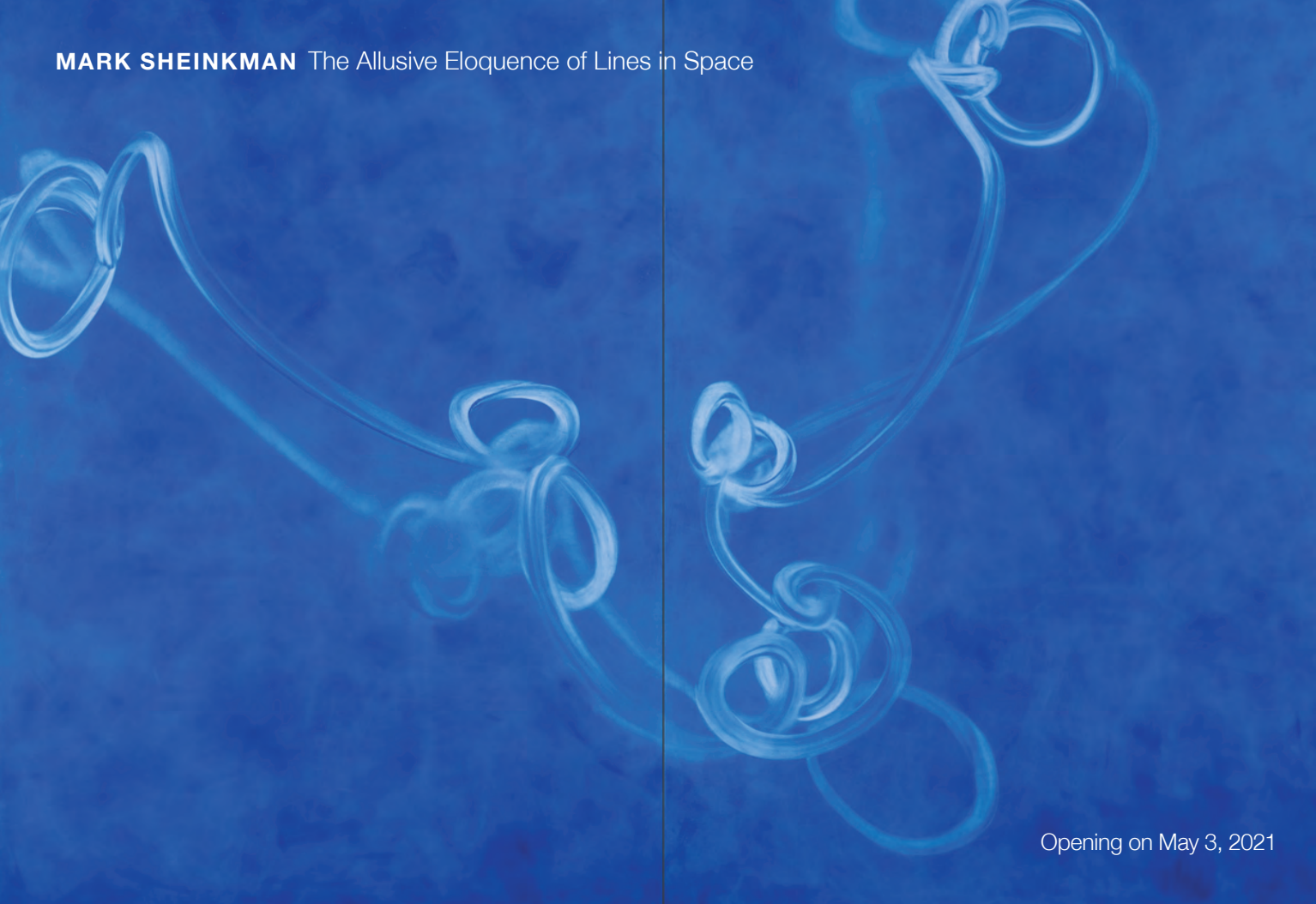


MARK SHEINKMAN The Allusive Eloquence of Lines in Space



Opening on May 3, 2021

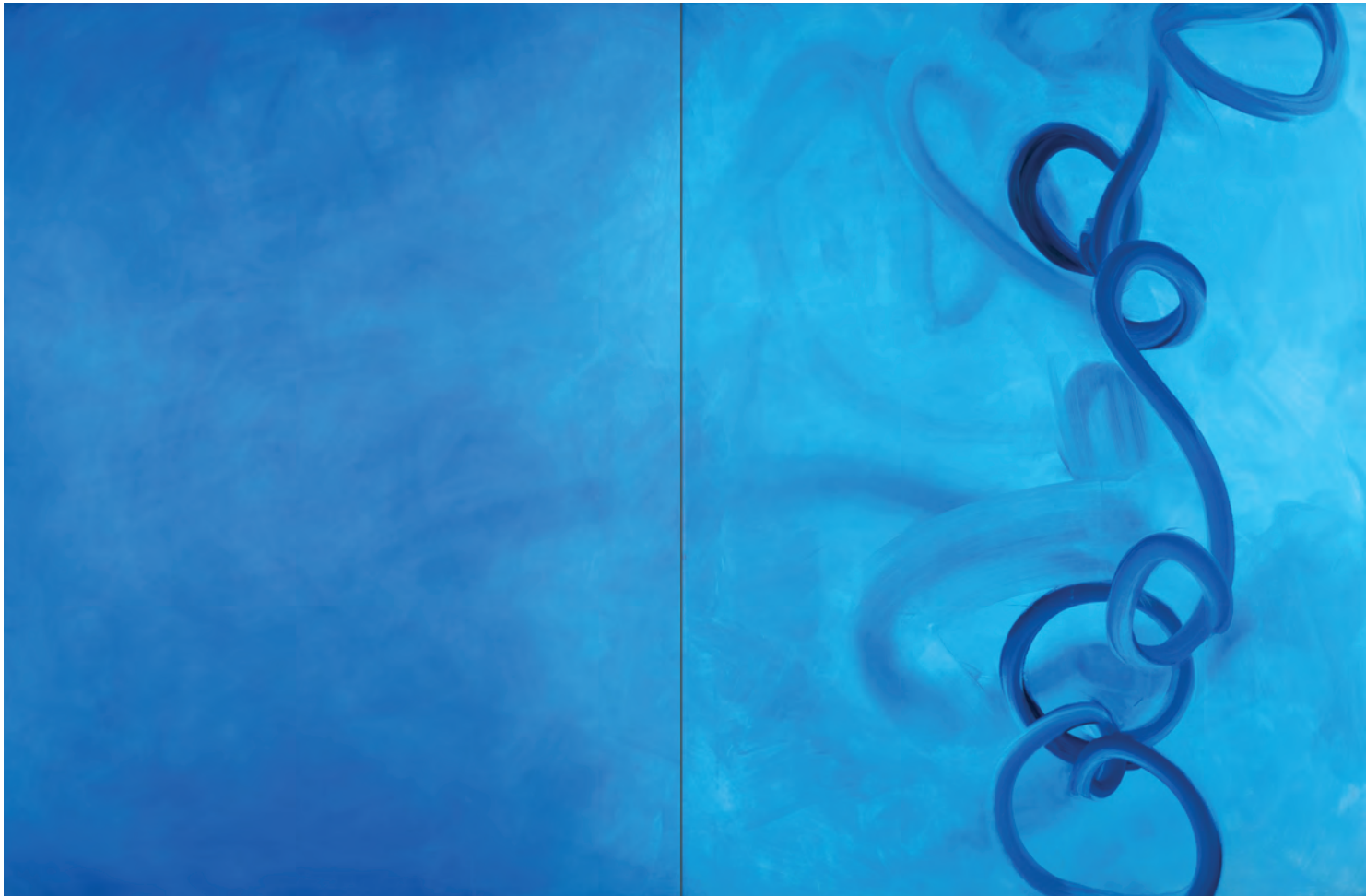
MARK SHEINKMAN

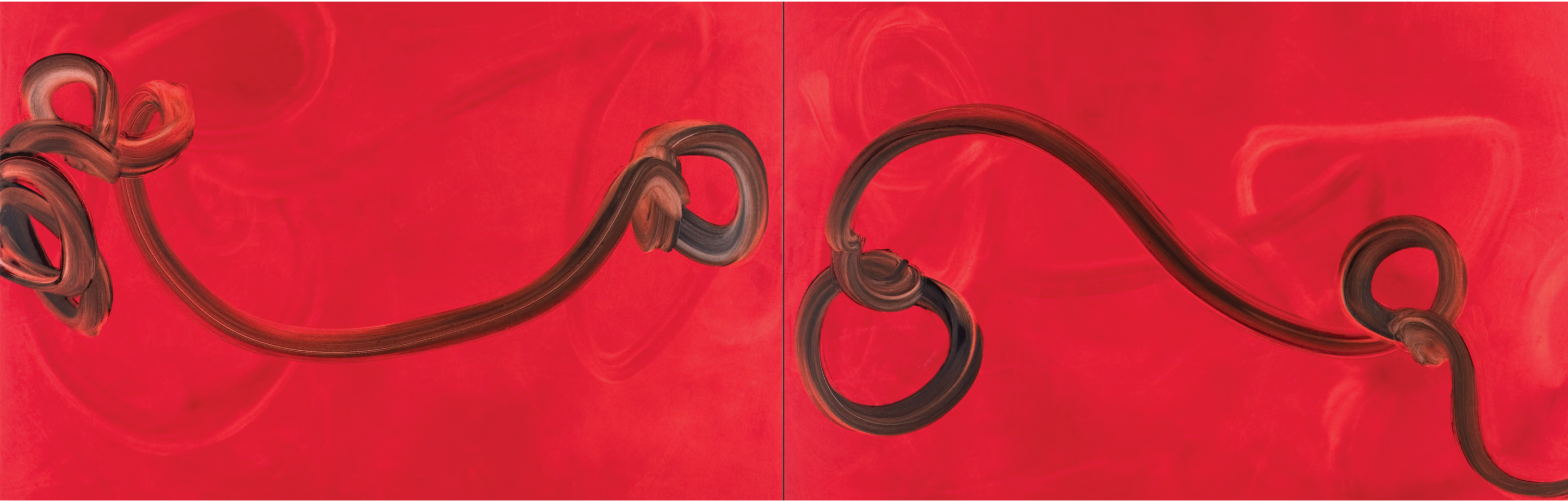
Viewers seeing these latest works by Mark Sheinkman might be struck by the richness of their colors. Yet for most of the past three decades, Sheinkman's paintings were all monochromes: black-and-white studies of linear mark-making, made of oil, alkyd and graphite, growing into lissome forms that seemed to curl in space like wisps of smoke. Then in 2018, in both a gradual culmination and sensory eruption, the works exploded into riotous color, with swirls of brilliant hues arcing over the canvas like the trails of fireworks.

In numerous ways, Sheinkman's work is a study in contrasts: at once dynamic and restrained, declarative and understated, brazenly abstract yet hinting at real-world referents that seem to hover just beyond our conscious ability to label or interpret them.

A native New Yorker, Sheinkman graduated from Princeton. Although he came of age in the 1980s and '90s, his work is rooted in Abstract Expressionism, invoking memories of Cy Twombly's meditative, jittery scrawls; or more contemporaneously, Brice Marden's tenuous, tensile webs. Examining his work often points back to its own process of creation, with portions of the voyage covered over or partially obscured, leaving spectral layers. Thus, each piece suggests a palimpsest – text written over its own, previous iterations. Balancing rigorous control with the performative freedom of improvisation, his paintings embrace an intuitive spontaneity, teetering between precision and playfulness: at times, suggesting the echoing lyricism of a Miles Davis solo, at others, coalescing into rhythmic clusters. But whether sinuous or staccato, looping or lattice-works, they always highlight the delineation of line in space.

Sheinkman's distilled vocabulary calls to mind MoMA curator Kirk Varnedoe's description of post-war abstraction (as explained in his book *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art Since Pollock*) as less an expression of artistic permissiveness than “as a history of denials, of self-imposed rigors and narrowed concentration.” Likewise, Sheinkman's painterly approach derives a giddy liberation from constraint. Eschewing flat or static compositions, his energetic process translates two-dimensional gestures into multi-dimensional pictorial space, so that they simultaneously exist as tactile strokes on the flat surface of the canvas and as almost sculptural elements floating in an indeterminate ether. Although technically non-representational, they appear as documents of motion that has frozen into form. Often, they suggest traces: the airflow in the wake of a bullet, or a sparkler, or a hummingbird, the twisting path of some underwater paramecium, the journey of an eye across an image – the types of phenomena one might find in the pages of a science magazine.





Troy, 2020, (detail), Oil on canvas 108 x 156 inches (total), two panels, 108 x 78 each

SHEINKMAN

For all their concision, Sheinkman's works inspire multiple allusions. Over the years, they have suggested microscopic photographs of minerals, bones, proteins, tendrils, corals, coiling strands of DNA, or, ascending like Charles and Ray Eames' *Powers of Ten*, everything from the darting trails of subatomic particles to maps of astronomical events. They are notable for their elusive scale; encountering them, a viewer might feel they've entered another realm, of physical forces beyond our human gauge. In this aspect, Sheinkman harks back to the idea of abstraction as reducing form to the basic building blocks of existence: not geometry, but something no less essential – the active alchemy of organic form, the dynamic calligraphy of creation.

The works' physical creation is more pedestrian – each day, Sheinkman rides his bicycle from the Upper West Side to his West Harlem studio in an old warehouse on the edge of the Hudson to engage his craft. His latest pieces, all oil on canvas, offer sumptuous color fields that recall the brooding intensity of Rothko. Within them, he unspools layers of coiling strokes which snake across the canvas like knotted life-ropes, or some vast ethereal electric cable. *Empire* is raw and loose, suggesting a meandering bloody path, or a dangerously snarled umbilical cord. In *Troy*, two extended nooses or lassoes hint at missed connections; in *Apollo* (though they may sound grand, the titles all derive from Brooklyn streets) a ghostly looping lariat seems to emerge from the mists to ensnare the viewer. The implied reference to American (or French) iconography aside (hurrah for the red, white and blue!), the choice of colors carries elemental associations: churning oceanic blues, fiery Turner-esque reds, the wispy whites and greys of clouds or smoke .

In all, Sheinkman's canvasses are forays into a disorienting abstract terra incognita, tethered firmly by the artist's hand. Despite their ominous themes, I often find a sense of celebration in his work, a joyful communion with the physical world, with all its secret structures and unseen energy. Through a humble lexicon of line, he has conjured an atmospheric arena in which vital forces are unleashed to flow fluidly together. Enticing the viewer with immersive immediacy, Sheinkman's painting packs a wallop. One can think of his work as channeling the bottled lightning of the gestural impulse – making a case for the continued relevance and potency of mark-making, rejoicing in the allusive-yet-elusive eloquence of lines in space.

GEORGE MELROD



Cover: *Apollo*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 108 x 156 inches (total), two panels, 108 x 78 each

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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We thank the artist, Mark Sheinkman, for the loan of these paintings.

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ESSAY George Melrod

ABOUT GEORGE MELROD

George Melrod has written extensively for publications such as *Art & Antiques*, *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *American Ceramics*, *Sculpture*, *World Art*, *Los Angeles*, *Details*, and *VOGUE*. In 1998, he moved from New York to Los Angeles, where he was the editor of *art ltd.* magazine, which covered contemporary art in California and the Western U.S. Art writing aside, he also writes screenplays, fiction and humor, and is very fond of cats.

ABOUT JAY GRIMM ART ADVISORY

Jay Grimm is an independent arts professional with over 25 years of experience in the New York gallery world.

For more information about this exhibition and program, please contact Jay@jaygrimm.com, (T): 917.690.0035



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