

Artist Resources – Mark Grotjahn (American, b. 1968)

JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART

[Grotjahn at Gagosian Gallery](#)

[Grotjahn at Blum & Poe](#)

[Grotjahn at Mnuchin Gallery](#)

[Grotjahn at The Broad](#)



Grotjahn, c. 2020

One of the [earliest exhibitions](#) of Grotjahn's "butterfly" series was at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2006-2007.

Untitled (Dancing Black Butterflies) was on display at the Portland Art Museum in 2010. [Read an archived interview](#) with the artist about his upbringing in California and [watch a video](#) of that artwork when it was on display at New York's Gagosian Gallery.

In 2012, the [Aspen Art Museum](#) hosted Grotjahn's first comprehensive museum survey exhibition in the United States.

Childhood friend Ward Robinson [interviewed](#) Grotjahn in 2015 for *Animals Magazine*: "A real painter's painter, Mark is obsessed with working, obsessed with painting and the history of painting, obsessed with paint and the physicality of paint."

Though primarily a painter, Grotjahn also produces three-dimensional work. In 2014, the [Nasher Sculpture Center](#) first exhibited a series of the artist's sculptures. [Read an interview](#) with Franklin Sirmas about the artist's approach to sculpture.

A 2016 [interview with Alain Elkann](#) addresses Grotjahn's invitation to exhibit at [Casa Malaparte](#), different themes in the artist's work, and his career in Los Angeles.

[Watch](#) Grotjahn discuss John McLaughlin's (1898-1976) work for LACMA's [Artists on Art](#) series.

Read a [conversation](#) between Grotjahn and fellow artist Alex Israel (b. 1982) for *Garage Magazine*. The two discuss a shared affection for Justin Bieber, Instagram, and information superhighways.

Grotjahn's exhibition, *New Capri, Capri, and Free Capri*, opened at Gagosian Gallery in 2018. In an [interview with Artforum](#) about the exhibition, the artist said: "Seeing the show at Gagosian, I realize there's a lot of experimentation left. It doesn't fully have to be as systematic as I've made it. I see myself going into the fringes of these works. I'll refine and explore. That's where it's more automatic. I like less looking, more doing."

Prices for Grotjahn's work have been soaring for years. A [New York Times article](#) explores why, and what happens when an artist calls the shots. In 2020, Gagosian offered a [48-hour sale](#) of a single artwork, *Untitled (Capri 52.56)*, for \$800,000.

Go on a [virtual studio visit](#) with MOCA Los Angeles director Klaus Biesenbach and read [Purple Magazine's 2020 interview](#) between Bill Powers and Mark Grotjahn.



Grotjahn in his studio, 2020
Photograph: Olivier Zahm



Mark Grotjahn (American, b. 1968)

Untitled (Black Butterfly Pink MPG Orange), 2002

Oil on linen

Collection of Lizzy and Ramtin Naimi; L2025:40.4

Mark Grotjahn is a Los Angeles-based painter who works with geometry and perspective techniques to create optically complex compositions. From 2001 until 2008, the artist was fixated on the theme of butterflies. He employed Renaissance single-point and multi-point perspective techniques to make hundreds of paintings and drawings of butterfly wings in a range of color combinations. **Untitled (Black Butterfly Pink MPG Orange)** is one of the earliest explorations of this theme and a rare example of a two-paneled diptych. The painting was included in Grotjahn's first exhibition in New York and has continued to be featured in survey exhibitions of his wide career.

On view June 4 – September 7, 2025

Mark Grotjahn (American, b. 1968)

Untitled (Broken Down Beautiful Post Impressionist Face 41.71), 2011

Oil on cardboard mounted on linen

Private Collection; L2024:83.1

Mark Grotjahn has been based in Los Angeles since 1996, when he became known for his complex perspectival techniques and meticulous geometric paintings that abstractly referenced open butterfly wings. However, after a skiing accident in 2008, the painter began depicting faces using loose, gestural brushstrokes. **Untitled (Broken Down Beautiful Post Impressionist Face 41.71)** takes inspiration from the Modernist and Post Impressionist painters who were interested in “primitivism,” or the Western idealization of African and Pacific cultures and art. As Grotjahn explains: “I think my masks reference artists who reference primitivism. They’re not directly connected to tribal arts. I think they look more like third-grade art projects.”

On view November 20, 2024 – March 9, 2025





Mark Grotjahn (American, b. 1968)

Untitled (Colored Butterfly White Background 8 Wings 530), 2004

Colored pencil on paper

Anonymous; L2023:141.1

Mark Grotjahn is a Los Angeles-based painter interested in geometry and perspective. In 2001, the artist began his *Butterfly* series, which uses Renaissance single- and multi-point perspective techniques to create optically complex compositions. **Untitled (Colored Butterfly White Background 8 Wings 530)** is a *Butterfly* work that utilizes randomly selected pencil colors to enhance the perspective illusions. It was created for the artist's first solo museum exhibition, held at UCLA's Hammer Museum in 2005. Grotjahn abandoned the technique in 2008, when a skiing accident broke his shoulder and he was unable to continue the tedious series.

On view January 31 – May 5, 2024

Mark Grotjahn (American, b. 1968)

Untitled (Colored Butterfly White Background 6 Wings), 2004

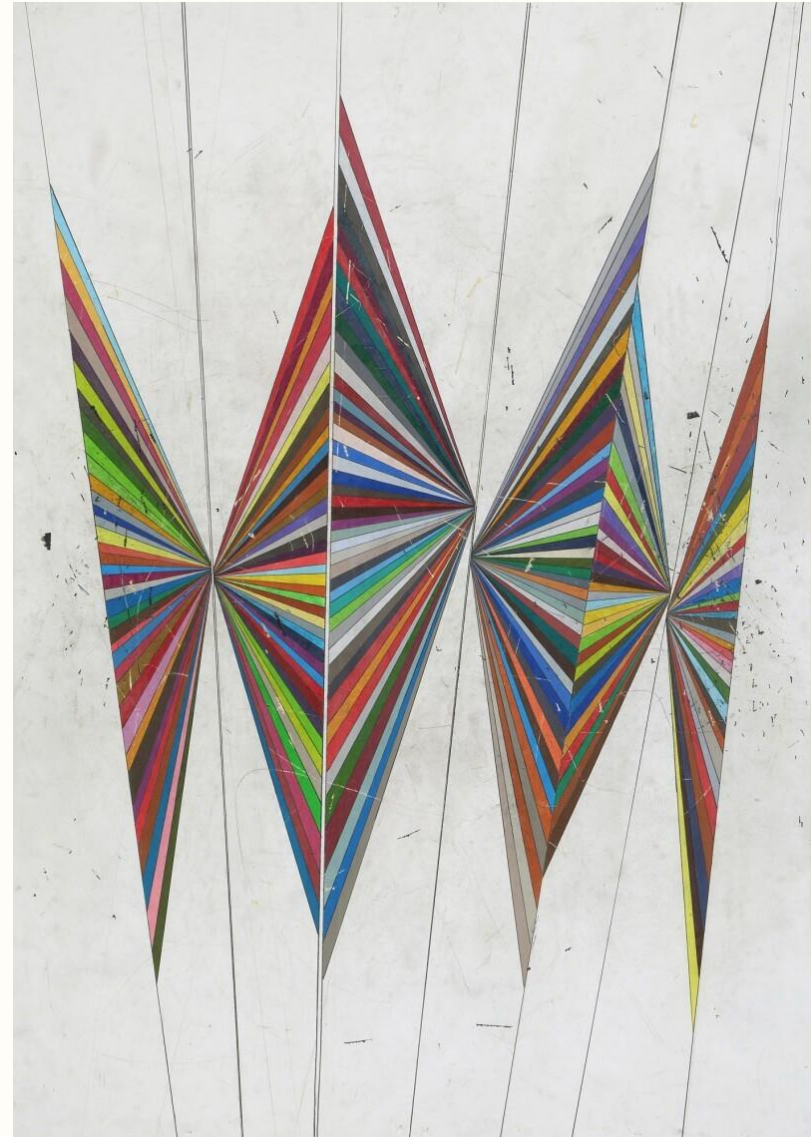
Colored pencil on paper

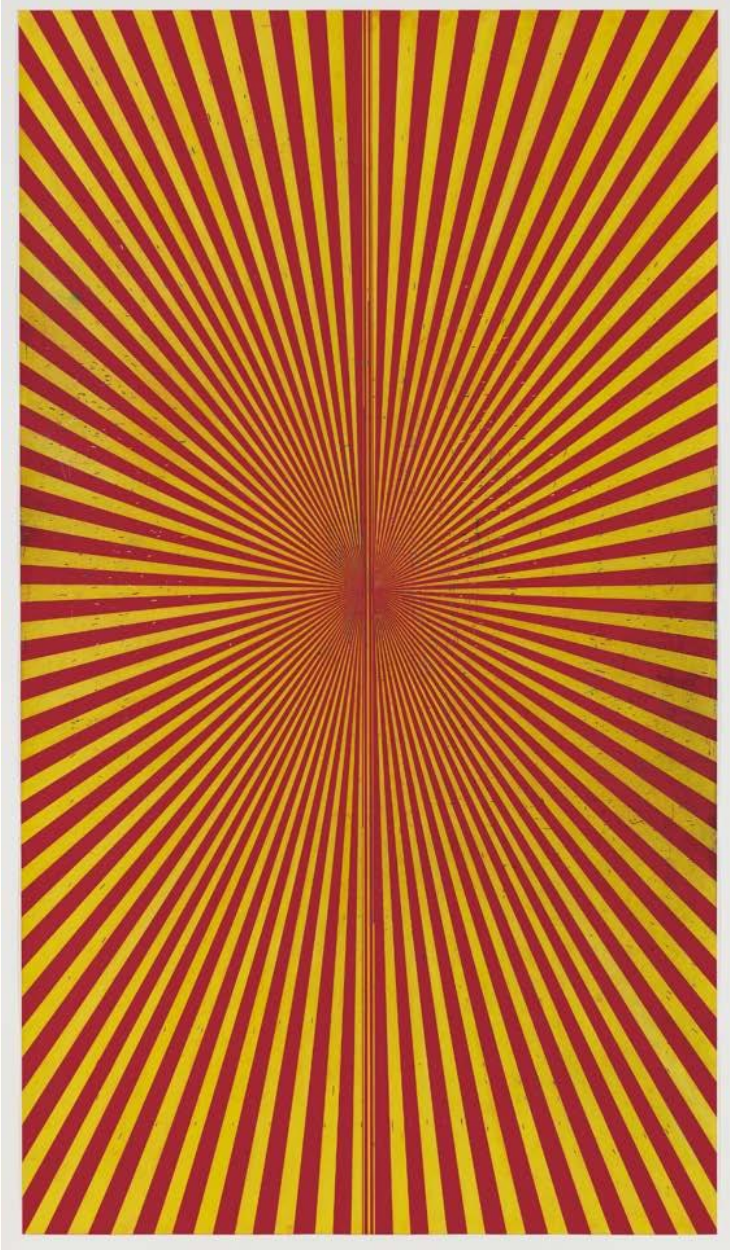
Private Collection; L2022:135.1

Los Angeles-based painter Mark Grotjahn has an ongoing fascination with geometry and perspective. In 2001, the artist began his *Butterfly* series investigating Renaissance single- and multi-point perspective techniques to create optically complex compositions.

Untitled (Colored Butterfly White Background 6 Wings) is an early example from this series. For this drawing, Grotjahn began with the butterfly outline before setting aside enough colored pencils to cover each section and randomly choosing from those to fill in the design. **Untitled (Crimson Red and Canary Yellow Butterfly 45.93)** departs from this systematic approach, as the artist limited himself to only two colors. The artist once said: "Because I have an active and obsessive eye, I'm interested in finding as much contentment as I possibly can. In my work I create problems and then solve them in order to feel peace."

On view March 29 – July 2, 2023





Mark Grotjahn (American, b. 1968)

Untitled (Crimson Red and Canary Yellow Butterfly 45.93), 2004

Colored pencil on paper

Private Collection; L2022:135.2

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On view March 29 – July 2, 2023

Mark Grotjahn (American, b. 1968)

Untitled (Free Capri 50.24), 2018

Oil on cardboard mounted on linen

Private Collection, San Francisco; L2021:119.2

Los Angeles-based artist Mark Grotjahn's early work referenced LA storefront signs and butterfly patterns, often using complex Renaissance techniques of perspective. After a skiing accident in 2008, he turned to the looser, gestural brushstrokes seen in this abstract painting and others by the artist. The "Capri" series began in 2016, when Grotjahn was invited to exhibit at a 1930s home designed by the controversial writer Curzio Malaparte (1898-1957) on the isle of Capri, Italy. The scraped paint of **Untitled (Free Capri 50.24)** evokes the trees and plants that grow on the island's rocky cliffside. When asked about Casa Malaparte the artist responded: "To me the house is very interesting, because it's rigid, handmade and severe. Just look at the location."



Sebastiano Pellion di Persano, *Casa Malaparte*, 2019.
Detail of photograph

On view August 25 – November 28, 2021

