



[Ackermann at Hauser & Wirth](#)

“Now what is interesting me is the figure, figurative elements. Repeating them into a sort of automatism, where abstraction arrives and it kind of frees the structure, the composition of the painting, and also frees me into dimensions. I can stop thinking of this foreground-background and I can operate more on the push and pull in the painting, that kind of dimension building structure when you let the painting have a conversation with you. It’s a losing control and gaining control back method,” Ackermann [explained in a 2010 video interview](#) in conjunction with her show [Crash/Stop](#) at Rebecca Camhi Gallery in Athens, Greece.

[Ludwig Múzeum’s](#) 2011 survey – the first in her native Budapest – was titled after Ackermann’s family name, *Bakos*, and focused on her most recent three years of work and her interventions with film beginning in the 1990s. [Interview Magazine](#) spoke with Ackermann on the occasion of the exhibition about creating an artistic persona, growing up in Communist Eastern Europe, and the freedom of creativity in New York.

The Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami’s [2012 survey of Ackermann’s career](#) traced the development of her style and process through periods of painting, drawing, and collage over twenty years as she integrated the influences of her eastern European background and New York life.

Hauser & Wirth showcased a new suit of Ackermann’s [Chalkboard Paintings](#) in 2015, in which a canvas is primed with chalkboard paint and taken through cycles of drawing and erasure. As she described, the purpose of the process and the finished work is “to facilitate an intuitive emotional intelligence that is not founded solely on intellect. Standing as a monument for movement as opposed to any narrative story or lecture, the works are content to be unseen by means of erasure and negation.”

Ackermann spoke with friend and fellow artist Josh Smith in an honest conversation about working processes and the burden of creativity for [BOMB Magazine](#) in 2017, in conjunction with Ackermann’s [2017 exhibition of new work at Hauser & Wirth](#). “Almost all my paintings are about movement—forms or figures moving in and out of dimensions of depth within a rectangle. They are like a wild dancer. Lines can become the traces of movements...the physical effort of [making] is recorded,” Ackermann told Smith. “Painting for me is physical work. There are patterns of movements that I’m not aware of while I’m working, but I can see them clearly later when I step back to look at what I’ve done.”

“There have absolutely been times when I’ve tried desperately to communicate how I make my work — but more and more, I’ve been realizing how impossible it is for me to explain or describe what I do when I paint: because when something good starts happening, I just lose myself,” Ackermann reflected in [a 2019 interview about her life in New York](#). “There is really no explanation for that kind of activity. Most of the time, I just sit in the studio, and I wait for that moment; and I do find that sitting quietly tends to give a painting the space to speak.”



Ackermann in New York Studio, 2019.
Photograph: Oresti Tsonopoulos



Rita Ackermann (Hungarian, b. 1968)
Mama, Gravity and Grace, 2020
Oil, acrylic, and China Marker on canvas

Peterson Family Collection; L2020:101.1

Born in Budapest, Rita Ackermann has lived and worked in New York since the early 1990s, when she quickly made a name for herself in the indie arts scene designing wall art and window displays, and collaborating with fashion designers. Her ever-expanding multi-media practice includes painting, drawing, photography, and collage that explores the intersections of figuration and calligraphic abstraction, the sacred and the erotic, intentional and automatic gesture.

Mama, Gravity and Grace comes from Ackermann's *Mama* paintings, begun in 2019 and dedicated to the daily ritual of talking with her mother. A textured surface results from working thin layers of paint with a paintbrush, palette knife, and bare hands, adding and subtracting elements by impulse. Ackermann explains the visual and conceptual oscillation remarked on by the title, as a "mobility of polarism, a push and pull" in which fragility balances violence, male opposes female, and darkness wavers against light. "Each painting has the line as its core. There is no story line one can follow. It is the line of life which runs through it," she explained about the series in 2020. "Erased, blurred boundaries, no limits...What I hope for my paintings is that they think themselves into existence."

On view November 23, 2020 – February 28, 2021

Extra Resources

[Ackermann's *Mama* paintings at Hauser & Wirth 2020](#)