

FEATURES

Queer Artists in Their Own Words: Julie Mehretu Won't Spill the Tea or Throw the Shade

Zachary Small June 30, 2019

The month of June is a time to celebrate the LGBTQ community and reflect on the advances of queer people to strengthen civil liberties around the world, even in a moment of great political uncertainty. It's also a good opportunity to spotlight the richness and diversity of culture we have within the community. Hyperallergic is commemorating Pride Month by featuring one contemporary queer artist per day on the website and letting them speak for themselves. [Click here to participate.](#)



Julie Mehretu in Rome at the Piazza Pasquino (image courtesy the artist)

Julie Mehretu

Age: 48

Location: New York, currently in Rome

Artistic Medium: Painter

Who are you and what do you do?

I am an artist, mother, student, and lover.

What are the top three greatest influences on your work?

Music, revolution, and failure.

Describe your coffee order.

A flat-white to go, please.

What is your greatest accomplishment?

A life of creativity and raising my children as freely as possible.

What constitutes a perfect day?

Sunshine and an amazing new song in my head.

What was your favorite exhibition from last year?

Frank Bowling: Mappa Mundi curated by Okwui Enwezor at Haus der Kunst.

What would your superpower be if you had one?

A terrific sense of humor.

Tell us a lie about yourself.

I have no guilt.

What is one question you wish somebody would ask about your work?

How did you make that in a day?

What is the greatest threat to humanity?

Hubris, generally. Fear of sex, women, and freedom.

What did you make when you first started making art?

At six, I made and decorated paper ties that I wore each day.

Do you prefer spilling the tea or throwing shade?

Bad at both (#queerfail).

What is your all-time favorite work of art?

“The Triumph of Death” (c. 1446) by an unknown painter at the Palazzo Abatellis in Palermo. It’s tied with Caravaggio’s paintings of Saint Matthew in the Contarelli Chapel of the church San Luigi dei Francesi.

What are your plans for pride month?

Rome.

What is the future of queerness?

Continuous creative invention.

Back in my day...

Summers were endless and filled with daydreaming.

Name one guilty pleasure.

Fuck guilt.

Greatest queer icon of the internet: Babadook, Momo, or a pervading sense of existential angst?

A pervading sense of existential angst.

Is there enough support for queer artists where you live?

There’s never enough support, so we made our own.

How do you stay cool during the summer?

Always leave New York City.

What is your favorite type of milk?

Milk??