

Melissa Meyer

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by James Panero

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With “Melissa Meyer: New Paintings and Watercolors,” the gallery Lennon, Weinberg continues its streak of exhibiting abstraction that knocks your socks off. Like Stephen Westfall, whose exhibition recently closed at the gallery, Meyer works with patterns and variations of color. Her paintings and watercolors begin with a rough grid of pastel shades. On top of this structure, she builds out the rest of her designs, usually through repeating and changing shapes of darker colors.

What sets Meyer apart is her paint handling. Inspired by dance, her work can be a tour de force. After setting a scene, her hand reenters like a performer jumping across a stage, tumbling and waving the brush before coming back down in the other direction. The success or failure of the paintings depends on the execution of this performance. Some of her paintings, like *Walk the Line* (2011), are too loose and frazzled. Others, like *Belvedere (BK Bridal)* (2010), become overworked through too much packed activity. More often than that, however, her shapes settle into the repeating rhythm of the pastel grids. The watercolors in this exhibition—both called *The Countess Olenska*—have about as silky a surface as one could want, but the decorative designs are too nice to come at us as works of art. Their flatness is much better suited to the book project Meyer composed in watercolor, now on view at a nearby gallery, BravinLee Programs.

Dassin (2011), the largest work at Lennon, Weinberg and located on the gallery’s skylighted back wall, makes all the right overtures. Here Meyer lets loose of her grid. Her brush strokes venture not just side to side but out to us and back into space, both forward and behind her pastel framework. *Walkabout* (2011), the best work in the show, delivers on its promise. With cool swagger, it pops off the grid and does its own thing—a walker in the city enjoying life on its own terms.