

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

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Melissa Meyer

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HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Conversations Can Be a Way of Moving Forward: Melissa Meyer's Category-Resistant Abstractions

by John Yau on April 17, 2016



Draw the Line, 2015, 72 x 96", oil on canvas

that it doesn't drip, which is one reason she works on the floor. The grounds of the paintings, especially the larger ones, are made up of a patchwork of warm and cool whites. In one painting, "Draw the Line" (2015), which is done in warm and cool blacks, I counted at least three different whites in the ground. This kind of scrutiny is part of the way Meyer wants viewers to experience her work; she wants them to take it in from varying distances without privileging one over another.

Except for the watercolor, "Raycie Series III" (2014), which is vertical in format, Meyer's paintings tend to be either on a not-quite-square canvas or a diptych. Nine of the eleven paintings in the exhibition are diptychs consisting of two equally-sized canvases abutted together. Compositionally, Meyer draws discrete, often zigzagging linear structures onto the surface's subtly shifting white ground. If there were some abstract artists of Meyer's generation who wanted to get rid of the brushstroke and to make paintings that revealed themselves at a certain distance, rather than invite further scrutiny, there was another group who took a different path. I am thinking of David Reed (born 1946) and Meyer (born in 1947). Both Reed — who has a show coming up at Peter Blum later this month — and Meyer decided that they had to figure out how to go forward, how to make work that wasn't nostalgic, without jettisoning the brushstroke, as many of their contemporaries did.

Since 2001, Melissa Meyer has continued to reinvent herself without severing her connections to Abstract Expressionism or, more particularly, the brushstroke and drawing in paint. One of the central features of this transformation is watercolor, which she started using at beginning of this century. This inspired her to thin the oil paint — which, in her work of the 1990s, had been thick and greasy — to the viscosity of ink or watercolor. Her exhibition current *Melissa Meyer: New Work* at Lennon, Weinberg (March 31–May 7, 2016) is the fourth at this gallery since 2009, and it is her best yet.

Meyer paints on the floor. She uses long-handled brushes and, in her larger canvases, she works on all sides of the painting. Although the paint has been thinned, she prefers



Raycie Series III, 2014, 38 x 25", watercolor on paper



Entangled, 2016, 24 x 72", diptych, oil on canvas

categories that didn't hold. I found that the distinctly colored calligraphic shapes vary just enough in size to be noticeable. Some of the brushstrokes move through space like sensual, grooved ribbons, while others underscore the painting's two-dimensional surface. The ground can become a plane bending in space, its edges defined by four loosely applied brushstrokes. The painting becomes a record of change and difference that both adds up and doesn't add up. This is what I find so engaging about Meyer's work, that you cannot put it into a particular perceptual category: it resists simplification.

The skeletal calligraphic structures are not arranged in any discernible order, either by size or color. There is a rhythmic dissonance to the paintings that held my attention, made me conscious of equating looking with examining. What is it about these two shapes placed side by side, like an incongruous couple? Why did the artist draw one shape over another, in a different color? Conversations of all sorts happen throughout the painting. As I focus on different relationships, areas, and configurations, I become aware of the variety of ways that Meyer's shapes reinforce the physical edges and corners by their placement, size, and direction of their outer lines.

The other thing that becomes apparent is that the artist cannot go back. There is no rubbing out and starting over again: each structure is defined in its making. Nothing is fussed over. And yet, instead of codifying what she does, Meyer keeps finding ways to resist the desire to adopt a unifying order. This is what makes the paintings so compelling. In "Draw the Line" (2015), Meyer restricts herself to warm and cool blacks and grays. No brushstroke seems to possess exactly the same viscosity as any of the adjacent brushstrokes. Some lines are thicker than the ones beside it. Within the constraint of a limited palette, there is the possibility of myriad distinctions and differences, and Meyer takes advantage of them.



Vivace, 2015, 80 x 78", oil on canvas



Double Feature, 2015, 16 x 32", diptych, oil on canvas

In an art world that has for many years celebrated copies and lookalikes, and where abstraction has long been another tool in the box, Meyer has taken a different, less rewarded path. She has not looked back or aligned herself with certain key figures, as male artists who still believe in the heroic are more than likely to do. And like a number of veteran painters — and here I am thinking of Suzan Frecon, Katherine Bradford, Gary Stephan, and Stanley Whitney — she came into her own during this century. The awareness of how much she had to work through in order to reach her own territory never deterred

Meyer, and that belief ought to be valued much more than it is in a country that prefers knock-offs or expensively produced trifles for those looking to park their assets.

[Melissa Meyer: New Work](#) continues at Lennon, Weinberg, Inc. (514 West 25th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan) through May 7.

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Melissa Meyer

Butler, Sharon. "Newness: Melissa Meyer at Lennon, Weinberg" Two Coats of Paint, April 10 2016.

<http://www.twocoatsofpaint.com/2016/04/newness-melissa-meyer-at-lennon-weinberg.html>

SHARON BUTLER TWO COATS OF PAINT

Newness: Melissa Meyer at Lennon, Weinberg



Twosome Too, 2016, 40 x 60", diptych oil on canvas

When artists experiment with a new medium or process, audaciously moving from one that they've fully mastered to less familiar territory, new ideas often emerge that inform their work in unexpected ways. So it is with Melissa Meyer's compelling new paintings at Lennon, Weinberg.

In 2014, the [State Department's Art in Embassies program](#) invited Meyer to create a large outdoor mural for the entrance to the new [American Embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan](#). For this ceramic-tile project, Meyer, who customarily works in watercolor and oils, began using digital media. The result was a series of images in which color and composition behaved differently – in particular, they incorporated layered contrasts – and the experience of working digitally seems to have influenced Meyer's

painting practice.

In earlier work, Meyer hewed to a loose grid formation in which the symbols, at once spontaneous and deliberate, floated on the surface. But in the most intriguing of the new paintings, such as *Entangled* and *Twosome, Too*, she has layered the symbols. Her signature marks, rendered in lively colors, are overwritten with even looser marks in thin washes of blue-black paint. In other paintings, like *Twain*, the marks are drier, and less fluid and looping than in previous work--aesthetic decisions that give the brushstrokes a new urgency.

My favorite piece in this absorbing show is a small diptych called *Double Nature*. Meyer started by painting a basecoat of a faintly greenish off-white, and then added the familiar yellow, green, maroon, black, and blue-grey symbols on top. The off-white underpainting tempers an exuberant palette, establishing a complex and satisfying equilibrium. The symbols themselves seem less tidy than those in earlier work, with one thin, dark, elongated zigzag mark on the left panel drawing my attention. It resembles the type of angular mark that might be made on a computer in Illustrator with the pen tool. Embracing digital tools to make drawings for the Art in Embassies project has clearly spilled over into Meyer's painting, prompting adventurous experimentation.



Double Nature, 2015, 16 x 20", diptych, oil on canvas

"[Melissa Meyer: New Work](#)," Lennon, Weinberg, Chelsea, New York, NY. Through May 7, 2016.

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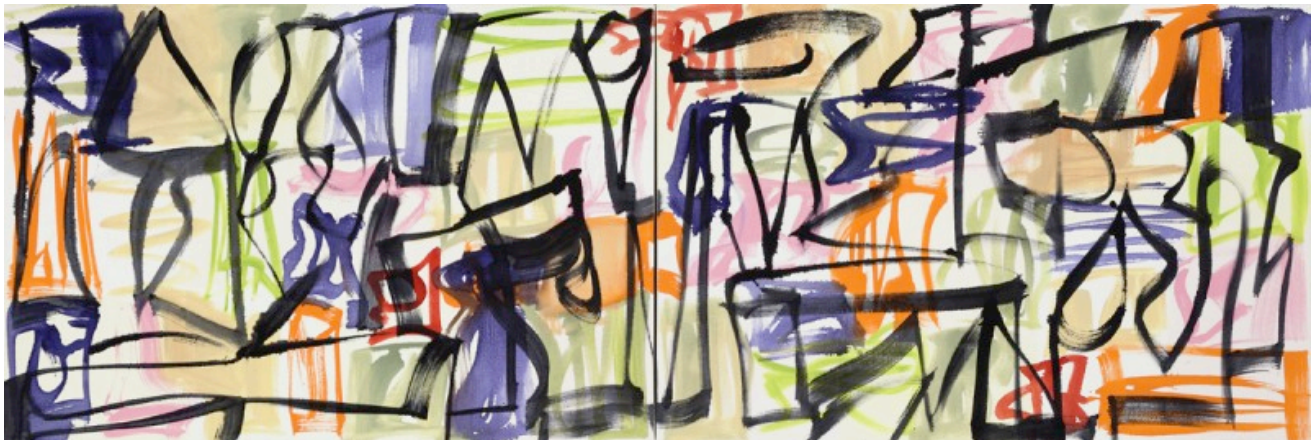
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Melissa Meyer

Rhodes, David. "Artcritical Pick: Melissa Meyer at Lennon, Weinberg," April 29, 2016.

artcritical
the online magazine of art and ideas

ARTCRITICAL PICK: Melissa Meyer at Lennon, Weinberg



With Melissa Meyer, drawing and painting play an equal role in generating her linear element – and she cannot be accused of forsaking either in not separating them. An arabesque can remain just that or it can thicken and double to become a shape. Other times areas of color are drawn over or partially cancelled out, the choice constantly varying. When it comes to her consideration of composition, spontaneity would appear to win out over structure because the hand is ahead of thought. But there is no attendant loss of control as experience clearly informs the hand as much as it does thought. A painting always happens over a period of time: it is a time-based medium after all, a fact of which Meyer's approach makes a virtue by repeatedly elapsing one painterly moment or relationship into the next, simultaneously exposing the process and allowing it to run backwards and forwards for the viewer. There is always discovery in Meyer's paintings, even when there are clear horizons to head towards. DAVID RHODES (2014)

on view through May 7, 514 West 25th Street, between 10th and 11th avenues, New York City, (212) 941-0012

Melissa Meyer, Entangled, 2016. Oil on canvas, diptych, 24 x 72 inches. Courtesy of Lennon, Weinberg, Inc.