

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

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Jill Moser

Wilkin, Karen. "At the Galleries." *The Hudson Review*, Spring 2008.

I'M TOO CYNICAL TO THINK THAT THE CURRENT WAVE OF ENTHUSIASM for trendy work made by the young and unformed is going to subside anytime soon, but it's worth noting that the fall-winter season in New York was distinguished by a remarkable number of serious, ambitious painting shows by artists who've been around long enough not only to have distinguished histories, but also to know what they're doing. There was no lack of more predictable exhibitions, but the amount of thoughtful, mature painting on view was positively heartening—not, I hasten to add, only because it was *painting*, not only because it was made by adults, but also because it seemed to indicate renewed confidence on the part of artists and dealers in the ability of works of art to communicate wordlessly, through the specificity of their materials and the way those materials are manipulated. It's always reassuring to be confronted by hard evidence that painting isn't dead, despite the value placed on "alternative media" and "contemporary materials." I should point out, however, that one of the most provocative exhibitions of the past season was a multi-media effort that included both sculpture and two-dimensional work, by a young Indian artist. (More about that later.)

Marjorie Minkin, Ronnie Landfield, Johnnie Winona Ross, and Jill Moser's exhibitions at Jason Rulnick, Heidi Cho, Stephen Haller, and Lennon, Weinberg galleries, respectively, provided compelling proof that abstract painting is still a flourishing genre.

Moser's exhibition of recent paintings at Lennon, Weinberg was testimony to both her single-mindedness and her ability to invent. The pictures were populated by energetic, looping scrawls of line, now tightly wound and pushed into a corner, now more relaxed and expanding across the entire field; now lean and spare, now dense and seductive. Moser's tangles become animated protagonists in silent narratives. Each configuration suggests a different personality, a different mood, a different emotional temperature, at the same time that it declares the presence of a very specific individual through the evidence of her distinctive touch and handwriting. Some of Moser's loops and whorls are deeply serious characters; some are elegant, some explosive, and some, a little histrionic.

A first impression is that the images are so pared down—the series at Lennon, Weinberg was limited to smoky indigo lines on off-white grounds—that they might properly be described as drawings, but longer acquaintance makes it plain that these lean works are as richly and subtly inflected as any more "traditional" painting. Moser incorporates her pentimenti into her finished images, as Matisse often does in his charcoal drawings—which she admires—and cumulatively, these traces of readjustments create a delicately inflected field. This evidence of thought-processes sets up a dynamic relationship with the final generation of lines, slowing down their speed, trapping them at the same time that it provides a sympathetic setting; variations in the density of the lines themselves add to the complexity. In the recent past, Moser often grouped her images in pairs or quartets, so that her lively knots played against each other, as well as against the clean boundaries of the support. At Lennon, Weinberg, each individual painting stood alone, more self-sufficient than ever. Each image demanded that we become involved in the particularities of Moser's fluent, exuberant gestures, even as we succumbed to the spell of her arcane storytelling.



Jill Moser. *Circus Acts*, 2007. Oil on canvas, 32 × 48".

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Hirsch, Faye "Jill Moser at Lennon, Weinberg." *Art in America*, April, 2008.

Art in America

April 2008

Jill Moser at Lennon, Weinberg

In her first exhibition at this Chelsea gallery, Jill Moser included two dozen oil paintings (2006 or '07) and two etchings (2006), abstractions all, showing her signature looping, calligraphic, indigo-blue forms suspended in whitish grounds. Emanating from cores of a denser blue, the forms—something like loosened knots—are smudged along their edges, making them appear as if they are coming in and out of focus, or as if they are in constant motion—a blur. Blue halations, ever so faint, invade the surrounding whiteness like barely perceptible puffs of exhaust. These effects serve to transform background into atmosphere and physical support into ambient illumination; the imagery is buoyed, so that in this installation of so many works, the impression was one of extreme lightness.

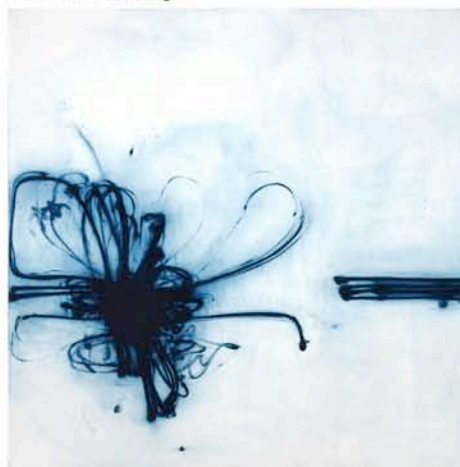
Yet the paintings are far from purely evanescent, forced into physicality by the confident gestures that made them, their blue forms quite various in shape and subtle in impact. However abstract, some suggest narratives in their internal transformations and, in the case where more than one form is present, their interactions. *Tryst*, for example, stages a face-off between a bar that slides in from the right like a gun barrel and, at the left, a shape that looks as if it's exploding. Seconding this bellicose theme, the form in *Swoon* somewhat resembles an automatic rifle—but clownishly, with balloonlike, roping lines descending from its "cartridge" and "barrel," and lofting it into weightless dysfunction.

As elegant as the paintings appear at first sight, after a time their activity begins to feel almost cartoonish, like late Guston drawings, but with his blocky blacks reconceived as ropy blues. Especially fine is *Circus Acts*, which—perhaps because of the loops, seemingly whipped into motion, and the taut, leashlike line rising diagonally from the lower right corner—reminded me of Giacomo Balla's famous wagging dachshund. Similarly joyous was the largest painting in the show, *It's Always Charlie Parker's Birthday* (47 by 69 inches), with its two insectlike forms vibrating away, airborne. More serene is *Liner Notes*, the title perhaps a pun, since the image is like a seascape, with what looks like a distant ship viewed through a tangle of dockside ropes.

The exhibition would have been stronger had fewer paintings been included—half of them were 30 inches square, and a certain repetitiousness resulted. These are works that yield their pleasures from long, slow scrutiny, and there need not be too many of them to convey the artist's skill in making protean a limited vocabulary.

—Faye Hirsch

Jill Moser: *Tryst*, 2007, oil on canvas, 30 inches square; at Lennon, Weinberg.



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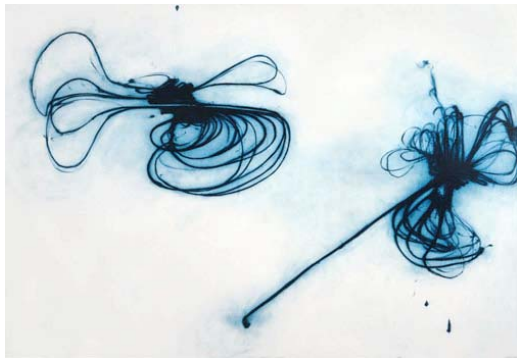
DAVID COHEN, Editor

STUDIO VISIT
November 2007

artcritical.com

BLUE IS THE COLOR OF INFINITY: A STUDIO VISIT WITH JILL MOSER

By LARA TAUBMAN



Jill Moser *It's Always Charlie Parker's Birthday* 2007
oil on canvas, 47 x 69 inches
Courtesy Lennon, Weinberg, Inc.

Deep blue lines and dense squiggles run my eye rapidly around the walls of Jill Moser's downtown New York studio. Thirteen paintings and two copperplate etchings present a disciplined palette of dark blue, highly energized lines emanating from within a glowing, white background. On the eve of her one person show in November at the Lennon Weinberg Gallery, Jill holds high expectations for this new body of work. With strong ideas about medium, concept and method this group of paintings and prints shows her to be an artist whose spartan palette is a loaded tension bank of history, visual and conceptual language as well as a fearlessness of beauty and object making.

Anxious to show space and line that expresses the complex gray areas within polarities, Moser sees her work as a place to discover the depths inherent to opposing ideas, images and visual formalities. The key to her thought process is that nothing is fixed. Her paintings, from her choice of medium to her conceptual and metaphorical dialogues, are based outside of pre-determined spaces. These deceptively simple paintings are not commanded by attachments to a medium or an idea. She rigorously protects her ideas and images by keeping these defining factors open ended and always ready to change.

Moser's downtown studio is a simple one room space with dark wood floors. A copy of Michael Ondaatje's conversations with Walter Murch about film sit on the small table among exhibit catalogues and announcements. A mobile palette table sits in the center of the room covered in cans and paint tubes arranged to mix the color of her signature blue lines, a combination of earth and plastic colors that she describes as "...straddling the nature/culture divide." A pile of blotted newsprint press proofs spill out from the corner of the room. Small, intense copper plate etchings and monotypes line the walls next to a

photographic series of light bulbs delicately wrapped in baling wire she made several years ago – visual clues to the lines and shapes found in her recent works.

As a student, Moser studied cultural anthropology and was particularly inspired by seventies avant garde filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage, Michael Snow as well as Chantal Ackerman. Initially wanting to follow in their footsteps as a non-narrative filmmaker, she was put off by the technical demands of the film medium. She was, instead, attracted to the direct experience of drawing and the sensuality of its materials. She feels that this latest body of work is closest to her very first art works of wall markings on Mylar paper. “Frosted Mylar has no fixed ground,” she says, but still produces a surface for mark making upon which its foundation is neither illusion nor background. She initiates a process that is concerned with “how an image emerges from a material.” The white background in her works is conspicuously anonymous, it is neither a background nor an aperture for the blue lines. In this way the background and foreground become a non-issue making a crucial departure from the obsessive Formalist principles of Abstract Expressionism that emphasize “push-pull” space. Moser’s distinct regard of the foreground and the background as a non-issue defuses the Formalist principle. It serves the work as it serves Moser but keeps her independent from having alliances with any one school of thinking or art.

Jill’s meticulously developed approach to medium forges a clear pathway between the most immaterial aspects of her palette to the consequences of how her body relates to the canvas and the results of the final marks made. A consistent scenario of small disciplines enshroud her process to create a final work that seems tightly bound between the static and the dynamic. The limited palette of blue is a variable combination that interweaves earth colors with plastic ones – not quite phthalo blue, not quite prussian blue, not quite black and not quite brown. “Blue goes deeper than any color, more than black. Blue is usually never associated with local color attributable to forms but is a color associated with things in flux like water and sky,” says Moser. The endless options of infinity is the range of flexibility that she seeks in her paintings for the life of the painting itself and for the viewer.

Keeping true to this ethic Moser applies the paint to a multiply layered ground, a “translucent” surface that creates a flexible environment of independence. It is as if she wants the painting to show her where marks need to be applied. Using extra long brushes to apply the initial lines, “Long brushes force you to use the whole body when making a line, the outcome is less predictable and more improvisational.”

Though sparse, these paintings do not emanate a clean surface themselves. The blue-black lines float amidst a hazy residue that is integral to the construction of the final work, changes made without pristinely drafted conclusions. Her paintings reveal the edges of her decisions, actions and thoughts while creating.

The traces of her presence left behind in the surface have a touch of the anthropological to them, much in the way that ancient cave walls show the hand of the artist unapologetically either in mark making or through intent. It is perhaps the only sentiment to which Moser hearkens, a continual search for the meaning of the object and how it relates to and identifies with the world around it.

Jill Moser: New Paintings continues at Lennon, Weinberg through December 8. 514 West 25 Street, between 10th and 11th Avenues, New York City, 212 941 0012

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Action Precision

Cohen, David. "The Afterlife of an Ideal." The New York Sun, June 29, 2006.

THE NEW YORK SUN

THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2006

ARTS&LETTERS

The Afterlife of an Ideal

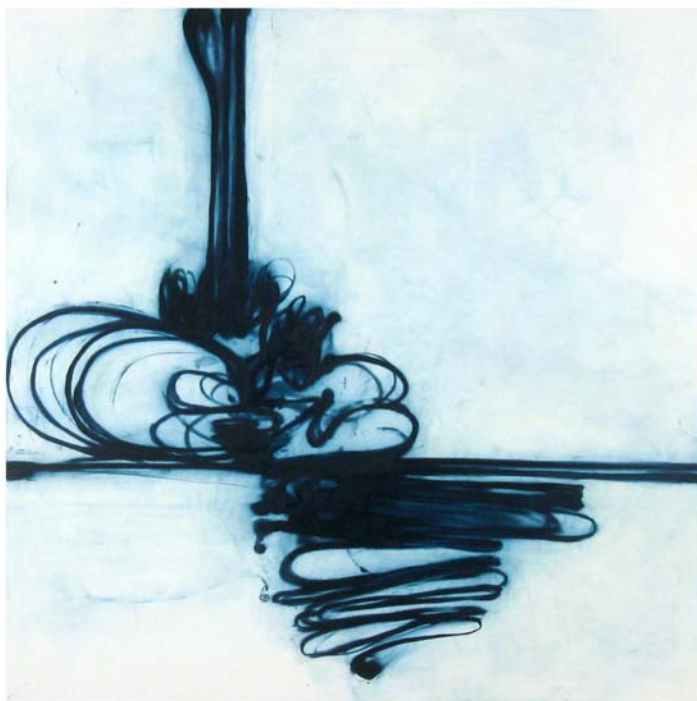
By DAVID COHEN

Where "Neoplastic Redux" alludes to the afterlife of an ideal, "Action Precision" charts the fate of a gesture. The nine-person group show at Lennon, Weinberg is at once critically tighter and formally more diverse than the somewhat spurious Harris ensemble. What these artists have in common is neat spontaneity: They devise systems within which crisp results are uncompromised by wayward yet trusted inflections of the hand.

James Nares takes action and control to fetishistic extremes. In his tasteful "It's in the Books" (2005), a blue totem is built from a fluent yet jerky sequence of broad brushstrokes. You wouldn't know it, but his modus operandi entails an elaborate rigging up of mountaineering ropes to enable him to be suspended over his canvas. Ongoing public relations ensures that one savors the double sense in which he is an "action" painter, Franz Kline meets Spider-man.

More spectacular results are to be had on terra firma. Three examples from Jill Moser's "Blues for Orange" series (2006) build richly dynamic abstraction from frenetic, overlapping lassoes against a light ground. She always maintains a sharp figure-ground distinction, but the ground is animated by fallout from the gestural events. Sam Reveles's linear agitations are more intense: In "English Canto-Dragonfly" (2006), dense accumulations of scribble form a field that is just kept short of filling the whole of his tall, thin canvas.

Craig Fisher exploits blind chance to crystalline effect. He is an inveterate recycler, working on drop cloths or the reverse of failed canvases, building up fugal relationships between marks and stains from the right and wrong sides. The result in "Untitled" (2006) is a suave nonchalance that recalls cool jazz.



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Jill Moser, 'Blues for Orange 9' (2006).

Temperature and intentionality alike heat up in Melissa Meyer's masterful "Regale" (2005) a loose, erratic grid of multicolored glyphic squiggles. Both the individual elements and their coordination are a high-wire act between meaning and intuition, freedom and system, abandon and control.

Peter Davis shares Mr. Nare's attraction to the squidgy section created by the point at which a brushstroke changes direction. He exploits a contradiction in speed by capturing gesture as if photographically, emulsifying his brushstrokes in a technique that mixes gloss paint and baked acrylic on a wooden support. Despite the means by which it is recorded, the slick gesture comes across as spontaneous.

Jacqueline Humphries also seems intent on containing wayward gesture within some kind of structural discipline. Her untitled 2006 canvas presents an explosive, translucent splurge of silvery white over steely grays in a virulent, uncouth assault whose sense of precision is defined by its clarity. The gesturalism seems clamped into place by a superimposed L-shaped section filled in by irregular stripes and drips of orange; this contrastive reality signals circumspection, the precision that keeps watch over her action.

Action Precision until August 11 (514 W. 25th Street, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, 212-941-0012). Prices: \$4,000-\$65,000.