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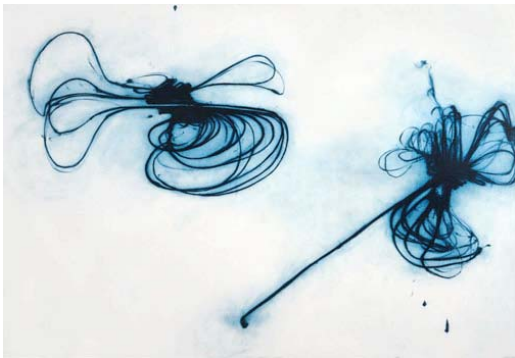
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BLUE IS THE COLOR OF INFINITY: A STUDIO VISIT WITH JILL MOSER

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