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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".