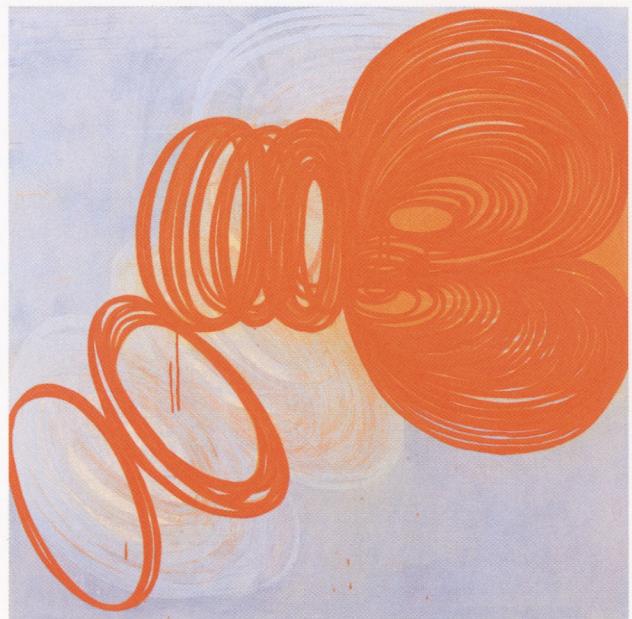


JILL MOSER *New Work*



Orbit

In the new work of Jill Moser painting is likened to drawing, to the deliberate act of tracing. Gesture is kept to a controlled minimum as the circular lines left behind by the brush proceed with an inscribed precision. The prudent speed at which these images have been constructed creates a tension -- between thought and action. The concentric, rhyming, echoing line that swirls, coils and gyrates through Moser's work is a visual metaphor describing the drama between impulse and calculation that defines abstract painting in the modernist tradition. Think of Pollock versus Newman, Twombly versus Ryman.

Moser's line tends to invoke both aspects of this divided lineage. The forms seem preordained, yet possessed of a momentum that threatens to push them beyond the boundaries of the picture plane. This, of course, never happens -- it is only implied. That each circular or ovoid line will complete its orbit, and never cease or be visibly interrupted, is a consistent feature of each composition. Even under-tracings or prior forms maintain this holistic integrity.

Equipped with these coordinates, Moser creates images that are always on the verge of depicting something – a phenomenon, an object, a referent. Titles supply few clues, however, throwing suggestion back to the viewer for consideration: *Dawn*, *Orient*, *Tether*.

Moser replaces the well-rehearsed dichotomy between representation and abstraction by using painting to put down her thoughts. This practice maintains an individual intimacy, the integrity of persistent, focused thought itself.

A description of this process, an attempt to describe what thought is and how it works, is offered by Ralph Waldo Emerson. In his essay "Circles," Emerson envisions the life of man as "a self-evolving circle" and describes the creative process as one of concentric assertions and revisions.

Our moods do not believe in each other. To-day I am full of thoughts and can write what I please. I see no reason why I should not have the same thought, the same power of expression, to-morrow. What I write, whilst I write it, seems the most natural thing in the world; but yesterday I saw a dreary

vacuity in this direction in which now I see so much; and a month hence, I doubt not, I shall wonder who he was that wrote so many continuous pages.

Such a description of how thought works to express itself – “from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles” – sets up the American poetic imagination, finding formulation across a horizon that connects Walt Whitman to Frank O’Hara.

The circle that can be declared but then amended is a powerful emblem. Tracing orbits as Moser’s lines always do, the gyre of thought is pictured. In Moser’s work the eddying line emerges as an apt record, envisioning the poetry of what one does.

Dr. David Moos
Curator of Painting and Sculpture
Birmingham Museum of Art