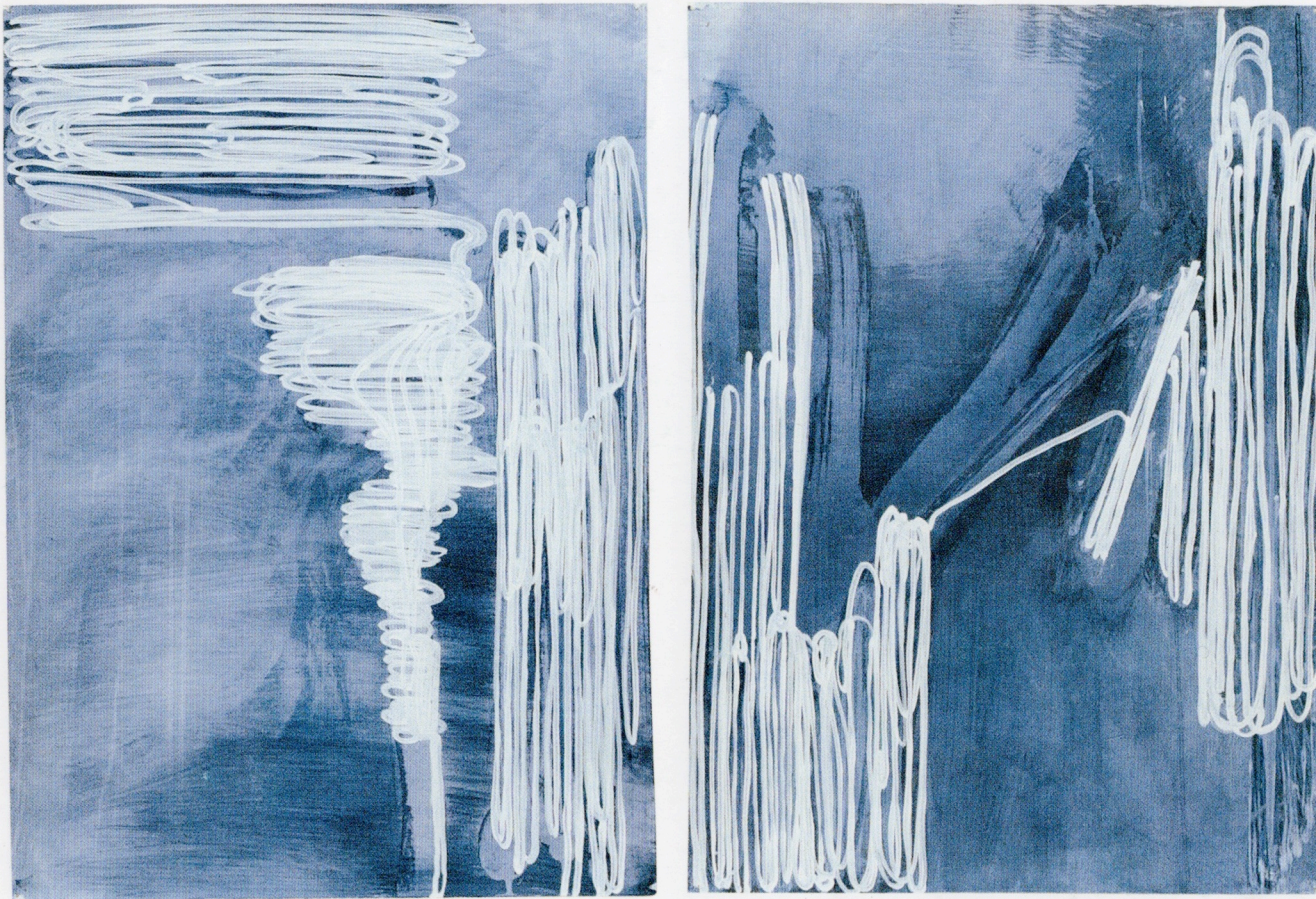


JILL MOSER

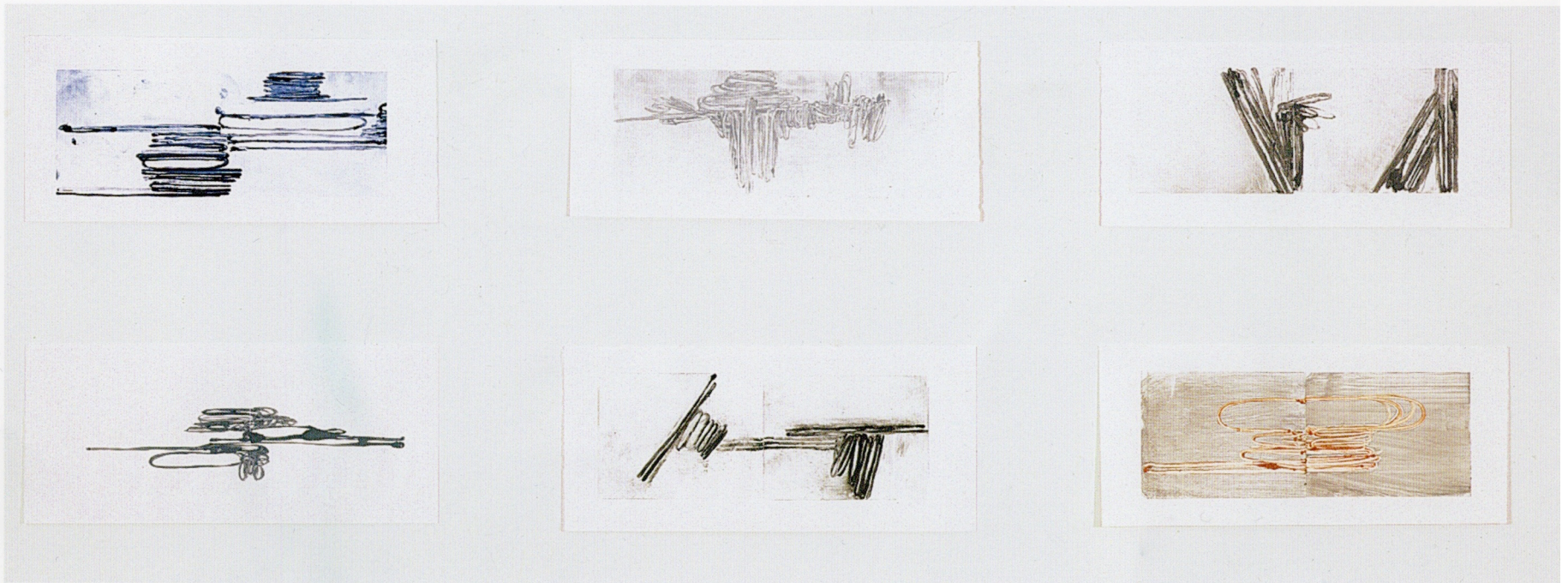
parings

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Few contemporary painters are willing to take on the history of gestural line in twentieth century painting. In this respect, Jill Moser's art is both audacious and informed. For art is in part a social contract, an appeal to an understood culture even as it seeks to impress new information into the record. Moser's painted line and the scale of the environment which it inhabits reminds us of Giacometti, Matta, Guston, Marden, and Winters to name some obvious antecedents. Moser's painted line has intentionality, it is an animate thing, alternately winding itself like stored rope, tensing like a spring-loaded slinky, or stretching a bony finger through the weather of her wiped-down tonal fields to a fresh compaction of flattened ovals on the other side of the canvas. And when her coils of line pancake together they can have a frowsy, brow-furrowing quality that makes the entire painting seem to brood upon itself, a quality that openly invokes Guston while stretching the line further than he ever did.



Above: Studio installation summer 2004 each monotype 8.5" x 20"

Front: *Blueing* 2004 casein and ink on paper 27.5" x 40"

Moser's re-reading of Barthes "A Lover's Discourse" inspired the binary organization of her recent monotypes, which, along with three drawings, are the focus of this exhibition. Barthes establishes in a series of "fragments" 33 paring models that index the various manners by which relationships between lovers establish themselves and bind their participants. Moser has always been interested in "the behavioral quality of line," as she puts it, and saw that certain consequences could be explored by paring the pictorial rectangles in which her line acted. It is as if the character of each linear arrangement is augmented and amplified by being in relationship with a partner. A central fold, or seam in the pictorial field hinges the intimate dramas unfolding between Moser's linear bundles. 3.1 displays aggressive tensions between each half, as the gestural figures seem to push against each other along the hinge. The pressing of the red lines up against each other in 2.3 is more languidly erotic; the small

vertical ovals in the upper center openly evoke a prolonged kiss. In fact, the play of the erotic is felt throughout this body of work, in the recombinant configurations of abject, comic, and contentious modes. The shadow gestures of the large light-on-dark ink drawing, *Blueing*, hover as a kind of visual corollary to the phosphorescent palimpsest of memory.

The relative quickness and responsiveness of the monotype process to working serially helped Moser essentialize her evolving consideration of the painted/drawn line as the principal actor within the pictorial field. Thus, the pun in her title for this show, *Parings*, as in cutting to the quick. Even the tonal residue in the wiped areas seems to be evaporating, leaving the stretching and pulling line and its double in the adjacent frame, as the chief vehicles for color and character. The middle ground is extraneous within the small scale of her monotypes. What remains are Janus-faced dualities framed as starkly as they are in *Sappho* and *Catullus*: figure and ground, presence and absence, desire and loss, reach and contraction.

— Stephen Westfall 2004

