

An abstract painting featuring large, overlapping shapes in teal, orange, pink, and magenta. The teal shape is the largest, occupying the right and bottom portions of the frame. The orange shape is a large circle at the top right. The pink shape is a smaller, irregular shape at the top right. The magenta shape is a large, irregular shape on the left side. The background is a dark teal color.

# TALKING PICTURES

JILL MOSER

COLLABORATIONS

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## TALKING of TALKING PICTURES

*Collaboration offers...an opportunity to have an experience that can't be got on one's own...Common projects do not forfeit the force of individual vision; they bring something else, a third direction.*  
—C.D. Wright

*Talking Pictures* offers its readers a unique, double platform featuring Jill Moser's selection of painted collages, paired with responses from 40 writers and artists. Moser began these daily meditations five years ago to guard against the disruption of time and place brought on by the pandemic. Especially now, during this dark period of history that endangers freedom of expression and threatens to alienate and divide us, the focused relevance of community brings light back into our lives. When "winter was giving us the silent treatment" (Paul Muldoon), art had more to say. Minus any Rorschach projective test of perception, the players chose their images. This eclectic range of ekphrastic responses reflects a union of sensibilities that reminds us how consciousness relies on *a third direction* to create one genre-transcending alliance. This is a catalog come to life. Call it a playful coalition, whether writer or editor, artist or curator, journalist, psychoanalyst, filmmaker, or poet, Moser's friends embraced the challenge.

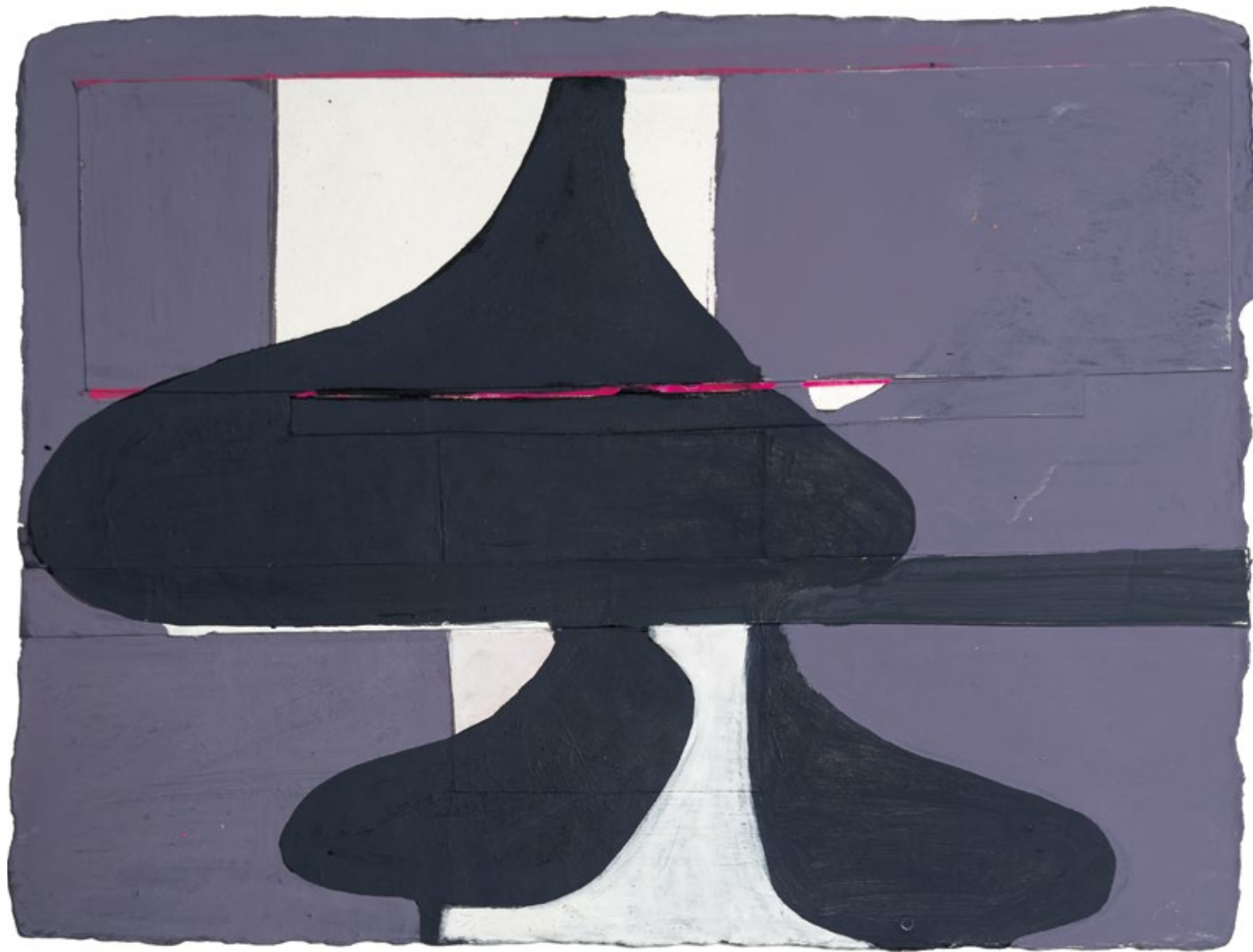
The book celebrates how each relationship with Moser's extraordinary color palette and use of line formed a natural interrogatory impulse to frame their own conceptualized focus within linguistic and visual contexts of the ever-shifting imagination. The elegant construction of painting and collage somehow already implies there will be a conversation where everyone speaks the language of juxtaposition. It follows that Moser's paintings also dissolve time here: Their "present-tense continuous" (Jennifer McGregor) falls into that gravitational field of liminality. "A moving image emerges, where liminal shapes of vibrant colors shift fluidly across the picture plane in an almost rhythmic dance" (Giuliana Bruno) as the next dynamism of meaning evolves. Manya Steinkoler declares, "Your liminal is my chair...It means my liminal is your chair." Wherever your eye lands in space, each exchange, if not "an act and a boundary" (Ágnes Berecz), then indeed, what "lies between them as

boundary and bridge" (David Lichtenstein), faithfully draws us closer to a synesthetic experience. With color comes emotion, and every participant brought some delightful element of subtext to the table. Lilly Wei's perceived "dissenting twang" can be heard "permeating the void" (Aniko Erdosi), where all, if not one of us, "closes one's eyes and hears the seep of starlight into stone" (Eric Pankey).

It's not surprising that, as a poet, I find Moser's oeuvre shares many qualities of poetry. The works invite us to enter the artist's mise-en-scène, a balancing act between linear edges and angles (the consonants) and occasional rounded mounds (the vowels), which render visual music and imply motion. They are as cinematic in their action as they are suspended in their landscape, as orphic as they are humorous, abstract yet not anonymous. If translating art is one act of empathy, then the alchemy found in Moser's book is certainly a much-needed antidote. Side by side with the written pieces, they present intuitive inter-coherences that ask us to "Keep looking." And we do, with palpable attention and joy.

After all, "[a] game is afoot" (Nancy Princenthal), and "seeing into a fictive world" (Karen Wilkin) means the unknown suddenly engages with each individual's kinetic energy. Consider the ontological freedom created when minds unite. "Maybe it's the little specks that seem to be spaces between spheres or light reflected, yet are manifestly nothing but what they are, green specks separate from everything else, their own community" (Adam Simon). Borrowing from Gaston Bachelard, I'll also say, "[t]he dreamer [then] knows very well that [they] must go beyond the time of fevers to find the tranquil time" (*The Poetics of Reverie*) to embark on such an adventure. If I could, as poet Didi Jackson imagines, "just thumb/the horizon, its knife edge," all the way to longing when "sky and sea/come close to one another" (Chase Twichell), and where Jill Moser says, "Welcome home" (Jesse Browner), then I'd know too, I was paying equal homage to the most exciting book of collaboration I have seen in years.

Elena Karina Byrne  
Los Angeles, June 2025



## Dervishish

Whirl, feet —  
Whirl your waist  
over me, splash  
your top  
on my bottom, swirl  
your derby 'round  
my heart, cover  
me with turvy's  
groundless ground.  
Outside in —  
twirl me home

*(after H.D.)*

*ALL THIS AND NOT ORDINARY*

On Friday, August 27 of 2021, the US media was reporting on suicide bombers, legal proceedings, cryptocurrencies, vaccine mandates, and the approach of tropical storm Ida. On Shelter Island, Jill Moser was working in the studio on a series of small-scale collages called daily meditations, temperatures were well over eighty degrees with thunder forecast in the vicinity around 2 in the afternoon. When the day was done and the meditation ended, *8.27.21* was made. There is no how, nor why, only when. What is a work's relationship to its time? What is its time? Is it the time of its maker?

*WHAT IS CUT. WHAT IS CUT BY IT.*

Measuring roughly eight by eight inches, *8. 27. 21* is constructed from colored pieces of paper. It is an arrangement of machine-made and hand-made, dense and lean, smooth and textured surfaces that cover, align, overlap with and bulge underneath each other. Cutting is both an act and a boundary, and in *8. 27. 21* papers are sliced, colors are carved, and borders declared. Lines thin and thick, literal and painted, quiver and waver. *8. 27. 21* is a sculpted terrain, an imaginary topography. It is about the process of assembling things to make a place, about the contingencies of the hand, and about the desire to declare, and at the same time, erase boundaries.

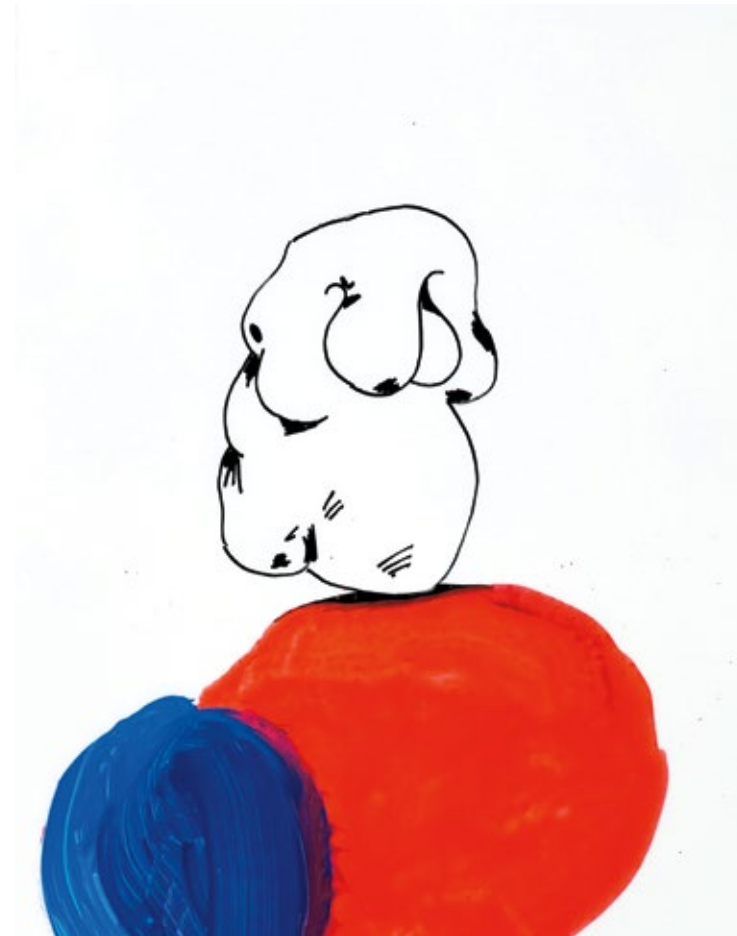
*THERE IS A KIND.*

Made of competing layers of paper and gouache that play hide-and-seek with each other, *8. 27. 21* is a densely saturated sequence of various greens, grayish lilac, and magenta. Bold, solid, and porous, none of the colors evoke nature. Some, like the magenta stripes, have a loud, even aggressive luminosity that complements the haptic violence of cutout papers. But are they magenta or red violet? Or rose, crimson, reddish purple, or pink? How to call the color of the thin, vertical lines that create an overlaid, asymmetrical frame? Dated, but untitled, *8. 27. 21* signals the futility of language to name what takes place among its layered cuts and hues. By defying linguistics and resisting geometry, it makes its own rules.

\* Lines in italics are quoted from Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*.



The crimson poodle becomes a cloudy thought of its own magnificence.  
It sits on the yellow pedestal to fill an air that can barely contain it.  
Moser's biomorph mounts a rectangle to tell a story of over and under, on-top-of and behind.  
Her grammar of layers crafts a reflection on before and after, one thing after another, this and that,  
you and me.





## OLD LOVE

A long love means the first part  
is old, though still attached.

Some of it's forgotten,  
or disagreed upon—

seams and glue, not cracks.  
If death steals half the love,

the rest does not wither  
or collapse. Its memorial candles

go on flickering in the dark,  
secret stars above a place

where sky and sea  
come close to one another

but do not touch.  
Whatever wounds there were

are hidden now, barely a trickle  
of old blood disguised as rust.



## TWO PSYCHEDELIC NIGHT WAVES





### Sex on the Beach

Two flat, vertically striped ovoids against a grey horizon and a grenadine sky. They are a linked pair, almost exactly the same size, sharing a bridge between them. It's a horizontal band, almost an umbilical cord, or the last stretch of shared matter before two cells separate. They're not humanoid bodies, though ovoids could always be heads. Look at one of Guston's bean heads, a bean with an eye. Moser's forms are as basic and as compromised by the stuff of paint and the imagination's perverse equivocality when drawing intervenes. I'm reminded of Guston's paintings just before they coalesced into lumpen, but identifiable figuration. There were these contractions of the field into darker *testes*, heads, almost-heads. The generative nature of these forms was proven out. Sexiness is everywhere in Moser's painting, in the ooze and spring, in the close heat of the air, in the conjoining and stretch of separation. The backdrop of horizon and sky echoes Picasso's beach paintings from 1931-32. His *Figures at the Seaside* (1931) are sexing it up on a dune rise above a cabana before the beach, sea and sky. The glare surrounds them. We could all use a cold drink. I'm sober, but I nominate a Sex on the Beach, a sort of Vodka Sunrise, only with cranberry juice substituting for grenadine and the addition of peach schnapps. Bottoms up!

