

Jill Moser Interview by Wade Wilson

Wade Wilson: Your paintings from the series titled *Stills* present us with dichotomies: they are at once elegant and wild in their gesture and articulation. In the pieces you forge a tension between rest and motion which makes for a particularly lively visual experience. Can you trace the steps that led you to this place in your painting?

Jill Moser: Stillness and motion, the figure and mark making, form and gesture: these relationships have always been in my work, dependent on each other, egging each other on. I love the play between what is seen as fixed, formal, and determined in an image and what is active and provisional in the gesture that makes it.

making lead you into a painting. Is this true? Or is it the other way around? And how does it work for you?

JM: Improvisation plays an important role in my work, but my decisions are not random. As a painting or drawing develops it gradually reveals its own logic and stance. It suggests certain possibilities that I then work with. But it is really through the teasing of form and gesture, each insisting on the other, that the image emerges. Your question suggests that there is a distinction between the two: mark making and imagery. I can never strictly separate the two. Sometimes a line can be the most essential of forms.



I have continually explored this interplay, sometime privileging one over the other. In *Stills*, I found I could maintain a suspended tension between the two, allowing for a kind of drama.

WW: The marvelous sense of randomness present in your imagery suggests you let the mark

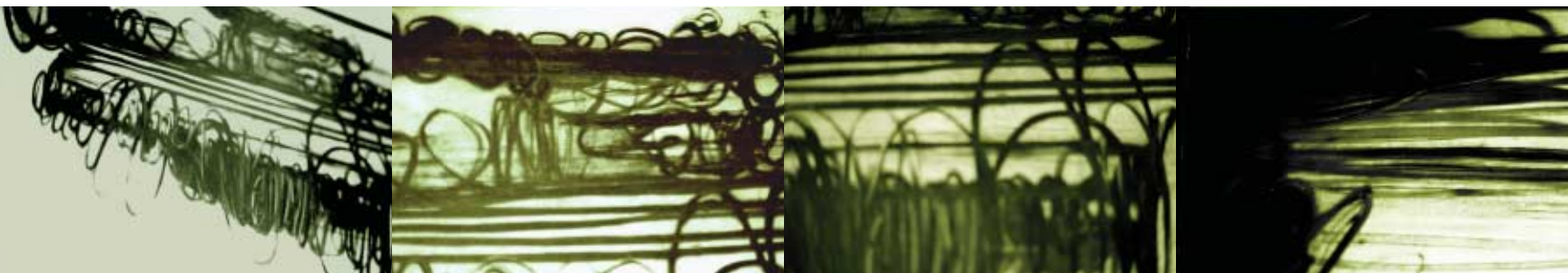
WW: You are doing something in painting that few painters do: you address in your paintings issues that confront artists who draw. What are these issues and how have they changed the way you approach a painting?

JM: All of my work comes out of drawing and concerns itself with the possibilities associated

with drawing. I worked exclusively in that medium for many years, using all kinds of marking materials on translucent mylar. Through that work I developed an understanding of mark making and line that I have brought to all of my subsequent work. In painting I wanted to find a way of keeping the immediacy of line alive, to retain what Guston called “the bareness of drawing, how it locates, suggests and discovers”. The physicality of painting, working on a stretched canvas with the materiality of paint is altogether different from marking with tailors chalk or oil stick on a sheet of mylar or paper. It insists on a slower, more deliberate attention to making. This sets up the field between drawing and painting that I have been investigating

as you push lines beyond their perimeters and force the movement into a painting’s surface, thus adding substantially to the dynamic of the painting. How does this happen in a work and what significance does it hold for you?

JM: What you refer to as field I call ground, and regard as the actual foundation or surface on and in which the figure is situated. I never choose the ground. The canvases begin as pristine white surfaces that assume their character entirely as a result of how the figure develops. Through erasure and reiteration, the figure records the history of its making and that is seen in the ground (what the critic David Cohen recently referred to as “the fall out”).



ever since. What remains important in both is that the image is active in the process of describing itself.

WW: How do you choose the field for your works? In some, the field remains a pure white, as lines strike their bold paths across the canvas’ surface. In others, however, the fields become

Some paintings are more hard won than others and that accounts for the differences.

WW: The installation for *Stills* at the gallery includes three quadrants of paintings. In these we see the various relationships that exist between canvases. Can you comment on these relationships and how they manifest in the series for you?

JM: *Stills* developed as a group of related images. As I began to paint on 30 inch squares I found that the scale allowed me to juxtapose canvases in varying relationships. That led me to consider working with them as a montage, transposing the idea of the film still, or edit, to the painting frame and creating a group of images that could interact with each other. I wanted to see how the arrangement of images could offer different kinds of narratives. One of my earliest influences was 70s avant-garde cinema. In fact, while painting *Stills*, I collaborated on a digital video, *Dis-Stillled*, with filmmaker Shaun Gamboa. I also became interested in how the placement of paintings could insist on a more physical kind of viewing.

installation allows the viewer to make her own order and sense out of whichever narrative she wishes to follow.

WW: Obviously, working in a series allows you to explore a particular problem in more depth. What answers have you found in your work as it progressed through this series, and how does a painting from a series differ from a painting that is not part of one?

JM: If *Stills* is a series, it is one without order or sequence, more like a collective. Each painting has its own inherent character but also has a kinship to the others. I generally work this way. It is a way of explicating a vocabulary,



Installing *Stills* in the gallery gave them a much more expansive space. We hung the paintings in groups of four although the quadrants are not very far apart. This offers a way to read the paintings. They can be considered as quadrants but they can also be read as rows of two with six across or a collective of twelve. There is also the far wall with four across. The

playing it out in all of its possibilities. *Stills* is the most ambitious group yet. I painted them over the course of eight months and in response to each other, keeping all sixteen canvases up on my studio walls and moving them around constantly. They incited and challenged each other and, I think, still do.