

CARRIE MOYER: Pagan's Rapture and Seismic Shuffle

By Osman Can Yerebakan



Carrie Moyer, *Triple Trills*, 2017. Acrylic and glitter on canvas, 66 x 90 inches.
Courtesy DC Moore Gallery and Mary Boone Gallery, New York.

Times are queer in Carrie Moyer's twin exhibitions at DC Moore and Mary Boone Galleries, where the New York-based painter introduces exceptional, unabashedly jubilant new paintings of acrylic and glitter on canvas. During a preview of *Pagan's Rapture* at DC Moore, the artist walked the audience through her buoyant abstractions while elucidating the transformation of her practice to its current phase. "For many years I thought of myself as a kind of 'Minister of Propaganda' for various lesbian and queer causes," she said, "I'm interested in taking that same passionate sense of urgency and transformation and, by conveying it through abstraction, making it accessible to a wide variety of viewers."

For decades, Moyer created posters and graphics for numerous gay and lesbian liberation organizations and Dyke Action Machine!, the queer agitprop duo she cofounded with photographer Sue Schaffner in 1991. Since the early 2000s, she has channeled her activist soul—in voluptuous forms and glimmering drips—onto canvas with painterly virtuosity. "My paintings reflect my own oblique subject position as a lesbian woman in relation to canonical culture," Moyer explained, "The position allows me to burrow through decades of stale, over-determined critique and rediscover the pleasurable and liberating aspects of painting." In both exhibitions, the urgency of agitprop veers away from its usual candidness towards a revelation of color, form, and technique. The artist adroitly manipulates her surfaces with dense, matte colors in thick slabs of paint, urging the audience to speculate on subjectivities and narratives insinuated but never imposed. Her figures are whimsical and tentative, ignited by humor, fluency, and breaths of inspiration, freed from explicit political declarations.

Abstraction grants the artist with latent forms of representation, ones that are stripped of words, images, or explicitness in lieu of otherworldly juxtapositions. The eye tends to grasp familiar shapes—bodies intertwined in ecstasy or boundless landscapes immersed in light—amidst visual potpourri of bulky monochromatic hues and psychedelic renderings of amorphous matter. Drips of shimmering yellows, reds, and oranges mingle with sprinkles of glitter, all accentuated by ornamental structures either framing or piercing through the softness of magmatic liquids. *Hot Metal Twice* (all works 2017) at Mary Boone is a majestic medley of magmatic earth tones surrounded by a blue-grey border of botanical forms, daringly shrouding (or guarding) the sizzling fluidity within. Moyer's depiction of dripping forms is seductive, reminiscing corporeal desire or even intercourse, to the mischievous eye. However, the artist is not occupied with messaging or innuendo. *Sassafras and Magma* (at DC Moore), again, alludes to mysteries of sensual plants and searing liquids. *Pitch* dark chunky leaves bloom against the backdrop of simmering shades of reds and oranges, depriving the viewer of the pleasure of observing the color medley in full. In *Arch*, *Martha Graham's Candy Stripers*, and *Vapors and Salts* (all DC Moore), similar corpulent forms in various colors obstruct the glittery exuberance dominating the backdrops. The viewer yearns to see beyond ponderous chunks of paint, but Moyer does not hesitate to let hulking flatness retrain oozing materiality.



Carrie Moyer, *Sassafras and Magma*, 2017. Acrylic and glitter on canvas



Carrie Moyer, *Martha Graham's Candy Stripers*, 2017. Acrylic and glitter on canvas

Avoiding illusionistic concerns such as depth or perspective, Moyer queers the color field, lending texture, seduction, and idiosyncrasy to the immateriality of plain sight. In her catalog essay *Hot and Sour*, curator Mia Locks, who showed Moyer in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, emphasizes Moyer's eschewal of broadly ideal topics such as nature or subjectivity, highlighting her interest in "sensorial responses to such ideas" as an alternative. This joyous blend of painterly skill and exuberance aligns, however obliquely, with a queer politics of embodiment, pleasure, and liberation.