

BOMB

Carrie Moyer by Bruce Pearson

A studio visit with the abstract painter where she reflects on past and present work and on resisting the conventions of late modernism.

January 25, 2023



The Origin of Glitter, 2022, acrylic, glitter, and pumice on canvas, 75 × 110 inches (diptych). All images courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York.

I've followed New York painter Carrie Moyer's work for a couple of decades, and it's been exciting to see her ongoing experimentations with paint, different textures, techniques, and references. I've also been taken by how she continuously, in one way or another, brings her feminist and activist politics into her various bodies of work. As a fellow painter, I'm inspired by her radical investigations and her approach to painting as an inquiry.

Many abstract painters tend to actively engage with art history, rejecting or incorporating prior ideas, including their own. I love how artists' works can contain that very conversation with themselves; the next generation will then continue it and that keeps the history moving and fresh. In Moyer's work, for instance, a brushstroke receiving a shadow is one way in which she playfully intermixes abstraction with illusion, thereby subverting the genre's prescriptions.

Visiting my peers' studios is one of my favorite things about being an artist in New York City: I get insight into how others think and explore, and then go to the show that comes out of it. When we recorded this conversation in Moyer's studio this fall, she was in the middle of working on several paintings in various stages of completion. It's a privilege to see an artwork before it receives its final touches. I also got to witness how Moyer's process occasionally involves the computer. She scans her paintings, or creates forms on the screen, then prints them out and moves them around on the canvas, not unlike a Matisse cutout. This was one of several revelations I took away from the studio visit. —Bruce Pearson



Studio view of (left to right) *Love You Tammy Faye*, *The Origin of Glitter*, *Knock Off*, and *Leda Was a Swan*, 2022.

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One of the joys of this work is using paint to play with the history of illusion, but also talking to all these other moments in painting history. Flatbed planes, staining, monoprinting, tricky surface treatments, impossible light and shadow effects. The stuff in my bones about modernism rejects the things that give us great joy in painting, like illusion. (laughter)

BP

This painting on the right seems to invite you in, but there's also resistance—you think you get a handle on something, and then it just slips away. Looking slow rewards the viewer.

CM

That's my goal. I guess I'm interested in cultivating the long view of painting. I'm rejecting the "I spent three minutes looking at your painting on Instagram and now I get it" mode. These over here are new works that I started this summer. This one is finished, that one is in process. I'm interested in returning to some of the work I was making in the '90s that was more blatantly related to posters. I'm using collages and other stuff, mining my own archive.

BP

Over the phone, you mentioned that you felt that you were on the edge of a breakthrough. Has that happened yet? What is it?

CM

I'm one of these painters who is painting to find something out. I go at a picture thinking there're going to be these reference points—for example, some of these collages—that help me set up a structure. Then, the process of making it becomes revealed. I'm always responding to what I'm looking at. With these new ones, I don't know if it's a breakthrough, but it's a definite move because I'm using things that I've discovered about paper over the past two years and trying to bring them into painting. I'm setting up a very complex surface before I even put anything on it: all these canvases have a fiber paste on them, so they actually feel dry and papery.

