

art-rated

Information

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Artist Interview - Kristine Moran



Kristine Moran - 'Lillies in Midnight'

Art-Rated's Jonathan Beer and Lily Koto Olive interviewed painter Kristine Moran.

Art-Rated: Your work, old and new, is known for its decisive marks, and clean vibrant color and ever since stumbling upon your work a few years ago I've always been curious about your process. Can you describe your studio practice? How planned are your compositions? Do you work on more than one painting at once?

Kristine Moran: The process can at some times be blissfully straightforward; an idea, a very quick sketch, loose compositional drawing on canvas and paint, and it somehow hits the mark at the first go. Other times, it's a clumsy process of back and forth between sketch and painting. The sketch is re-drawn a few times as the painting evolves. The paint is applied and wiped down several times over. As the under-painting is done fairly thinly, I

can work out subject matter, composition and ideas as I'm going along. I view it as a sort of reverse excavation. As I'm painting, shapes, figures and creatures will emerge. It's up to me to cull them into existence, allowing the story to unfold naturally. I usually work on several paintings at once, especially while the subject matter is still emerging. I'll work on one painting until it's about three-quarters done and then leave it. I'll do this for several paintings in a series. Then I can step back and see an overall theme developing, at which point, if one painting needs to change direction to tie in with the others, it's still possible to do so.

AR: I could pick out a number of influences in your work, perhaps Francis Bacon, Eric Fischl, De Kooning, Lucian Freud, and David Hockney to name a few. I'm more curious who you would name as influences? And how did they influence you?

KM: I'm looking at different artists all of the time. It depends on what I'm working on. Without a doubt Bacon, DeKooning and Hockney are re-occurring influences. This latest body of work has led me to the Romantic period and the prevalent views on mysticism of the time. William Blake's work is fascinating. He blurred reality with spiritual visions throughout his lifetime, walking that fine line between sanity and madness. Even today, as science continues to uncover truths about our existence as humans, there is still so much left that is unexplained, leaving questions such as what happens after death wide open for artists to continue to ponder. I've also been looking at Paul Gauguin's paintings, not only for his sense of color but also his ability to shift time and space. Vision after the Sermon is divided in half by a large tree between the Breton women and the hallucination they have of Jacob wrestling with an angel. I like the way he organizes real and imagined spaces.

AR: What inspires you outside of other art? What are some influences that have always been part of your career?

KM: I'm constantly filtering in a collection of thoughts and ideas into my work. The personal and private often come into play. I reflect on experiences from the environment in which I find myself, and then seek out similar sentiments echoed through literature or music. In the past I've looked to the work of Margaret Atwood, JG Ballard, Oliver Sacks, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky just to name a few.

Insomnia had a significant impact on my last body of work. I'd been sleepwalking and having nightly hallucinations. I was fighting it during the day and stressing about getting some painting done, when I finally realized that I could let my experience dictate the direction of the work. While doing this I recalled the author Robert Louis Stevenson, author of the Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, who seemed appropriate to my situation at the time—he often spoke of his vivid dreams dictating the course of his stories. At the same time, I fortuitously stumbled upon the writing of scientist Paul Broks, who said,

"While sleeping the brain loses its grip on the self, the self tumbles into a thousand parts." This became the underpinning for the 2011 exhibition titled Protean Slip at the Nicelle Beauchene Gallery in NYC. The painted figures in that series transform into shadowy, fragmented shapes, floating against a nocturnal landscape.



Kristine Moran - 'Somnambule'

AR: Are you inspired by contemporary female artists? Do you feel gender is still an issue in terms of navigating the art market as a young female artist?

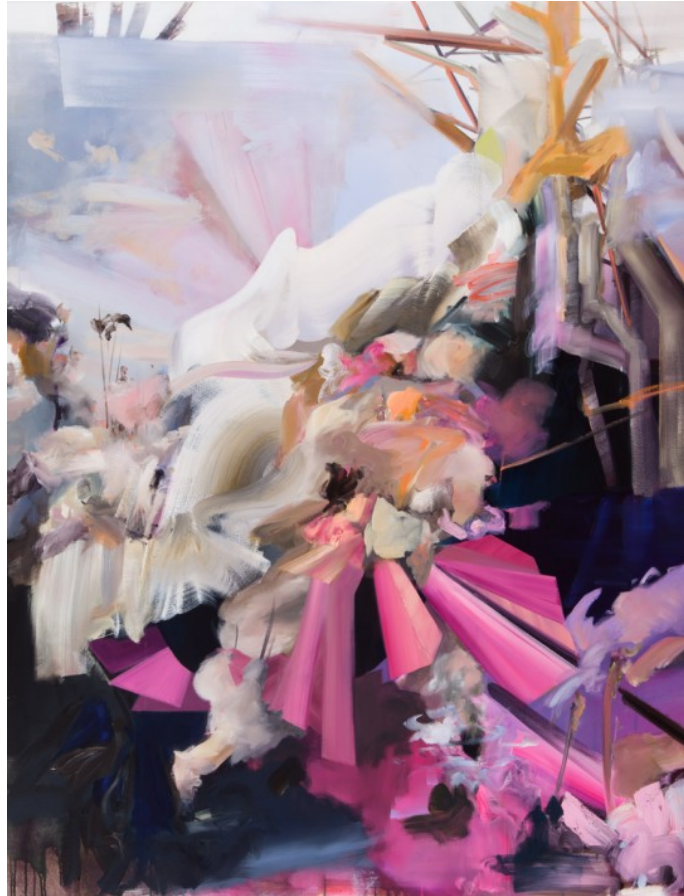
KM: There are so many terrific female artists out there. I was still in college when artists such as Cecily Brown, Inka Essenhigh, Lisa Yuskavage and Julie Mehretu were first making an impact on painters everywhere. In recent years I've had huge love affairs with the work of Mary Heilmann, Amy Sillman, Joan Snyder, Amy Feldman, Keltie Ferris, Jackie Gendel, Patricia Treib, and the list goes on. Gender seems to be taking a back seat finally. You'll still run into some stereotyping from time to time, but generally speaking, I find it's not too bad.

AR: Your work is full of many perceptual artifacts; some elements are reminiscent of a photographic process, while others reference digital collage and others day to day observation. How do these things find their way into your work?

KM: These elements appear as the painting process is underway. At times I'll seek to create a specific perceptual shift, to give the appearance of passage of time for example, but other times, an unanticipated opportunity will present itself on the canvas while painting. In any given painting you will find that at times the painted gesture is fast, spontaneous and loose while at other times slow and very carefully considered. The paintings evolve in a process of adding and subtracting; each gesture informed by the preceding one.

The process lends itself to constant revisioning and experimentation while the work is in progress, allowing for a back and forth dialogue between the formal development of the work and the narrative that informs it.

These formal strategies continually draw the work from representation back into abstraction.



Kristine Moran

AR: Your work falls more recently on the side of figuration; but it still maintains the intimate and attentive relationship to paint, brushwork and surface. It's as if those earlier brushstrokes are now transforming into these quasi real entities. Can you talk a little bit that transformation?

KM: The brushwork in my paintings plays a large role in conveying a certain emotion or psychological effect. It can be an indicator of the figure's disposition. I aim to let the materiality of the paint -color, texture, the movement and speed of the gesture- tell the story. At times the gesture of a brushstroke can evoke movement and create shapes that come in and out of focus. I'm interested in the figures having a morphing quality about them as though transitioning from one state to the next. Changing up the speed and vigor at which the brushstroke is applied and the gesture is laid down, helps create this illusion.

AR: Your work seems to stem from an intuitive process. Can you elaborate on how these series come to light and if you go into the bodies of work with a unifying theme in mind or if the pieces reveal their intentions after you have created them?

KM: My process changes from moment to moment, depending on how far along I am within a series of paintings and also how clear the ideas are to me within a series.

As I begin a series of paintings I usually have a vague idea of what it is that I want to work out throughout the work. But because my work depends largely on the painting process itself, even the most detailed sketch will at times translate into something completely different on canvas. For the most part, the paintings tend to morph into unexpected territory as they evolve. I find that if I try to stick too closely to the original intent, my paintings become didactic or too illustrative for my liking. On the other hand, if I'm able to stay completely open, the subject matter emerges through painting. A certain brush stroke or gesture will make me suddenly shift the direction of the work into a new direction, and it's imperative that I stay open to these unexpected turns.



Kristine Moran - 'Fear in Waiting'

AR: There seems to be concurrent themes linking the various bodies of work together in terms of titles and color. Can you elaborate?

KM: Once many paintings in a series are in progress and vague ideas about the work have become more concrete, I can then elaborate on details of the painting to get that particular thought or idea across.

For an exhibition I put together in 2009, I presented a series of paintings that had the idea of 'cabin in the woods' as a place ripe for metamorphic occurrences. Using Margaret Atwood's lecture series *Strange things; the malevolent north in Canadian literature* as the over arching theme for the show, the work juxtaposed the wild and the domestic. Many of the paintings depicted figures in dark watery backwoods or shadowy cabins and had titles like *Woven lair* and *Hidden in the shore maze*. This subject of women going into the wild to find themselves was something that kept coming up and the subject interested me. There is something about the wilderness that seems to allow a person to exist in multiple dimensions.

I installed the paintings so that the viewer would be a witness to the protagonist's shifts and metamorphosis. The very first painting seen as one entered the gallery space was titled *Departure*. This painting is of an interior cabin, whose walls begin to shift and collide, and perspective is skewed. The viewer places him/herself inside the space and takes on the role of the protagonist. In the following works, it becomes clear that the protagonist is unraveling from one painting to the next. The series goes from a very rational painted space, towards an irrational abstract space. The very last painting of the series *Into the Water*, has the protagonist dissolve completely, thus creating an open-ended form of place and self.



Kristine Moran - 'Bride's Last Encounter With Her Lovers'

AR: What's next for you?

KM: I'm working on a series of paintings for an October exhibition in Toronto at the Daniel Faria Gallery. This series questions the space where life and death intersect. Submerged within gestural abstractions are scenes in which figures are slipping in and out of material existence. In the painting titled The Bride's last encounter with her lovers, tangles of flesh dissolve into sensuous textures. Fluttering among the fray, figures appear through a curtain of dense foliage. The painting represents the transition zone from physical to subtle-a testing ground, a passage through to somewhere else, where temptation beckons one last time.

Kristine Moran lives and works in Brooklyn, NY and is represented by Daniel Faria Gallery in Toronto and represented by the Nicelle Beauchene Gallery in New York. <http://www.kristinemoran.com>