

ARTSLANT PRIZE 2013: MAUREEN MEYER - INDIGO MAJESTY

BY JAMES PATRICK BENN

Maureen Meyer - Second Place, ArtSlant Prize 2013

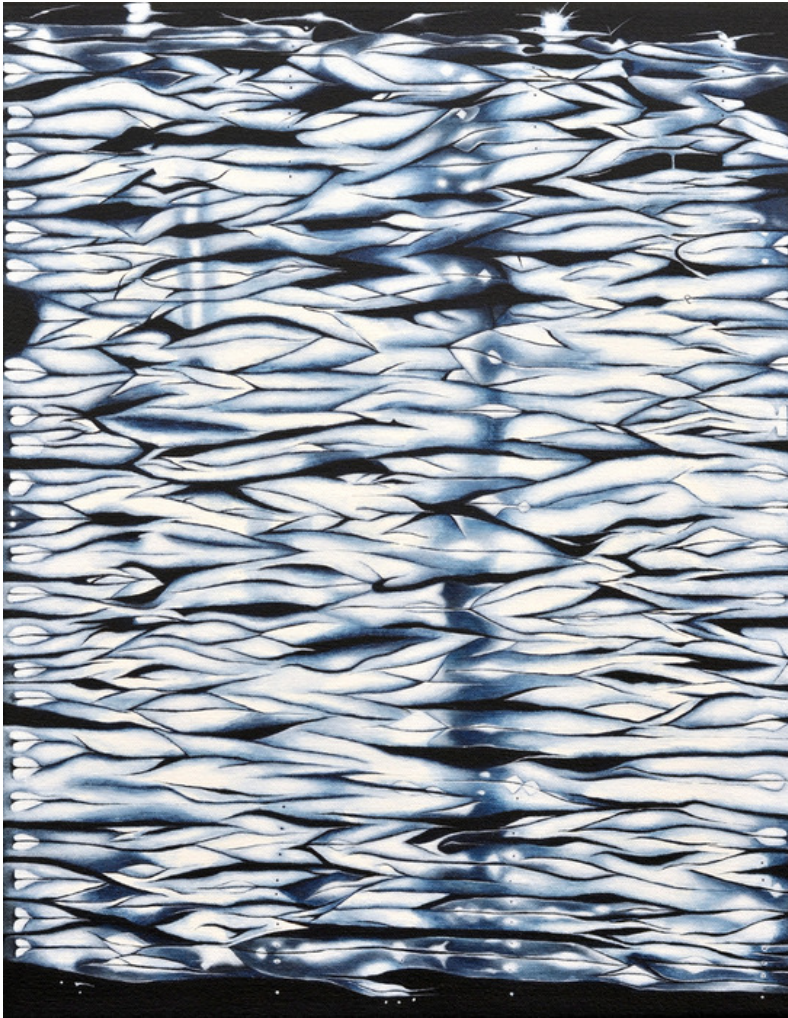
I discovered Maureen Meyer's work this summer when she was chosen by the jury to advance to the next round on the way towards the Artslant Prize. I forwarded the announcement email to Artslant's Editor, Natalie Hegert, and asked, "Who is this person? Her work is beautiful."

Her name is Maureen Meyer. She was born in Nuremberg, Germany and she has lived in many places. Of late, she resides, and paints, in New York City. Her education and experience have trained her in painting, textiles, and fashion. But it was at an indigo workshop in 2006 where she discovered indigo and united these three fields, setting out on the path that led to the paintings that we see in this collection here.

At first glance, one might think that Maureen Meyer creates these images electronically or overexposes photographic images. "Is she playing with x-rays?" one might wonder. One could reach these conclusions because the images are so bright; they are so flushed with light, a light complemented and brightened by the fading, and darkening, shades of indigo.

But these images are neither electronic, nor photographic; they are acrylic paintings. Given their abstract nature, one might suspect that she paints images conjured from her imagination, but this is not the case either.

She explained to me that her process begins by stretching, clipping, and or even stitching fabric, which she then paints. The result of this Hantai-esque *pliage* –these painted fabrics – are not the end product, they are just the point of departure, the model for the paintings. Maureen then takes what she sees in her “sketch,” mixes the indigo pigment into acrylic paint, and then recreates the fabric image on the canvas to create the paintings in this indigo series.



Maureen Meyer, *Approaching Thunder*, 2011, Acrylic on Canvas; © Maureen Meyer

It is perhaps her study of indigo that I find most compelling about her work. There is something so rich and inescapable about this color. All colors can fade into white and darken to black, but no color does that quite like indigo. No color has quite the same emanating warmth; no color pulls you in like indigo does. Maureen and I spoke about these magical qualities and she smiled, “There is a seductive nature of indigo.”

If the indigo and the light pull me into her work, then I suspect that it is the strong patterns of geometry that keep me looking within them. Meyer creates that geometry with strong lines; they might be the thin indigo gridlines of *the Road and the Common*, or they might be the long white-filled indigo stripes of *At the Foot of the Hill*. The lines never remain constant or hard; they are purposefully blurry, and they vary in thickness and spacing. Those irregular lines are variations on themes that keep the eye moving. They build a structure, and Meyer ornaments that structure with light and dark. Without the powerful lines, these would be very different paintings.

Those lines, decorated in dark and light and white and indigo, create a dreamy visual rhythm, patterns, often grids of light and dark. Sometimes, though, they are repeated and varied motifs, like we see in *Return and Departure* or *The Thunder Breaks*. In *Approaching Thunder*, the grid seems to be falling apart, but it does not; it hangs together, about to collapse. It is the resistance holding the piece together that creates a contradictory calm and tension, creating a delightful visual of the clichéd calm before the storm.

To me, Meyer's combination of bright light and soft darkness, held together with those strong lines and layers, outlined and filled with the seductive, majestic richness of indigo, create a rich painted place of calm and spirit. These pieces all bring me to that place that Charles Baudelaire describes in his poem, "Invitation to the Voyage," that place where:

*There all is order and beauty,
Luxury, peace, and pleasure.*

When I spoke with Maureen, she explained that the work we see here is just the beginning of her exploration of indigo. She says that she is only just now beginning to crack the code of this mysterious color. I look forward to seeing what comes next.

—James Patrick Benn

(Image on top: **Maureen Meyer**, *The Shining Wire*, 2009, Acrylic on canvas, 16 in x 14 in; © Maureen Meyer.)

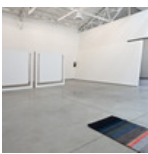
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