

# ARTnews

Jill Moser's striking paintings are a series of controlled explosions. Moser here transformed the esthetic dilemma of abstract painting—the tension between order and chaos, being and nothingness—into a unified totality. Neither side is scanted, neither is subordinated to the other because both have a right to be present on the canvas and to fight for control of space. Equilibrium and harmony are concepts



**Jill Moser, *Equivalents*, 2012, oil and acrylic on canvas, 70" x 73".**

**Lennon, Weinberg.**

difficult to reconcile with violence and passion, but that is exactly what these works accomplish.

The appropriately titled *Equivalents* (2012) exemplifies Moser's modus operandi. Underpainting, the preparation of the surface, establishes control over the canvas. This act of will enables Moser to move from smaller to larger formats without losing power. Once she establishes the painterly field, in effect, turning bare canvas into a personal utopia, she is free to give rein to her passions.

The movement on this large work descends from left to right, the color from orange to black. Light abuts dark, horizontal energy competes with vertical movement. But there is also mystery here: Moser must toss her painterly dice, and in doing so she commits herself to an order. The same was true for the other eleven paintings here as well as for the witty aquatint *Lipstick and Cigarettes* (2011) and the artist book she created by drawing directly on poems by Charles Bernstein (*The Introvert*, 2010).

It is not easy to assign Moser's work a specific genealogy, but Hans Hartung comes to mind. Like Moser, Hartung specialized in gestural shapes floating on a placid surface, but where Hartung's career-long struggle was to establish abstraction as an artistic modality, Moser must not only maintain the dignity of an abstract tradition but also find new ways of putting her ideas into practice. She succeeds because she is able to keep the esthetic house she creates in harmonic and violent order.

**—Alfred Mac Adam**