

Discordant Voices: Paintings by Madalyn Marcus

Madalyn Marcus's large abstractions manage to radiate both energy and serenity. The scale of the work creates an experiential element, inviting viewers to enter into the atmosphere created by the dynamic, glowing, and expert interaction of colors. At the same time, the repetition of form and brushstrokes provide a grounding structure and a calming rhythm. Like taking a deep breath, these works strengthen and acknowledge the core while fortifying and sharpening the senses.

Although the paintings are essentially comprised of geometric shapes, they are anything but minimalist. While Marcus relies on an underlying grid structure as both a starting point and an organizational tool, the works evolve in a meandering, spiraling, improvisational manner, taking cues from the jazz she loves and often listens to while working. Marcus is painting with a sense of freedom built upon structure, exploring intuitively and internally. This can only come after years of experience and a deep knowledge of the essential components of the medium of oil paint.

Stepping outside the world of painting, the works also reference textiles. The rhythm of weaving, the repetitive movement of the body in the act of making, the cumulative building of the image with time and effort is an apt metaphor visually, procedurally and conceptually. Marcus is also inspired by the quilts of Gee's Bend, with their bold structure and unexpected color combinations, brought together by the distinctly imperfect human hand.

The way Marcus orchestrates space in these works is notable as well. By shifting tones in subtle and inventive ways, she controls the way we perceive the space, moving it forward and back. Infinite, deep and imaginative space lives next to flat, quotidian space that sits solidly in the here and now. This effectively keeps the eye lingering, creating another layer to respond to.

Marcus's paintings embrace contradiction and dichotomy. They seek no conclusions, but rather aim to be wholly what they are. Steady and true to themselves, these works walk the line between randomness and intention, balancing between the loose hand and the practiced stroke. Marcus has made works that function as objects in the world even as they also act as doorways, leading the viewer to a labyrinth of space charged with light glowing from of the act of creating. Marcus is master, fully in control but smart and brave enough to know when and how to let go.

Nancy Sausser,
Curator