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Arthur Peña Has Seen the Future—

and New York artist Carrie Moyer is an intriguing part of it.

BY PATRICIA MORA



Arthur Peña outside the "secret location" for ONO. Photograph by Megan Gellner



Artist and writer Carrie Moyer. Photograph © Girl Ray

As is appropriate for a visionary, Arthur Peña has large dark eyes as evocative as an Indian sadhu. He's been a game changer in the Dallas arts scene for years and perhaps he's seen the future and knows where things are heading long before the rest of us catch up with his frenetic pace. He now enjoys rather rarified company and plumbs the depths—and heights—of Dallas with ease. "I was doing things in Trinity Groves before it was Trinity Groves," he laughs. He grew up in an area that "was full of gangs, just on the edge of Oak Cliff and Cockrell Hill." Peña stops and adds, "I'm one of this city's native sons and I love Dallas. I'm committed to doing good things for the community."

While that is certainly true and Peña's earnestness is evident, he has also been busy creating a nexus between his home turf and New York. Specifically, he has been enjoying a role as curator who brings internationally known, museum-quality talent to the city. This effort made huge waves last year during the Dallas Art Fair and received outstanding media coverage. He curated a show in a shot-gun style residence in The Cedars, a space that was formerly Wanda Dye's gallery in years past. Dubbed ONO, an acronym for *One Night Only*, Peña hosts an invitation-only celebration of art and artists who are genuine head-turners. He states, "Last year was huge. ONO celebrated New York artist and MacArthur Genius, Nicole Eisenman." He adds, "It was her first solo show in Texas in twenty years and it received critical acclaim from



Carrie Moyer, *Sea of Forms*, 2019, acrylic and glitter on canvas, 66 x 60 in. Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York

both *ArtNews* and *Vice*.” Truth be told, the former publication named it an art highlight of 2018.

For 2019, Peña is working with another New York-based artist, Carrie Moyer, who is represented by DC Moore in Chelsea. Like Eisenman, she has yet another stunning pedigree—she’s a Guggenheim Fellow who has exhibited widely in the United States and Europe. Peña predicts this year’s ONO curatorial event will be another grand effort that is sure to make headlines, especially since the work being presented has never been seen before. Also, not only is Moyer bringing an impressive résumé to North Texas, her practice is queer-based and calibrated to challenge the ongoing patriarchy evident throughout art history. And the means by which she is accomplishing this is quite simple: she’s creating stunning abstract expressionist art that is vivid, biomorphic, and without a decidedly overt agenda that screams for attention. Instead, she creates sinuous shapes and colors that insinuate flora, water, or even Matisse-y looking black contours.

Born in Detroit, Moyer notes her “hippie parents were itinerant” and, therefore, responsible for her becoming a self-proclaimed autodidact. She is also apt to claim Helen Frankenthaler and Fernand Léger as artists she harkens back to; however, she also wants to revisit both “the female aesthetic and popularized imagery.” Put another way, Moyer recognizes that she is part of a long history, but she’s also pushing vigorously against the boundaries of any typical polemic. She’s exploring new turf that is both timely and timeless. Moyer is a refreshingly candid voice that questions both patriarchy and typical responses to it. This is not only new; it’s a critically needed shift in terms of understanding feminism and the art that circulates around it.

“Going into your own zone for fourteen hours” is how she describes her working life and, when questioned about beauty, which is often eschewed when it comes to what is deemed a serious feminist aesthetic, she responds, “I like it. The more the better.” She also touts the immediacy of her work and the attendant slowness that ensues after an initial thrilling entrance into it. In fact, she’s fond of saying, “What does the paint do?” For one thing, it apparently yearns to be layered. Her work is complex in ways that are wildly lyric yet veiled when it comes to an “out of the tube” palette. If anything, it becomes clear that Moyer and her work are both highly complex. She wants to create art that appeals to “lots of people” rather than be limited by queer activism. She has outlined her stance in a refreshingly straightforward mantra: “Painting is about painting.”

One Night Only is a strident move for Dallas, and Peña has been hugely influential as a curator. He, of course, is also a well-respected artist and, in fact, has shown his own work at a solo booth at the Spring Break Art Fair in Manhattan. Most importantly, Brigitte Mulholland, director of the highly esteemed Anton Kern Gallery, presented it. Arthur Peña may be a native son of Dallas—but he’s spreading his artistic wings in glamorous environs synonymous with the ultimate imprimatur when it comes to artistic achievement. Curator, artist, and raconteur: Arthur Peña is a force to be reckoned with. **P**



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