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Art In Review

Sam Moyer

By KEN JOHNSON

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Sam Moyer's beguiling, expansive pictures oscillate astutely between the sublime and the decorative. How she made them is hard to tell just by looking. Mounted on panels whose dimensions range from about 5 to 10 feet, they resemble much-enlarged, black-and-white aerial photographs of mountainous topographies, possibly on another planet. They also are like giant, dark photocopies of profusely wrinkled bedsheets. In most cases they are crossed by paler, translucent bands that appear as if caused by a flaw in the reproductive machinery.

Examining these mysterious pictures up close you wonder if Ms. Moyer made them by meticulously copying photographs of wrinkled fabric, as Tauba Auerbach does. Ms. Moyer produces them by a kind of tie-dye process. She crumples sheets of fabric, dyes them black, stretches them out, makes stripes using bleach and then irons them flat onto wood panels.

Like Jackson Pollock's dripping Ms. Moyer's technique automatically produces the old flip-flop between literal surface and illusory space of uncertain, possibly infinite depth. This kind of thing never goes out of style; it has been the essence of painting and drawing since the first cave artist picked up a piece of charcoal and made a mark on the wall with representational intent.

It also serves as a metaphor about the relationship between our finite bodies and infinite minds. That Ms. Moyer's works are more sophisticatedly suave than wildly original does not make them any less gratifying to behold.

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