

Charline von Heyl
(German, b. 1960)

Alastor, 2008

Acrylic on linen

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin by
exchange, 2012.116

Charline von Heyl's paintings "impose themselves and insist on being seen." *Alastor* evokes the unforgiving landscape surrounding the artist's Marfa, Texas, studio with blinding yellow sunbursts and lines that tangle like barbed wire. She layers these elements over a frenetic background of red streaks and smeared handprints. Befitting the title's reference to a vengeful figure from Greek mythology, the work bursts with explosive and even violent energy, confronting the eye with melodramatic urgency.

Amy Feldman
(American, b. 1981)

Heavy Vector, 2013

Acrylic on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, restricted gift of the Andree Stone
Emerging Artist Prize, Richard Gray Gallery,
Roberta Kramer, and Emerge, 2013.34

Amy Feldman describes her painting style as “big and bad, bleak and tragic and beautiful.” In *Heavy Vector*, shapes mimic muscles flexing against the boundaries of the canvas. Though simple, the work is full of personality: formal frankness paired with cartoonish humor and pathos. Feldman calls the drips running through the white space “punch lines,” breaks for levity in the otherwise starkly composed picture.

Joyce Pensato
(American, b. 1941)

Silver Batman II, 2012

Enamel on linen

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Helen and Sam Zell, 2016.5

Joyce Pensato renders the iconic Batman mask in fast, loose strokes, excavating the darkness lurking behind a pop cultural figure. Pensato's minimal gestures stake a bold and menacing claim on the territory of the canvas. Profuse drips recall the work of male abstract expressionist painters like Jackson Pollock; their use here makes absurd the hypermasculine comic book character and turns the superhero-like machismo of the movement on its head.

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung
(American, b. 1975)

Hedda Gabler, 2011

Spray enamel, oil, fabric, and thumb tack
on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, Bernice and Kenneth Newberger
Fund, 2012.121

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung grew up immersed in the punk and riot grrrl scenes of Olympia, Washington. The influence of this rebellious spirit is visible in *Hedda Gabler*, which features sprayed marks that resemble graffiti and a thumbtack piercing the surface of the canvas. The painting shares a name with a play by nineteenth-century Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen that portrays the rich inner life of a neurotic young woman.

Ellen Berkenblit
(American, b. 1958)

Love Letter to a Violet, 2015

Oil, charcoal, and oil stick on linen

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Sara Albrecht, 2015.17

A female face in profile dominates this work, expanding beyond the confines of the canvas. Ellen Berkenblit includes stereotypically “girly” details: thick eyelashes, a hair clip. Step closer to the surface and the confident, assertive lines she uses to depict these elements also become part of an abstract composition. Interlocking planes of punchy colors run through both figure and background, keeping the eye in vigorous motion.

Mary Heilmann
(American, b. 1940)

Metropolitan, 1999

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin by
exchange, 2012.13

A woozy web of red creeps across a nearly regular checkerboard: Mary Heilmann's *Metropolitan* simultaneously sets up and subverts systems of organization. Heilmann arrived in New York in the 1960s, when the male-dominated movement of minimalism was in full swing. Her paintings both work with and challenge tenets of minimalist art, such as the repeated use of geometric forms. Yet they are equally inspired by fashion, design, and pop culture.

Judy Ledgerwood
(American, b. 1959)

Sailors See Green, 2013

Oil and metallic oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Katherine S. Schamberg

by exchange, 2014.3

Judy Ledgerwood subverts the measured regularity of a grid with rhythmic yet erratic lines that drip and ooze as they zigzag across the canvas. Rationality gives way to mischief as the reflective sheen of the pattern disrupts visual order. Ledgerwood cites textile design—traditionally considered “women’s work”—as the source for the diamond pattern. The confectionary, feminine color palette was inspired by travel to India.

Tomma Abts
(German, b. 1967)

Dele, 2014

Acrylic and oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Marshall Field's by exchange,
2015.3

Tomma Abts's process is meticulous. She begins paintings like *Dele* without a preconceived idea of the finished product and obsessively reworks the surface. Forms gradually emerge through her focused labor of layering paint. The result is a complex illusionistic space that defies natural and visual logic: while the shapes appear at times to overlap, shadows and planes do not always align, and an implied light source confoundingly affects adjacent shapes in different ways.

Jackie Saccoccio
(American, b. 1963)

Portrait (Stubborn), 2013

Oil and mica on linen

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Emerge, 2014.29

Jackie Saccoccio brings her large and exuberant paintings to life through a highly physical and improvisational process: after applying paint, she shifts, jostles, and slams canvases into one another to create pools and streaks. Though there is no obvious figure in this painting, its vertical orientation lets us see it, as the title suggests, as a portrait—perhaps of a mood or presence as much as an individual sitter.

Ree Morton
(American, 1936–77)

One of the Beaux Paintings (#4), 1975
Oil on wood and enamel on celastic
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, the Pritzker Traubert Visionary Art
Acquisition Fund, 2016.1

Ree Morton called her transformation from suburban housewife to artist at age twenty-nine “a feminist classic, out of the kitchen and into the studio.” Morton plays on the sounds of *bow* and *beaux* (beautiful) to examine the clichés built into a symbol of femininity. Suspended in a starry expanse, the ribbon’s hourglass shape also resembles an artist’s diagram for one-point perspective: the way two-dimensional forms appear to recede into the distance to render depth.