

C O R E
M E M O R Y

ARTslanT
PRIZE EXHIBITION
2013

The ArtSlant Prize, now in its 5th year, is given to emerging artists that exhibit great potential and commitment to their artistic practice. Previous winners include Julie Davidow, Michael Zelehoski, Chantel Foretich, Robert Minervini, Holly Murkerson, Veronica Bruce and others. As part of this program, three to four winners are selected each year to exhibit at a major art fair in the United States; for the last three years, that fair has been Aqua Art Miami.

Over the course of the year, our users submit their work to be reviewed by a panel of jurors comprised of gallerists, curators, arts professionals and artists. From each round, eight Juried Winners are selected and from this pool of exceptional artists, the winners of the ArtSlant Prize are selected. One winner will receive a purchase award and one of their works will enter the ArtSlant Collection. The winner of the purchase award will be announced during the ArtSlant After-Party at Aqua Art Miami, December 7th, 9 PM - 1 AM.

The Winners of the ArtSlant Prize 2013

1st Place: Robin Kang

2nd Place: Maureen Meyer

3rd Place: Alison Pilkington

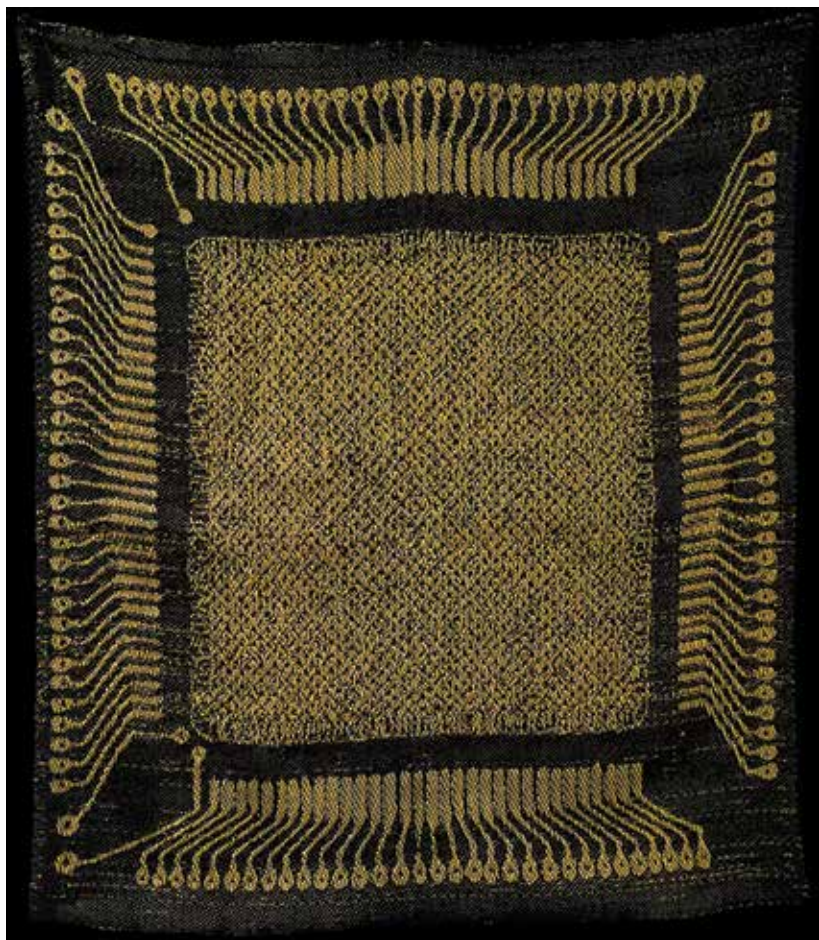
Honorable Mention: Alexis Courtney

Thank you to all who applied this year and who have supported the ArtSlant Prize program throughout the years.

ARTslant

8721 Santa Monica Blvd #843,
Los Angeles, CA 90069
USA

www.artslant.com



Core Memory, 2012. Woven silk and cotton. 45 in. x 46 in.

ROBIN KANG

PLAYING WITH MACHINES

By Joel Kuennen

Robin Kang interrogates machinery. From her roots as a photographer (BFA) and through her MFA in printmaking at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, it's always been about how the machine affects the artwork produced and what exactly can be done within that process of translation: idea to object. Her latest projects involve two very different explorations. Using digital jacquard looms, she recreates patterns taken both from ancient weaving cultures as well as the silicon culture of microprocessors, all the while interrupting and reinterpreting through the loom. Her concurrent project, *BRXL Blocks*, is an



Ancient Circuit Rising, Hand Jacquard Woven Cotton, 2013. 30 in. x 44 in

interrogation of architectural space through the use of very lightweight, transparent bricks made of PET plastic. These piecemeal constructors are farmed out to agencies of production in China.

Kang's BRXL Block installations leverage our relationship to the architectural. Installed, they take many forms: towers, walls, even extensions to preexisting architectural features. They sway as gallery-goers pass, so fragile and ethereal are they. When she began this project, Kang says she was coming from a place of industrial critique, a critique of the loss of craft. However, as she came to hold and play with these objects, she found they evoked another theme. "This other element of the

object itself came up during installation...I placed myself in this child-like place, just playing with blocks again... The fact that people respond to that and have a desire to play with these objects is exciting for me." One high-profile playmate is the Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel, who has one of Kang's blocks in his office and has been known to toss it to visitors, enjoying the surprise on their faces as they exert themselves to catch what appears to be a glass brick.

The loomed works bring together one of the oldest computational machines with contemporary technologies. Kang begins, "I was really interested in this relationship between the technologies of digital interfaces and the binary technology of the loom. I started researching images from early computers, specifically woven memory cores that were used in the 60's and 70's and are actually made of woven copper wires. There was this interesting physical connection and that was my jumping-off point." Taking an image, Kang processes it in Photoshop then sends it to the loom where the real interventions and play begin. "There is the moment where you are at the loom and you can switch out colors and put plastic or other materials in or reverse [the loom], whatever you want. It gives you a bit of creative freedom during the process but you don't really know how it's going to look until it's hanging in the studio."



One Woven Wire, 2012. A Single Handwoven Electrical Wire, Socket, Lightbulb. 40 in. x 60 in., hanging height variable.

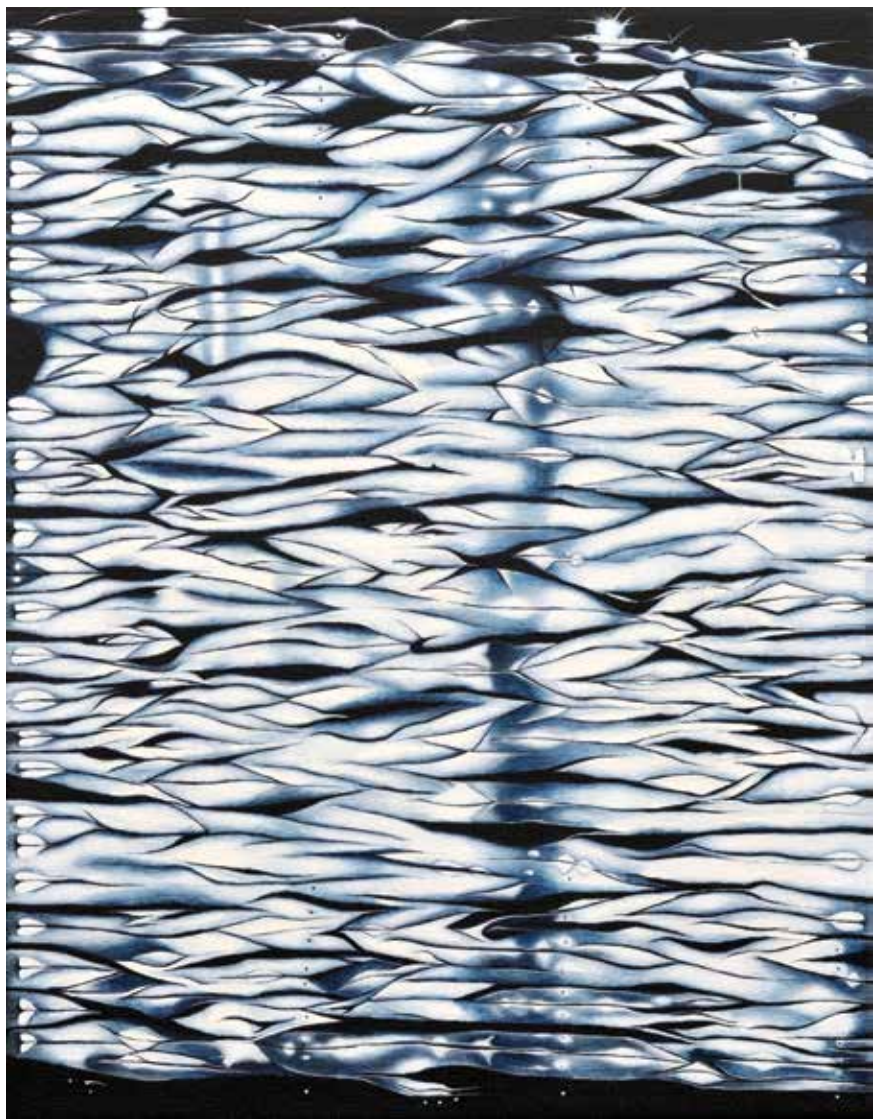
Within the mechanical process, Kang intervenes, playing the machine like an instrument, disrupting its flow to capture the diversions. Often, a finished piece is constructed out of multiple experiments. “I’ve been sewing together different weavings. For example *Ancient Circuit Rising* is a combination of weavings including test strips that I’ve added. I have this background in printmaking and I love those color tests and print nozzle checks, where the machine is involved in the process overtly.” Here, Kang reasserts her craft, taking together the elements that have been produced by the machine and assembling them to her aesthetic liking.

What is striking in her loomed pieces is that the patterns find a moment outside of time. Looking at the collection of Kang’s works, it is sometimes difficult to know whether a pattern is one that has been produced through muscle memory, passed down over generations or by core memory, writ in 1’s and 0’s and translated into the rapid movements of steel armatures. The delineation between ancient and modern technologies is blurred in Kang’s tapestries. “Some of the imagery I am using comes from cultures that were master weavers like the Nazca and Kazakh tribes who used highly geometric shapes. *Ancient Circuit Rising* is actually from a Nazca pattern. What is surprising is how similar some of those images are to what we think of as circuit boards.”

With any practice that relies on machinery, there are errors in translation. Kang, however, doesn’t view these as errors at all. “Some of these [ancient] patterns are faded or missing pieces so as a source material it has already changed. Then, when I put it on the loom, the aspect ratio changes. For instance, some of the images become elongated when transferred to the loom. These errors actually are a collaboration with the machine, something I wouldn’t have arrived at alone. It’s about the relationship between the hand and the machine and opening yourself up to create something other than an exact replica and to let there be a dialogue in the process. That’s when I have the most fun.”



Pink Intel, 2013. Hand Jacquard Woven Cotton. 16 in. x 15 in.



Approaching Thunder, 2011. Acrylic on canvas. 18 in. x 14 in.

MAUREEN MEYER

INDIGO MAJESTY

By James Patrick Benn

I discovered Maureen Meyer's work this summer when she was chosen by the jury to advance to the next round on the way towards the Artslant Prize. I forwarded the announcement email to Artslant's

Editor, Natalie Hegert, and asked, “Who is this person? Her work is beautiful.”

Her name is Maureen Meyer. She was born in Nuremberg, Germany and she has lived in many places. Of late, she resides, and paints, in New York City. Her education and experience have trained her in painting, textiles, and fashion. But it was at an indigo workshop in 2006 where she discovered indigo and united these three fields, setting out on the path that led to the paintings that we see in this collection here.

At first glance, one might think that Maureen Meyer creates these images electronically or overexposes photographic images. “Is she playing with x-rays?” one might wonder. One could reach these conclusions because the images are so bright; they are so flushed with light, a light complemented and brightened by the fading, and darkening, shades of indigo.

But these images are neither electronic, nor photographic; they are acrylic paintings. Given their abstract nature, one might suspect that she paints images conjured from her imagination, but this is not the case either.

These irregular lines are variations on themes that keep the eye moving. They build a structure, and Meyer ornaments that structure with light and dark.

She explained to me that her process begins by stretching, clipping, and or even stitching fabric, which she then paints. The result of this Hantai-esque *pliage* – these painted fabrics – are not the end product, they are just the point of departure, the model for the paintings. Maureen then takes what she sees in her “sketch,” mixes the indigo pigment into acrylic paint, and then recreates the fabric image on the canvas to create the paintings in this indigo series.

It is perhaps her study of indigo that I find most compelling about her work. There is something so rich and inescapable about this color. All colors can fade into white and darken to black, but no color does that quite like indigo. No color has quite the same emanating warmth; no color pulls you in like indigo does. Maureen and I spoke about these magical qualities and she smiled, “There is a seductive nature of indigo.”

If the indigo and the light pull me into her work, then I suspect that it is the strong patterns of geometry that keep me looking within them. Meyer creates that geometry with strong lines; they might be the thin indigo gridlines of the *Road and the Common*, or they might

be the long white-filled indigo stripes of *At the Foot of the Hill*. The lines never remain constant or hard; they are purposefully blurry, and they vary in thickness and spacing. Those irregular lines are variations on themes that keep the eye moving. They build a structure, and Meyer ornaments that structure with light and dark. Without the powerful lines, these would be very different paintings.



The Sky Suspended, 2013. Acrylic on Canvas.
30 in. x 20 in.

Those lines, decorated in dark and light and white and indigo, create a dreamy visual rhythm, patterns, often grids of light and dark. Sometimes, though, they are repeated and varied motifs, like we see in *Return and Departure* or *The Thunder Breaks*. In *Approaching Thunder*, the grid seems to be falling apart, but it does not; it hangs together, about to collapse. It is the resistance holding the piece together that creates a contradictory calm and tension, creating a delightful visual of the clichéd calm before the storm.

To me, Meyer's combination of bright light and soft darkness, held together with those strong lines and layers, outlined and filled with the seductive, majestic richness of indigo, create a rich painted place of calm and spirit. These pieces all bring me to that place that Charles Baudelaire describes in his poem, "Invitation to the Voyage," that place where:

*There all is order and beauty,
Luxury, peace, and pleasure.*

When I spoke with Maureen, she explained that the work we see here is just the beginning of her exploration of indigo. She says that she is only just now beginning to crack the code of this mysterious color. I look forward to seeing what comes next.



Narcissus, 2013. Oil on canvas. 20 cm x 25 cm.

ALISON PILKINGTON

PERCEPTUAL GAMES

By Peter Dobey

Alison Pilkington's paintings are unique in that they provoke thought itself. Many works of art will get the viewer thinking, but most rely on subject matter or conceptual thematization to accomplish this. Her paintings however, unsettle the viewer through their imagery alone. This doesn't come easy. The viewer has to want to really look, in order to question their own perception. So it is fitting that the artist,

who is completing her PHD in art practice at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin, is exploring the topic of Freud's notion of "the uncanny"; her paintings beckon us to reflect on the odd way perception itself makes us feel uneasy in our own familiar world.

Pilkington's paintings are deceptively comical in that they are visual representations of a series of cognitive misunderstandings. At first, the figures in them appear at face value, where they can easily be perceived as caricatures: cartoony personifications of objects that can appear as toasters, mailboxes, ice cubes, nightlights, etc., but upon further reflection, the figures that make up the foreground quickly recede into the background as the picture plane reveals an odd figure/ground schema. This confusion amounts to a perceptual game of trying to see two things at once, a painterly metaphor reminiscent of the famous "faces-vase drawing" of psychologist Edgar Rubin or Wittgenstein's "duckrabbit" – where, looked at one way the figure can be either a vase or set of two faces, or, a duck or a rabbit, but never both at the same time. We have to conceptualize them separately. This ambiguous splitting and conflation of visual thought is analogous to the idea of the uncanny, where something familiar can seem frighteningly alien to us as we try and navigate it and make sense of it. What Pilkington's art reveals is how evident these illusions are to us in everyday life.

Every one of us has had the uncanny experience of staring at an

Pilkington's paintings are visual representations of a series of cognitive misunderstandings.

ordinary object for so long that it loses its essence; a table for example, can become less table-like and more abstract over time, as can a word when repeated over and over in one's head. At her studio, Pilkington told me of an experience that led to a series of paintings. The painting *Precipice* shows a pink, squarish character with large round eyes and two wiry looking appendages sprouting from them. The biomorphic form was derived from an experience Pilkington had while staring at a digital music amplifier in a friend's studio. After a while, her thought process had transformed it into a face; if only for a fleeting moment, the inanimate object became almost human. But of course, it was not human, nor was it half-human. Its status could not be placed.

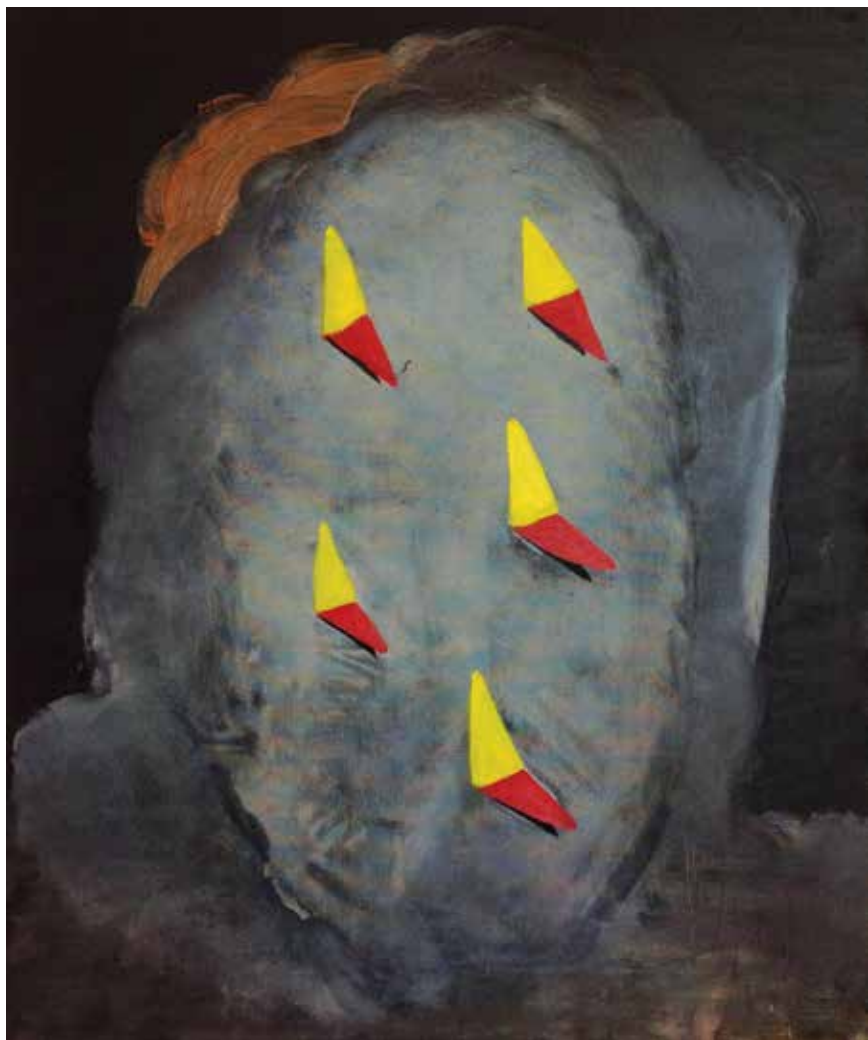
Seeing the face in the inanimate object, what had first been a design element of the electronic amplifier had become a smile on the painted canvas. Pilkington photographed the object, sketched it as she saw it, and called it "her." This character, transformed over numerous

iterations, is an example of what the artist calls “motifs,” figures that she takes and reinvents through the act of seeing and painting in repetition.

She describes her art as “cartoons,” a smart way of alluding to the playful subject matter while recalling the Renaissance era practice of using a “cartoon” or “cartone” to transfer the outline of a drawing onto a larger canvas in order to create a final painting. This is important because in many ways Pilkington’s work is an exercise of questioning what it is to replicate. Creating paintings in multiples, Pilkington makes replicas of her own work, repainting the same painting again and again, inevitably making small changes along the way. Each version that is removed from the original will either purposively or accidentally bring figurative changes with it. Just as the amplifier was not a face, so a rendition of an original painting is not its copy. “I’m a forger of my

Precipice, October 2013. Oil on canvas. 90 x 100 cm.





Monument, 2013. Oil on canvas. 50 x 60 cm.

own work,” she told me.

She suggests that the figures in her paintings, as well as the material of paint and the process of painting itself can be seen as a corollary of unconscious thought processes. In *Daydream*, blue rope-like lines of paint weave in and out of a bright pink, round face, allusions to the wily puppet strings of the unconscious mind. She describes her painting process as one that looks casual but takes a lot of time to get there; “I am trying to bring the material of paint and the strange imagery the motifs began from together.” Is this process – the attempt to bring the uncontrollable, malleable and unexplainable aspects of existence under our control – not the process we all hope to master in our own lives?



Catch, 2012. Archival Pigment Print. 20 in. x 24 in.

ALEXIS COURTNEY

SELF AND BELONGING

by Kara Q. Smith

Working across media, Alexis Courtney delicately exposes vulnerable sensitivities in both the artist and the viewer. Be it pleasure and frustration, or intimacy and rupture, Courtney's pieces oscillate between affectabilities with an effortless honesty.

Untitled, a series of photographs created over the last couple years, most prominently features the artist herself as subject. In *Shorts* (2013), Courtney sits topless, in a pair of cut-off jean shorts on a couch, her posture confidently poised toward the viewer, her gaze directed to the viewer's right, focused beyond the edge of the photograph. Her pose and expression convey an intentionality and depth. She is both confronting the viewer and avoiding a direct glance, averting being read as coy. The title suggests emphasis on the shorts, a pair I learned belonged to an ex-boyfriend. Here, is Courtney missing him? Channeling him? Expressing regret or desire? In other pieces in the series Courtney is found standing naked in a kitchen holding a rag, or lying on an

ironing board with her face turned directly at the viewer, or, in *Catch* (2012), bent over a balcony in an attempt to retrieve a fallen item.

The scenes are domestic and the compositions blend staged with comfort. In this space between what is and isn't, Courtney addresses belonging through housewife-like expectations (ironing, cleaning), yet rebels against them through bodily expression (nudity, gaze). *Untitled* is likely titled as such because the works are a part of a personal process, one that is quite universal: a battle of wanting and rejecting, the result of which is yet to be determined. When and where do we feel like we belong and how long does belonging last?

Courtney's recent video work creates a more active relationship with the viewer. *Moving Together* (2013) is a looped dual channel installation projected onto a screen hung higher than recommended for a comfortable viewing experience. On both sides of the screen, Courtney is dressed in black activating a punch balloon. One side askew from the other, the actions of each character seem to never match up, but come so close. Both balloons are continuously punched toward the viewer, causing an aversion to the piece and an attraction at the same time. If one stands long enough, will they ever synchronize? Conversely, *In/Out* (2013) exists on a 2" x 3" screen, sonorously drawing the viewer in close. The video slowly changes back and forth between

Exhaustion, 2013. Archival Pigment Print. 20 in. x 24 in.



close-ups of Courtney's face and that of a young male. Both breathe in and out deeply and slowly with pursed lips, creating soft whistles with each breath which never occur at the same time. It's a more serene and intimate type of discordance. Taken together, it's as if the videos should not exist without each other.

There is both a violent and calm side to relationships—between artist and viewer, romantic partners, self and belonging—often shifting. While the dualities in both video pieces seem to never match up, they come so close, offering the possibility of such occurrence. While failure seems to prevail in the dynamics of each video, akin to the detachment in her *Untitled* photographs, the deliberate effort and underlying desire embedded in each of Courtney's works delivers a glimpse of optimism in the journey of finding a sense of belonging.

Rag, 2012. Archival Pigment Print. 20 in. x 24 in.



NOTES

