

## **Beyond the Bio: Erwin Meyer**

*Beyond the Bio is a series that takes you past the canvas and into the minds of the artists and curators who build the contemporary arts community.*

German artist Erwin Meyer continues to explore his obsession with color, shapes, tension, rhythm and harmony. On view at his upcoming exhibition, will be 18 new individual jewel-like color harmonies in his “Color” series and two new series: “Tuscany and Umbria,” which beautifully synthesize the rich colors of these Italian regions, and “Black & White,” whose dynamic tensions captivate and surprise. Join Erwin Meyer for a private viewing on Friday, June 9 from 7:00-9:00 pm and for a public opening on Saturday, June 10 from 7:00-9:00 pm. The exhibit will be on view from June 11 – 17, with a closing reception on June 18 from 7:00-9:00 pm.

Click here for more information (<https://www.artallianceaustin.org/carousel/erwin-meyer-new-work>).



**Artist:** Erwin Meyer

**Primary Medium:** Oil

### **What motivates your work?**

My paintings are about harmonies of shapes and colors – from very small triangles to overpowering circles – all culminating in geometric fantasies. Often I create several consecutive canvases, as a necessary continuation of an image that just can't be stopped all of a sudden. Practically none of these shapes are the result of conscious planning. At first, a line may extend

from perhaps a triangle to a rectangle where it begins to form a different shape. From there I might extend lines in multiple directions, which turn into a myriad of shapes.

I would say I like to create a flash of sunshine on the wall that cheers people up a little. One can see different things in my paintings, and discover different compositions in various corners and sections that may not be apparent immediately.

### *COLOR*

The colors absolutely do not relate to anything in reality. Blue does not mean the sky, and red does not mean lipstick or love. Since I have traveled extensively throughout Europe, North Africa, and South America, sometimes regional colors have influenced me. My years in Germany, Geneva, Stockholm and London, where I studied at the Sir John Cass School of Art and Chelsea College of Art, and in San Francisco and New York City also greatly influenced my life. I had many different experiences, and learned to look at colors and shapes in many different ways. One needs a very great sense of color in order to be able to translate the variety of change into intriguing color compositions.



### *TUSCANY AND UMBRIA*

Because I like the colors that are prevalent in Tuscany and Umbria, I decided to do this series with fewer colors, but varying shades and tones – the colors that are largely prevalent in that area, in the landscape, cities, rivers and brickwork. There are fewer colors over a range of the colors prevalent in Tuscany and Umbria, in that one can change from lighter to darker tones of a

particular color. There are about seven to nine different colors that I use for those paintings. They vary in shades and tones. Some are light grey, dark grey, blue grey, and the same goes for browns and ochres and blues, and even light yellows.

### *BLACK & WHITE*

The color black is not necessarily one of negativity and depression, it can also be an element of emphasis, bringing out other shapes better if juxtaposed with them. I decided that it might be a cool idea to do something in black and white. This series creates challenges. One has to approach this whole process differently, making sure that the adjacent field is going to be the right color – one can't just draw lots of fields on a canvas, and then color them in black and white afterwards, because there will be very many conflicting areas, and then one is stuck, and has to redesign the whole thing. One has to do it as one goes along, taking care to create exciting dynamic tensions.



### **Why oils?**

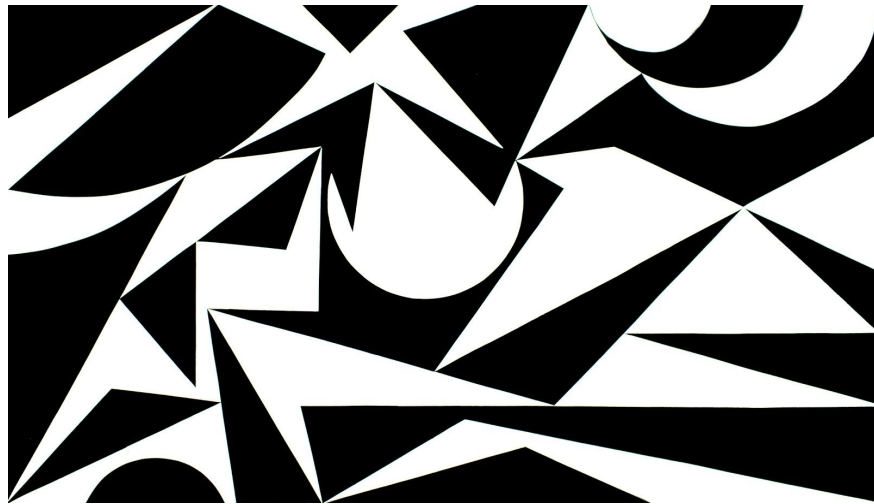
I paint in oils as a primary medium because they lend themselves to creating an extensive color palette.

### **How long have you been an artist and how has your practice changed over time?**

Initially in London, in 1976 and 1977, I was quite obsessed with creating pointillistic ink drawings of various subjects from the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand to gondolas in Venice, trees in Florence, etc. I also created many drawings of Georgian facades in London. I started painting in 1976, and created architectural hyper-realistic paintings of facades, buildings, and street scenes in Holland, London, France and Italy, and a few imaginary still lifes. When we moved to the

United States in 1978, I stayed briefly in central California, where I was fascinated by the crumbling textures of dilapidated barns and wooden fences and the colors in the flower fields. Later in San Francisco, I continued to paint architectural subjects – spiral staircases and facades. These were handled by a couple of galleries in San Francisco and New York City. After moving to NYC in 1980, I slowly started abstracting some of the architectural elements I used to paint in detail. By the mid-1980s, I was creating playful, and colorful canvases of imaginary facades and gardens. That was when I painted my first large-scale quadriptych on commission for a securities firm in La Jolla. It was about 20ft long and 8ft high. I really enjoyed seeing that in their offices! After that, I stopped painting in order to support my family as a technical translator.

When I started up again in about 2013, I wanted to create imaginary geometric fantasies, initially with some architectural elements, but by 2014, I was painting purely hard-edged geometric expressions of color harmonies, which I continue to explore at the moment.



**What are you working on right now?**

I paint geometric color expressions in oil on canvas, linen, or board. Sometimes I create multiple canvases in group or series, but the polyptychs are becoming very difficult now for me to maneuver. I really enjoy creating geometric color harmonies, and find them challenging and surprising.

**What does the Austin arts community need most as the city continues to grow?**

In view of its increasing growth and development, the Austin arts community might benefit from the creation of a nationally recognized art center for upcoming and emerging artists that gives new artists the opportunity for nation-wide exposure and recognition.

It would also be great if Austin could hold an architectural competition for the design of a world-class signature building, something similar to what Calatrava created for the Milwaukee Museum of Art or Gehry created for the Guggenheim in Bilbao.

*Erwin Meyer is a German artist living in Austin, Texas. He was trained as a graphic designer in Germany in the late 1950s, and worked in Geneva and Berlin. After traveling to South America and living in Stockholm, he moved to London in 1964, where he studied languages and worked as a translator. He continued to travel extensively throughout Europe and North Africa. In 1970, he met and married his wife, Racae. In 1975, he decided to study architecture at the Architectural Association, but he needed a portfolio and an 'A' level in Art to be accepted, so he studied painting at Sir John Cass College of Art and Chelsea College of Art. After passing his exams, he carried on painting, but due to the economic conditions in London in 1978, he decided to leave for the United States, instead of accepting a place at the AA. He painted in San Francisco, where he exhibited, and continued translating. In 1980, he moved with his wife and baby son to NYC to further his painting career. He had several successful exhibitions, but in order to support his family, he put his painting on hold except for a few months of intensive creativity in 1986, and worked for 33 years as a technical translator. In 2010, he designed a birthday card for his wife, because he couldn't find any suitable ones. He did that for a couple of years. In early 2013, his wife asked him to paint a canvas of rings for the archery training center she and their son owned. Erwin began painting again. He initially created paintings based on the birthday cards, but found them too convoluted and time consuming with too many details, so he started painting larger shapes on larger canvases. More recently, he has decided to create interconnecting and harmonizing geometric shapes on multiple canvases or boards.*

*In 2016, Erwin and Racae formed Erwin Meyer Studio, LLC. To make up for lost time, they decided to hold a studio show once a year to show his work. The first studio show was held in October 2016, and consisted of 55 oil paintings created from 2013 to 2016. This studio show is the result of his intensive exploration into geometric expressions, and the surprising and mesmerizing riot of color that has resulted. He says the paintings create themselves.*

**Keep up with Erwin on his**

**website:** <http://www.erwinmeyerstudio.com>

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/erwinmeyerstudio>

**and Instagram:** <http://instagram.com/erwinmeyerstudio>

*Beyond the Bio is curated by Art Alliance Austin. If you're interested in being featured email Ashlee at [apryor@artallianceaustin.org](mailto:apryor@artallianceaustin.org).*

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