

## Macroscope: Synchronicity in the Work of Goldner Ildiko and Carrie Meijer



Goldner Ildiko (left) ; Carrie Meijer (right)

“Paintings are music you can look at. Music is painting you can listen to.” – Miles Davis.

I have long thought about and written about paintings as what I call *frozen music* (a descriptor I borrowed from the great German poet Goethe’s characterization of architecture), so naturally I was delighted when one of my favourite musicians, the legendary trumpeter Miles Davis (who was also a nocturnal painter, as a matter of fact), chose to categorize these two

overlapping forms of self-expression in this fashion. Music has always evoked for me a sequence of visual images somehow aligned with the notes at play, and paintings, or any visual images really, also seem to display a still document of rhythm and melody interacting with colour and form. It’s even been demonstrated that the harmonic scale in music follows, or perhaps echoes is a better word, almost precisely the shape and form of flower petals, seashells and bird feathers, all of which are powerful representations of the spiral growth pattern evident in nature. The proportional harmony and ratio of ingredients involved in organic life forms of all kinds exhibit the selfsame pattern, captured famously in the Fibonacci sequence and what is popularly known as the golden mean, where one small section of the pattern maintains the exact same relationship with the bigger portions as the bigger portions do with the whole.

It happens to be 1:1.618; and it appears when beautiful patterns or sequences occur, whether in visual, physical or musical manifestations, and what makes them feel, look or sound *beautiful* to us is their adherence to this inherent pattern and its scales. It doesn’t seem to matter whether it’s the **Mona Lisa** by Leonardo or an abstraction by Mark Rothko, a fugue by Bach or a trumpet solo by [Miles Davis](#): it feels closer to perfection the closer it follows this basic sharing mechanism that, for some odd reason, has been embedded in any and all energy processes that result in discernible patterns, whether we happen to call them cactus rings, peacock tails, buildings, bodies, songs or drawings. Indeed, as Jackson Arn once pointed out in an article he wrote for the online art site Artsy, music has motivated artists from Matisse to Kandinsky to Mondrian to reinvent painting according to a seeming rhythm pattern following musical structures and designs:

The visual arts have always been influenced by music, and vice versa. From the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, however, Western artists sought something more than the usual symbiosis between art forms. They strained to evoke music’s

rhythms, structures and tones in their work – in short, to transform one art form into another.

Even if the avant-garde project of merging painting with music never fully achieves its goals – although it comes pretty damn close in paintings such as Mondrian's 1957 **Broadway Boogie Woogie**, with its brazen jazz evocations rippling in a colour-field splendour of dancing cubes – this is still a quixotic quest that has shared with us some of the greatest images in art history.

Arn further clarifies:

You can't talk about music and modernism without mentioning Walter Pater, the prolific 19th-century man of letters who is largely remembered for a single sentence he wrote in 1877: 'All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.' One interpretation of Peter's observations is that music is the only art whose form and content are not just inseparable, but the same. The reason music and painting differ, Pater went on to argue, is that painting is *mimetic*, trying to approximate the appearance of the physical world, and music is not.

But Pater was speaking in a 19th century which had yet to arrive at the domain of absolute abstraction occasioned by the invention of the camera, some thirty years before he was writing. And we now can offer an alternative insight: but what if painting is not necessarily an approximation of the physical world anymore? Or if it is, it is possibly, now anyway, more of an evocation of the sub-atomic world beneath the surface of things than what they look like on their outside skins.

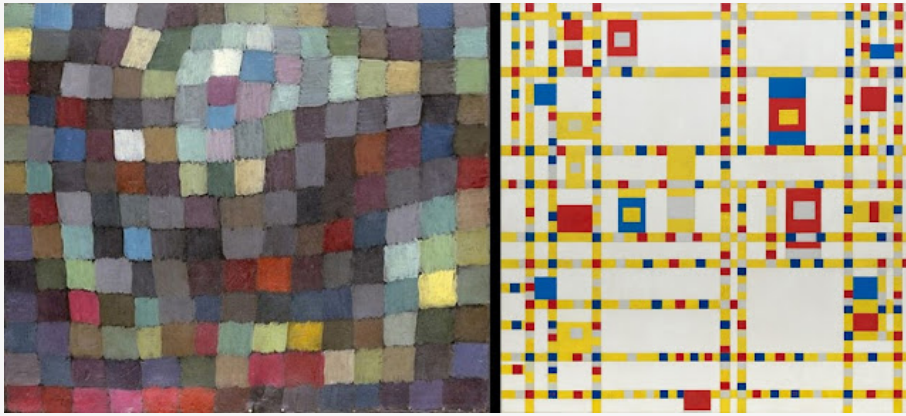
Two of the artists whose work feels to me most accurately to explore the interior world, as if utilizing a kind of *macroscopic* – a non-existent device (except in science fiction) designed to perform the opposite function of a

microscope – are those I am considering in this article. Equally fascinating to me is the occasional encounter with contemporary artists who seem to be talking to one another across great distances, as in the case of Goldner Ildiko of Pecs, Hungary and Carrie Meijer of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Or rather, it is their paintings and drawings which are talking to each other, in different dialects even, existing in a metaphysical or conceptual realm where distance is irrelevant. Their works, while looking quite different, of course, do seem to share a sibling fascination with rhythm and visual melody, as well as appearing to depict either an inner dimension of incredible smallness, as in the quantum world or an outward dimension of amazing vastness, as in the galactic scale. Their works are always untitled, perhaps as befitting something ineffable. Ildiko's are generally on A4 paper about 9 x 12 inches, using tempera, a water-based paint, and brush. Meijer's are on Schoellershammer paper, often about 42 x 59 cm and executed using Rotring technical pens, and she often pairs her images with photographs of similar echoing formal patterns, about 25 x 35 cm.

In an effort to corral my wayward imagination while engaging in a synesthetic resonance between these two artists, I was luckily visited by an elegant term from another German writer, W.G. Sebald, who talked of "form forks": a focal point, similar to tuning forks for sounds, but utilizing visual images instead. So I'll gladly borrow it here, since the relationship between the pictures of Ildiko and Meijer seem to share so much of the formal requirements of synesthesia, the quirky ability to perceive in two drastically different media the same or similar sensory experiences.

Hearing colours is one example; smelling sounds might be another. Therefore I'll readily oversimplify this zone of collision by claiming that both Ildiko and Meijer represent for me form forks, a grasp of structures which resonate visually for the eye exactly as an aural vibration does for the ear. They are, in other words, attuned to the underlying architecture of vision to a degree which permits, as the best jazz does, a wide latitude of potential interpretation for the viewer/listener. Both Meijer and Ildiko are purveyors of

*form forks* par excellence, as these works from 2019-2021 all reveal so clearly.



**May Picture**, Paul Klee, 1925 ; **Broadway Boogie Woogie**, Piet Mondrian, 1957.

But any interpretative faculties hereabouts, in the sense of the classical ekphrasis used to evoke the poetic feelings elicited by any formal art work, is, as you might expect, not at all of the literal variety. And again, Dorn touches on why this is the case: “Pater was writing at the dawn of the modern art revolution when literal representation was being purged from art and literature like pests from an old house. Abstract painters, abandoning the notion of a subject in favour of pure form, needed some rationale for their experiments. Small wonder then that so many of them looked to music.” These two artists, Ildiko and Meijer, in ways hauntingly similar to earlier abstractionists such as Mondrian or Klee, definitely manage to evoke a maximum of deep feelings through a minimal economy of means. They are thus simultaneously both maximalist and minimalist at the same time: equally similar to both Bach’s and Miles’s musical lingo.

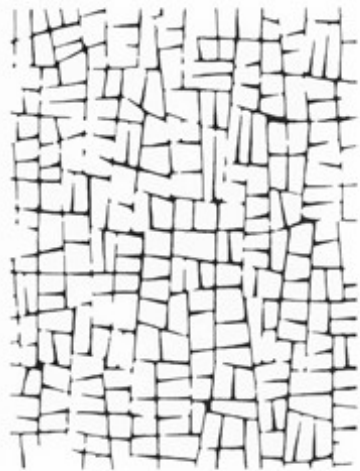
When we begin to examine the modernist ethos closely, and closely enough to understand that so-called postmodern artists such as Ildiko and Meijer are, in actuality, merely operating within the later or last stages of the

mature modern, not *after* its extinction, their agenda becomes clear. This is because modernism has not become extinct, much as some young artists might wish it would go away and leave them alone. They are still, it seems evident to me, attempting to recreate visually which music does sonically. Miles Davis would have understood this implicit fact by sheer instinct, which is why he claimed, quite rightly, I think, that paintings were music you can watch and music was paintings you could listen to. Which is also why, I believe, it’s perfectly easy to see and hear exactly what these images *sound* like. But, as with most of the great works of art, whether visual or musical in their language, that doesn’t mean it’s easy to explain to another being what they might *mean*. They mean just what they say.

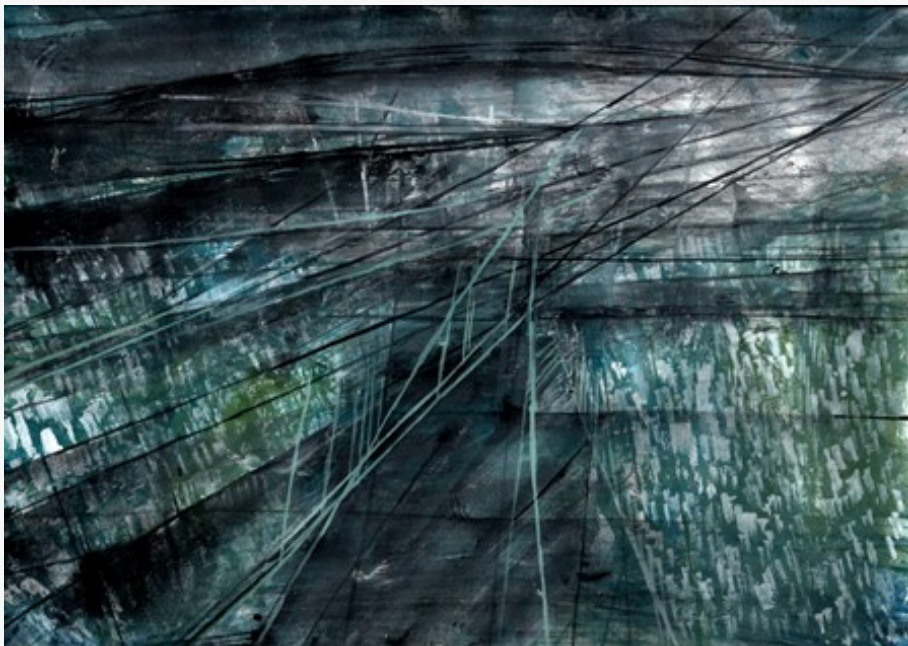


Carrie Meijer (left) ; Goldner Ildiko (right)





Carrie Meijer



Goldner Ildiko



– **Donald Brackett** is a Vancouver-based popular culture journalist and curator who writes about music, art and films. He has been the Executive Director of both the Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada and The Ontario Association of Art Galleries. He is the author of the recent book [Back to Black: Amy Winehouse's Only Masterpiece](#) (Backbeat Books, 2016). In addition to numerous essays, articles and radio broadcasts, he is also the author of two books on creative collaboration in pop music: [Fleetwood Mac: 40 Years of Creative Chaos](#), 2007, and [Dark Mirror: The Pathology of the Singer-Songwriter](#), 2008, as well as the biographies [Long Slow Train: The Soul Music of Sharon Jones and The Dap-Kings](#), 2018, and [Tumult!: The Incredible Life and Music of Tina Turner](#), 2020. His latest work in progress is a new book on the life and art of the enigmatic Yoko Ono, due out in early 2022.