

Kany, Daniel. "Paintings in the key of Dylan anchor strong line up at UMMA", *Portland Press Herald*. August 25, 2013.

Walking into the main gallery of the University of Maine Museum of Art and being greeted by Joanne Freeman's work is like sitting back after a hard day and turning on some great music; on the one hand, it's calm and relaxed, but it also moves.

Some things transport you by changing the place you are into precisely where you want to be. This is what Freeman's paintings do.

They are significantly-sized elegant white canvases with just a few loops of color: red, blue, teal, purple, yellow and so on.

Each is handsome, but as a group they exude a powerful sense of symphonic calm.

They have the rhythmic feel of Morris Louis, but most resemble Brice Marden's looping canvases from the 1990s.

Freeman directly references musicality in her work. In fact, the strongest piece in the show is titled "Three Chords" -- a direct quote of Bob Dylan.

Considering the work's proximity to Marden, this is a little weird, since one of Marden's best known paintings is "The Dylan Painting" at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. (Marden was married to Joan Baez's sister and was close to Dylan and other folk artists.)

By referencing Dylan, Freeman is opening the door to references and comparisons. Is she doing a Brice Marden cover? If so, why not? What musician, after all, hasn't covered Dylan? If it's a tribute, then it's an elegant tribute -- whatever the mix of Dylan and Marden and anything else.

Musically, the three-chord thing has meaning on its own. The basic classical music progression of sub-dominant, dominant, tonic (4,5,1 / F,G,C, etc) and rock 'n' roll use these same three chords for the same reason: If you play those three major chords, you hit every note in the major scale and thereby absolutely establish key.

Freeman's use of cool and warm loops on white is like establishing a musical key -- particularly since they are internally-structured abstract works. They might seem loosely improvised, but don't fool yourself: Freeman cuts out guides for the loops and clearly works her colors and textures with a demanding appetite for perfection. She is not after fussy evenness, but the richly-textured and complex subtlety of a master painter.

KATHRYN  
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While they stand strongly as a group, her weaker works prove Freeman doesn't have a simple recipe for success. The pieces with angled edges, for example, feel much stiffer than the ones with only swooping curves. Here again, Freeman seems to be tapping into musical technicalities. After all, distortion (like on Dylan's electric guitar) is a sine wave whose top curves are cut off by a flat ceiling; and Freeman's curtailed forms look just like such electric signals.