

ROSEMARIE FIORE

SMOKE PAINTINGS

ROSEMARIE FIORE

SMOKE PAINTINGS

VON LINTEL GALLERY · NEW YORK

FIRE/WORKS: ROSEMARIE FIORE’S INCENDIARY ENDEAVORS

*Fire is the immeasurable uncontrollable element,
concerning of which it is hard to say whether
it consumes more or produces more.*¹

Fireworks occupy a unique place in our cultural consciousness.² We instinctively know them to be celebratory, and in America they are intimately linked to a historical narrative of liberation and sovereignty. Dating back to the seventh century, fireworks were imported into Europe from China. By the Renaissance, they had developed into a particular art form with two distinct schools: a northern European one based in Germany and the other centered in Italy. In Venice especially, fireworks became an important part of cultural life, including most notably a part of the Redentore Festival that celebrated the end of a plague in the sixteenth century, still commemorated today. Their creation, for both warfare and festivals, was detailed extensively in Book Ten of Vannoccio Biringuccio’s 1540 treatise *De la pirotechnia*. Fireworks are understood by most as creating an abstract and ephemeral art form in the sky, but they are rarely considered in a more conventional art-making context. For the transgressive practice of Rosemarie Fiore, however, fireworks have served as her primary medium to create an extensive body of work in two- and three-dimensions over the last ten years.

In the hands of Fiore, fireworks are instruments of creation with limitless potential that allow her to employ a process-based method that balances precariously between chance and choice. In any medium (and she has worked in nearly all of them), the artist consistently challenges the boundaries of this diametrical relationship. She works collaboratively with a selected mechanism: a waffle iron, a video game, a lawnmower, a pinball machine, an amusement park ride (fig. 1-2), or, in this case, fireworks, to create what are perhaps best described as “events.”³ She is artistically descended from a lineage that includes Yves Klein, Carolee Schneemann, and Cai Guo-Qiang, and, like them, Fiore combines performance with painting, drawing, and various other art-making strategies in a desire to engage directly with the forces of chaos and control. This results in works that confront these collaborative processes. Created both intuitively and deliberately to a point, Fiore’s *Smoke Paintings* are also deterministic and thus share an affinity with the dynamical systems of chaos theory in which small changes in conditions can yield widely divergent outcomes. In the creation of these works, the forces involved ultimately, in the artist’s own words, “engage in combat.”



Figure 1
Good-Time Mix Machine: Scrambler Drawings, Process documentation with 1964 Eli Bridge Scrambler ride, 2004, Courtesy of Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO, Photograph by E.G. Schempf

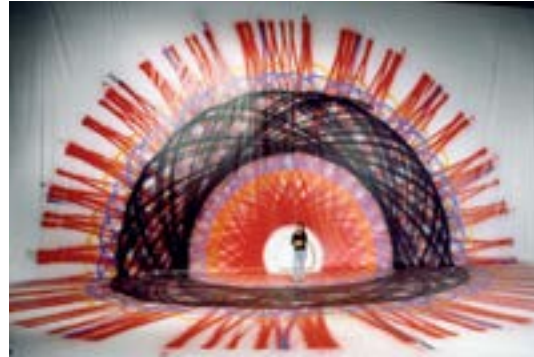


Figure 2
Good-Time Mix Machine: Scrambler Drawings, Installation view, 2004, Acrylic on vinyl, 60 x 60 feet, Courtesy of the Queens Museum of Art, Flushing, NY, Photograph by Stefan Hagen



Figure 3
Smoke Painting Machine: Sky City, 2012, Color smoke firework canisters, wood, caster wheels, plaster, resin, foil, tape, marker, polyurethane, fuse, 31 x 37 x 30 inches, Courtesy of the artist

The genesis of the *Smoke Paintings* occurred while Fiore was at a residency in Roswell, New Mexico, in 2001–2002. In an appropriately serendipitous moment, she witnessed the streak of a smoke bomb as it rolled across a concrete surface, leaving behind an unmistakable dotted line. Realizing that the firework could serve as semi-controlled mark-making device, Fiore began her investigation into the efficacy of the medium. Since that time, her arsenal of pyrotechnical implements has expanded to include Monster Balls, Smoke Crackers, Jumping Jacks, Dinosaur Eggs, Grand Blooms, and Magic Whips, among others, and the works have become increasingly complex with the artist's growing command of her materials. For her most recent body of work, Fiore has created rolling devices made of resin and plaster that are used to direct the smoke through a nozzle-like chamber and deliver the pigment onto the paper. These inherently sculptural devices have names such as *Sting Ray*, *Sputnik One*, and *Sky City* (fig. 3), but they are merely intended to be the conduit through which the *Smoke Paintings* are made. They are part Catherine Wheel, part spray-nozzle, and part wobbly spirograph. Each device possesses a hallmark as unique as its name from the wave-like zigzag of *Ripple* seen in *Smoke Painting #28* to the circular dot pattern of *Blue Iris* in *Smoke Painting #34*.

Fiore first puts down the “ground” of each work by rolling the firework-loaded device over the paper as smoke is forced through the outlets. It is an improvised choreography in which the artist pushes, pulls, swings, twirls, spins, and ultimately dances with the device (fig. 4). This is followed by a lengthy process of collaging pieces from firework-marked paper in the shape of circles and streaks. She stratifies these cutouts while also folding, scoring, or even tearing the paper to form a complex physical topography and labyrinthine metaphysical space in sculptural low relief. Fiore pushes the limits of her control to the precipice as part of this creative process.⁴ Her art historical knowledge is broad; she has drawn inspiration from the enigmatic nocturnes of Ralph Albert Blakelock, the psychologically charged images of Andrew Wyeth, and the automatist fumage technique of Wolfgang Paalen. While Fiore's insatiable appetite for experimentation assures that no mechanism is out-of-bounds for art making, her earnest visual curiosity also excludes no artist from considered study.

Intrinsically generative, the *Smoke Paintings* transcend conventional painting and collage to achieve a seemingly contradictory state where the ephemeral is indefinitely held in a state of suspension.⁵ A cause and effect relationship is established between the artist and the medium—a methodology that has been similarly employed by John Cage to create a series of watercolors and other works on paper in the late 1980s and in 1990. Chance was the defining characteristic of Cage's practice, and he relied heavily on the *I Ching*, or Chinese Book of Changes, an ancient divination text, to create his works. Fiore eschews a rigorous formal framework approach for a more intuitive approach in the creation of the *Smoke Paintings*, but like Cage she embraces and even delights in the chance elements that may be beyond her control.



Figure 4
Smoke Painting with Smoke Painting Machine: Sting Ray, Process documentation, 2012, Courtesy of Art Omi, Ghent, NY, Photograph by Ross Willows



Figure 5
Firework Drawing #74, 2011, lit firework residue on Fabriano paper, 48 1/4 x 59 1/2 inches



Figure 6
Fireworks, Installation view, 2012, Courtesy of Anderson Gallery, VCU School of the Arts, Richmond, VA, Photograph by Terry Brown

Filled with circular bursts, sweeping arcs, zigzags, and flashes of color, the *Smoke Paintings* have an inherent ambiguity of scale that could suggest we are peering through a telescope witnessing history through a distant astronomical occurrence or observing the unpredictable movement of protozoa through a microscope.⁶ These works, however, are not representational in a conventional sense. It has been noted that Fiore's work, based as it is on collaborating with aggressive mechanisms, becomes a critical investigation into issues of gender, power, aggression, and sexuality, but these are often merely byproducts of an all-consuming practice. Her earliest firework drawings included brilliant chromatic displays of colorful circular shapes interspersed with scorched remnants of flammables and areas of white paper that share formal similarities with the early modernist works of Franz Kupka or Robert Delaunay (fig. 5). These gave way to considerably more dense and complex compositions as Fiore has gained greater precision using the mercurial medium. The most recent series of *Smoke Paintings* combines the diaphanous sweeping marks left by the rolling device with the regularized geometry of her cutout shapes.

Fiore's creative process lies at the intersection of chance and choice and her insatiable appetite for experimentation and desire to direct forces that otherwise appear ungovernable are at the very root of her practice. For the artist, the action of making these works is an intoxicant, and that action, as critic Lilly Wei has noted, is a type of choreography as well as a private rite of exorcism.⁷ It is, in fact, action painting, but of a very different sort, and yet still reminiscent of the one Hans Namuth captured in his 1950 film of Jackson Pollock pouring paint in the studio. While Fiore shares an interest in automatism, these works emanate from someplace other than the artist's unconscious. They come from a congenital urge to delve deeply into and experiment with an intricate collaborative process that constantly challenges the notion of control. Wrestling with these challenges is intrinsic to Fiore's incendiary endeavors.

Marshall N. Price, New York, July 2013

¹ Pliny quoted in Vannoccio Biringuccio, *De la Pirotechnia*, trans. by Cyril Stanley Smith and Martha Teach Gnudi (New York: The American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, 1943), iii.

² An earlier version of this essay accompanied Rosemarie Fiore's 2011 exhibition *Artificiere*.

³ In 2004, Fiore employed the use of a Scrambler amusement park ride to create monumental hypocycloid drawings. These were exhibited in *Good-Time Mix Machine: Scrambler Drawings* at Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO, and also at the Queens Museum of Art, New York, NY. She has also created projects using the Tempest and Missile Command video games, an Evel Knievel pinball machine, her Hot Rod lawnmower, and other unconventional means.

⁴ Jonathan Stuhlman, "When Choice Meets Chance (The Two May Dance)," in *Rosemarie Fiore: Painting, Performance, Machines*, exhibition catalogue (Charlottesville, VA: Second Street Gallery, 2008), n.p.

⁵ Generative is a term that is usually reserved for digitally created art using a mathematical system, algorithm, or other type of randomized process. It is perfectly suited to Fiore's *modus operandi* of combining the clearly circumscribed with the wildly unpredictable.

⁶ Stephen Maine has identified the ambiguity of scale that leads to the dual nature of the drawings. Stephen Maine, "Rosemarie Fiore," <http://www.artcritical.com/2009/05/08/rosemarie-fiore-pyrotechnics-at-priska-c-juschka-fine-art/> (accessed July 8, 2013).

⁷ Lilly Wei, "Pyrotechnically Yours: Rosemarie Fiore draws with fireworks," *Art On Paper* 14 (September/October 2009): 20.

Smoke Painting #27, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
33 3/4 x 30 1/4 inches



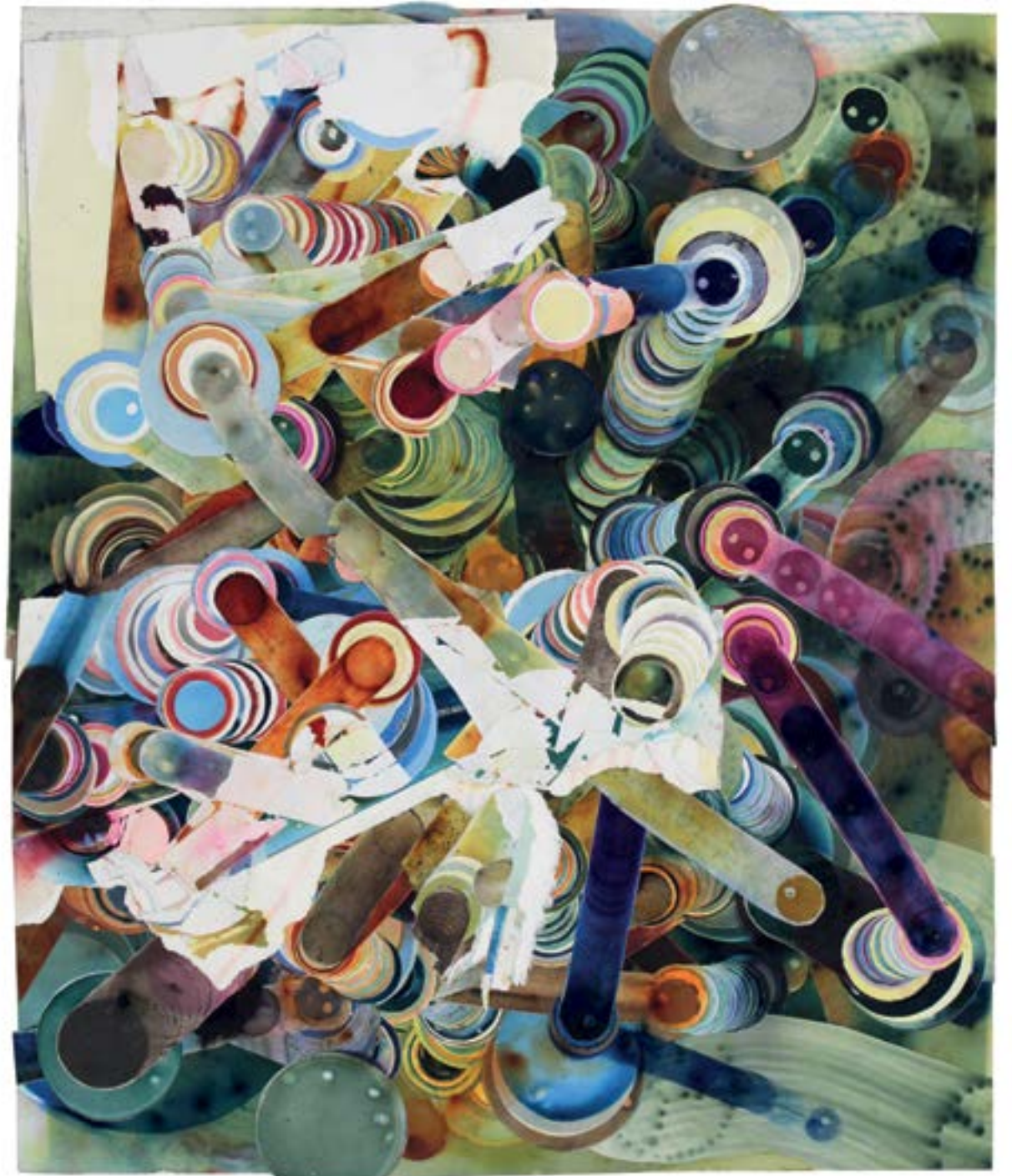
Smoke Painting #28, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
41 x 48 1/4 inches



Smoke Painting #29, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
34 x 28 7/8 inches



Smoke Painting #30, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
49 1/2 x 41 inches



Smoke Painting #31, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
48 7/8 x 41 inches



Smoke Painting #32, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
37 3/4 x 41 3/4 inches



Smoke Painting #33, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
29 1/2 x 33 1/8 inches



Smoke Painting #34, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
59 x 70 3/4 inches

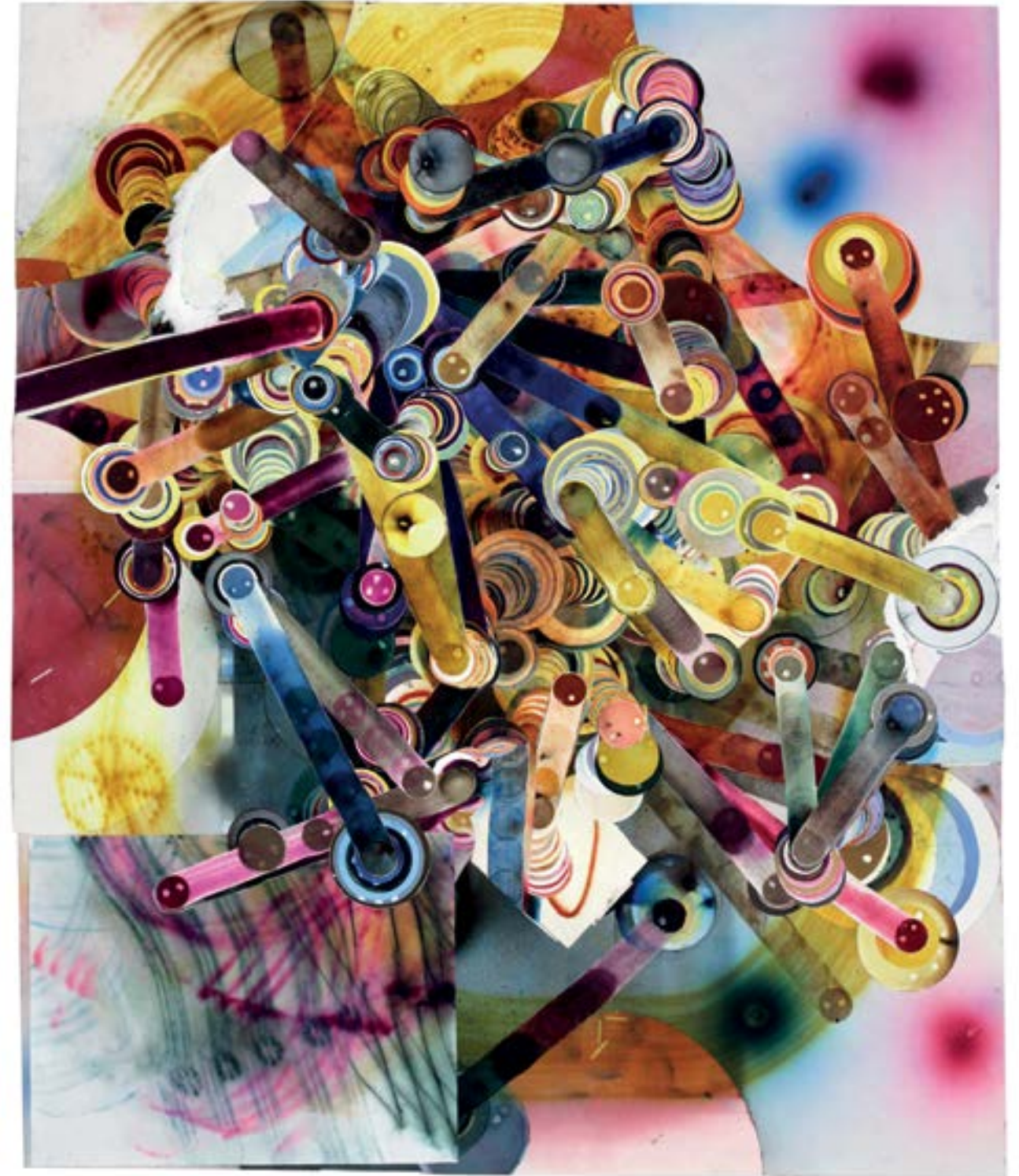
next pages:
Smoke Painting #34, detail





Smoke Painting #35, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
70 1/4 x 59 1/4 inches

next pages:
Smoke Painting #35, details





Smoke Painting #36, 2013
color smoke firework residue on paper
40 1/4 x 72 1/4 inches

next pages:
Smoke Painting #36, details







MARSHALL N. PRICE

Marshall N. Price received his Ph.D. in art history from The Graduate Center, CUNY and has written and lectured widely on American art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Since 2003, he has been at the National Academy Museum in New York where he is the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.

ROSEMARIE FIORE

Rosemarie Fiore has shown extensively in the United States over the past two decades, and, in 2013-14, the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) will exhibit her smoke paintings in Savannah, Atlanta, and Hong Kong. Her work has been discussed in numerous publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Art in America*, *The Village Voice*, and *New York Magazine*.

1972 Born in Mount Kisco, NY
Lives and works in Bronx, NY

EDUCATION

- 1999 MFA, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL
- 1994 BA, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
- 1993 Wimbledon School of Art, London, UK
Studio Art Centers International, Florence, Italy

SELECTED SOLO AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY
- 2014 *Firework Drawings*, SCAD Moot Gallery, Hong Kong, China
- 2013 *Smoke Paintings*, Von Lintel Gallery, New York, NY (catalogue)
Firework Drawings, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA
Firework Drawings, SCAD Gallery 1600, Atlanta, GA
- 2012 *Fireworks*, Anderson Gallery, VCUarts, Richmond, VA
Smoke Paintings: Sky City, Rosenberg Gallery, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY
- 2011 *Artificiere*, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, NY (catalogue)
- 2009 *Pyrotechnics*, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, NY
- 2008 *Painting, Performance and Machines*, Second Street Gallery and LYDM Gallery, Charlottesville, VA (catalogue)
Firework Drawings, Gallery Bar, New York, NY
- 2006 *House of Fiction*, Winkleman Gallery, New York, NY
- 2005 *Firework Drawings*, Doral Bank, New York, NY
- 2004 *The Good-Time Mix Machine: Scrambler Drawings*, Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO
Plus Ultra Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
ADA Gallery, Richmond, VA
Tony Wight Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2002 Roswell Museum and Art Center, Roswell, NM
Bodybuilder and Sportsman Gallery, Chicago, IL
Midway Contemporary Art, Saint Paul, MN

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *MAKE/DO: Contemporary Artists Perform Craft*, Gwen Frostic School of Art, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI; travelling to University Museum of Contemporary Art, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA (catalogue)
Bronx Arts Space, Bronx, NY
- 2013 *Morphology of the Print*, Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY
Paper Plus One, Von Lintel Gallery, New York, NY

2012 *Falling Through Space Drawn by the Line*, Center for the Arts, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY
Lydia, Picasso and Friends, LYDM Gallery, Charlottesville, VA

2011 *Extreme Materials 2*, Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY
TBV, Ruffin Gallery, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (catalogue)

2010 *Art on Paper 2010: The 41st Exhibition*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC (catalogue)
Fire Art, Hunterdon Museum, Clinton, NJ

2009 *Anthem: an All-American Diaspora*, Longwood Arts Center, Bronx, NY

2007 *Workspace Program 2001-07 Exhibition*, Dieu Donn  Papermill, New York, NY (catalogue)
Sosabeol International Art Expo, Lake Pyongtaek Art Museum, Pyongtaek Korea (catalogue)
Roswell Artist-in-Residence Program 40th Anniversary Exhibition, Roswell, NM (catalogue)
INTERSECTIONS: Collaborative Forces from the Artist-in-Residence Program, Abrons Art Center, New York, NY

2006 *The Spirit of Color*, Amy Simon Fine Art, Westport, CT
Permanent Adolescence, Cuchifritos, New York, NY
Year 06 Art Projects, Winkleman Gallery, London, England

2005 *Sir Isaac's Loft*, The Franklin Institute Science Museum, Philadelphia, PA
Adaptation Syndrome, The Hand Workshop, Richmond, VA
Blasts, G Fine Art, Washington, DC

2004 *Queens International 2004*, Queens Museum of Art, Flushing, NY
Process, Dorsky Projects, Long Island City, NY
All About Drawing, The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE
Samson Projects, Boston, MA
War and Peace, Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY

2003 *New Prints 2003/Autumn*, International Print Center New York, New York, NY
Yard, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY (catalogue)
Gun and Wound Show, White Box Annex, New York, NY

2002 *New Projects and Collaborations*, Dieu Donn  Papermill, New York, NY
The Accelerated Grimace, Silverstein Gallery, New York, NY
UnMediated Vision, Salina Art Center, Salina, KS
Video Cafe: About The Mind (Not Everything You Always Wanted To Know), Queens Museum of Art, Flushing, NY
The Dialogue, Thomas Erbin Gallery, New York, NY
Young Art, Museo de Las Americas, Puerto Rico

2001 Queens College Godwin Turbach Museum, Flushing, NY
Artist in the Marketplace: Annual Exhibition, The Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY (catalogue)
Ha Ha, Revolution Gallery, Detroit, MI
Suk, Sesto Senso Gallery, Bologna, Italy

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Anderson Museum of Contemporary Art, Roswell, NM
Art Omi, Ghent, NY
The Aspen Collection, New York, NY
Capital One, Richmond, VA
Cosmopolitan Hotel, Las Vegas, NV
Dieu Donn  Papermill, New York, NY
Flaunt Magazine, Los Angeles, CA
The Franklin Institute Science Museum, Philadelphia, PA
Lower East Side Print Shop, New York, NY
Neuberger Berman, Rome, Italy
The Weatherspoon Museum of Art, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC

Published by

Von Lintel Gallery

520 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10011

Tel 1 212 242 0599
Fax 1 347 464 0011

gallery@vonlintel.com
www.vonlintel.com

© 2013 Von Lintel Gallery, New York
© Artwork: Rosemarie Fiore
© Photography: Rosemarie Fiore
(except where credited otherwise)
© Essay: Marshall N. Price
Design: Harald Fersch, Munich
Printed by: Digital City Services, New York

No part of the publication may be
reproduced or transmitted in any form
or by any means, electronic or mechanical,
including photocopy, recording or any
information storage and retrieval system
without prior permission from the publisher.

An abstract painting featuring a large, curved, light blue shape at the top left, a yellow and orange area with red dots in the middle left, and a large, textured, reddish-brown area on the right. In the bottom left, there are several overlapping circular and oval shapes in dark green, orange, and blue, some with concentric rings and dots. The overall style is expressive and colorful.

VON LINTEL GALLERY
520 WEST 23RD STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10011
WWW.VONLINTEL.COM