

James Barron Art

Moira Dryer and Laura de Santillana: Air and Light

April 14 - May 20, 2023



VISIT US BY APPOINTMENT
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Moira Dryer and Laura de Santillana: Air and Light

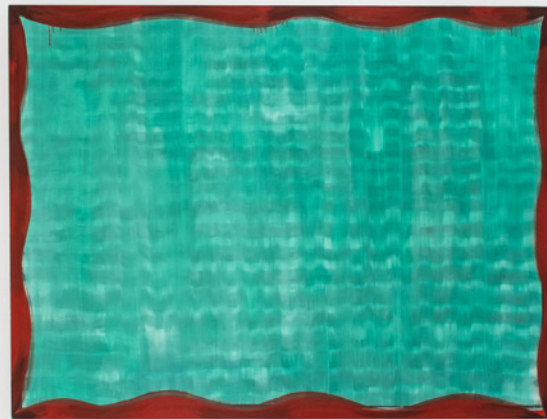
Opens April 14, 2023

We are pleased to present works by Moira Dryer and Laura de Santillana, two artists who have not been exhibited together before. Despite working in different mediums, Moira Dryer with casein on ordinary plywood, and de Santillana with glass that has been compressed nearly into a plane, their art is both pithy and delicate. Both defied the nature of their materials: the weight of wood and glass became sheer lightness and effervescence. Both played with transparency and translucency, and sadly, both died in the prime of their careers, having achieved so much, but with much more left to be said. Both were poets who drew inspiration from Italian art. Born two years apart, Dryer in 1957 and de Santillana in 1955, their work deserves greater attention, and we are proud to exhibit them together.



“It contains nothing, but it’s still a container, a vessel.
It contains color and light.”

Laura de Santillana



“[Dryer’s] painting was a subtle and volatile mix of air and light,
experimentation and perfectionism, open-ended casualness
and resolution, understatement and high concept.”

Ross Bleckner



MOIRA DRYER

Culture Shock, 1990
casein on wood
46 x 48 inches
(116.8 x 121.9 cm)





LAURA DE SANTILLANA

Tokyo-Ga (Bright Yellow - Celeste), 2016
hand blown compressed shaped glass
11 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 2 inches (29.5 x 22 x 5 cm)

NFS



LAURA DE SANTILLANA

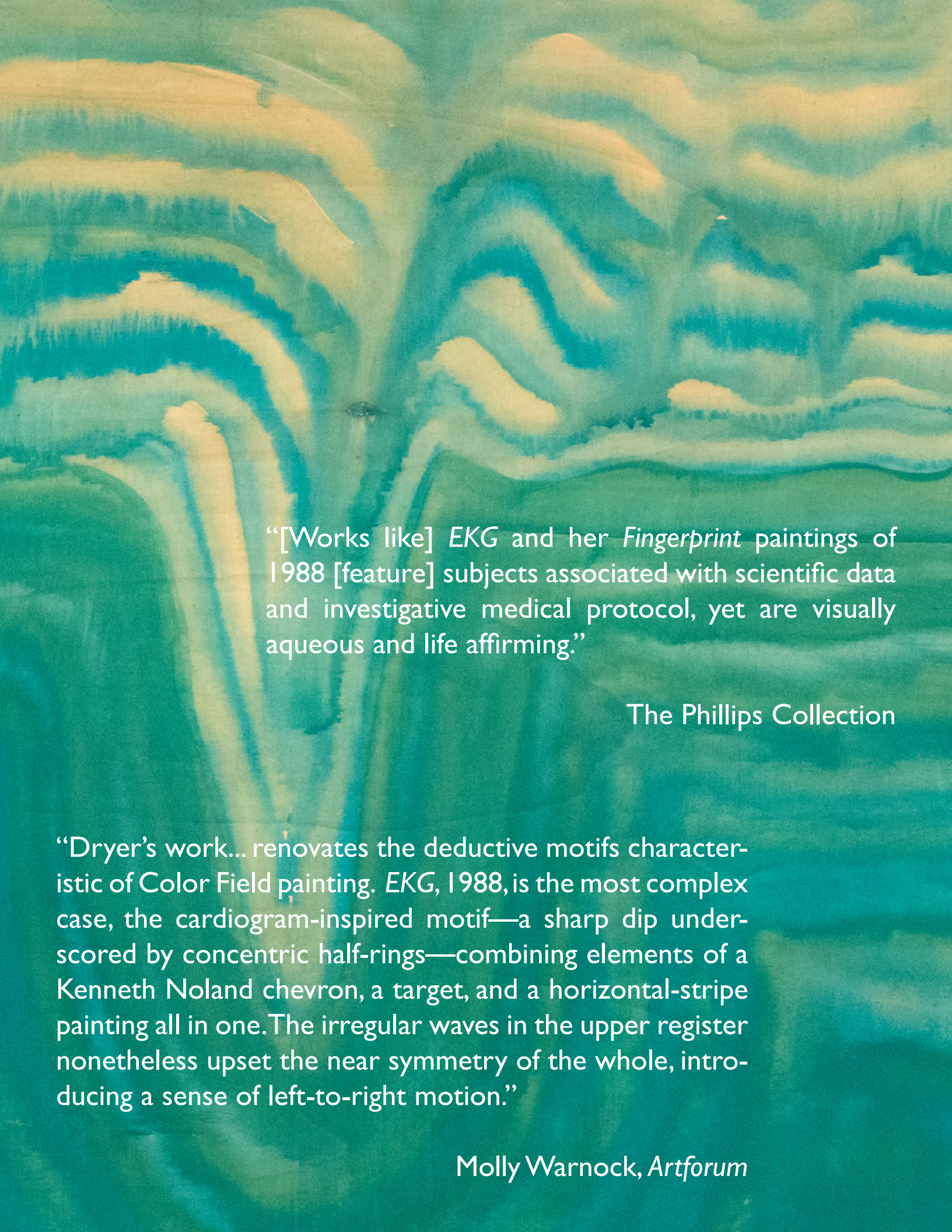
Flag XIII, 2001
hand blown compressed shaped glass
14 3/4 x 16 x 1 3/4 inches (37 x 41 x 4 cm)



MOIRA DRYER

EKG, 1988
acrylic on wood
48 x 48 inches
(121.9 x 121.9 cm)





“[Works like] *EKG* and her *Fingerprint* paintings of 1988 [feature] subjects associated with scientific data and investigative medical protocol, yet are visually aqueous and life affirming.”

The Phillips Collection

“Dryer’s work... renovates the deductive motifs characteristic of Color Field painting. *EKG*, 1988, is the most complex case, the cardiogram-inspired motif—a sharp dip underscored by concentric half-rings—combining elements of a Kenneth Noland chevron, a target, and a horizontal-stripe painting all in one. The irregular waves in the upper register nonetheless upset the near symmetry of the whole, introducing a sense of left-to-right motion.”

Molly Warnock, *Artforum*



LAURA DE SANTILLANA

Quartet, 2018
hand blown compressed shaped glass

Left to right:

12 3/4 x 8 1/4 x 2 1/8 inches

11 x 8 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches

13 1/8 x 8 7/8 x 1 3/4 inches

13 1/8 x 8 1/4 x 1 3/4 inches



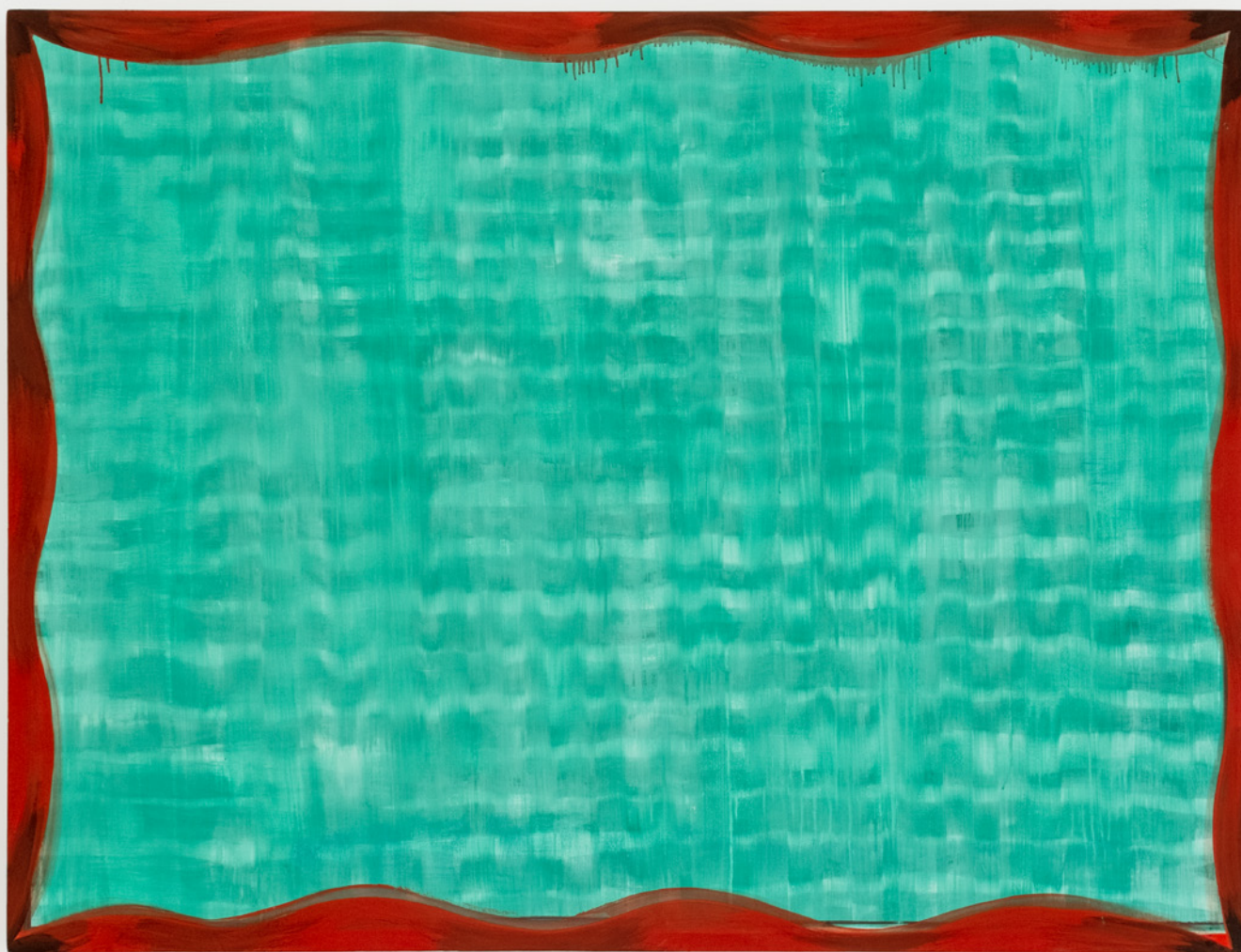


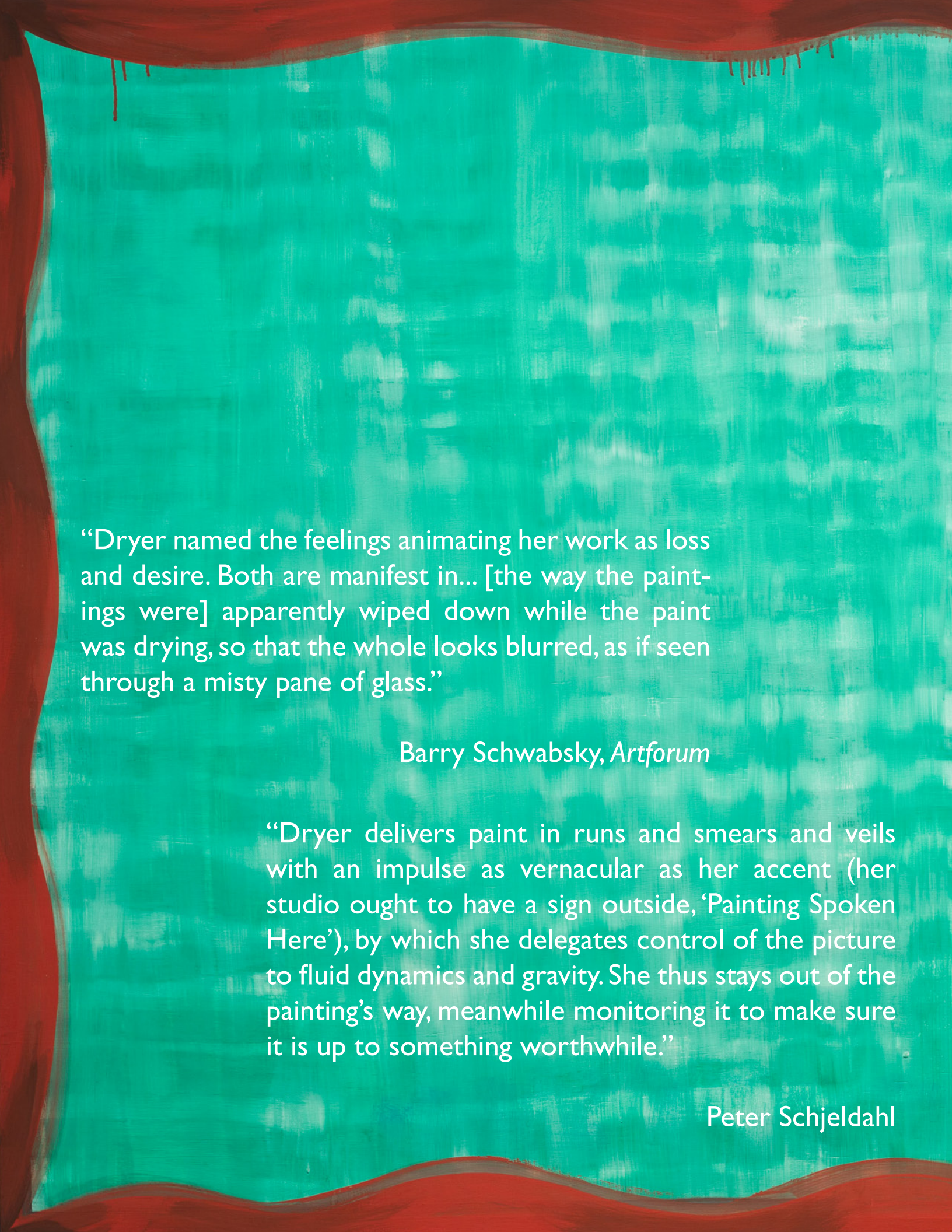
“It contains nothing, but it’s still a container, a vessel. It contains color and light. I say, *look at the glass in a different way*. That’s what I am trying to say with my work.”

Laura de Santillana

MOIRA DRYER

The Rumor, 1988
casein on wood
48 x 63 x 3 inches
(121.9 x 160 x 7.6 cm)





“Dryer named the feelings animating her work as loss and desire. Both are manifest in... [the way the paintings were] apparently wiped down while the paint was drying, so that the whole looks blurred, as if seen through a misty pane of glass.”

Barry Schwabsky, *Artforum*


“Dryer delivers paint in runs and smears and veils with an impulse as vernacular as her accent (her studio ought to have a sign outside, ‘Painting Spoken Here’), by which she delegates control of the picture to fluid dynamics and gravity. She thus stays out of the painting’s way, meanwhile monitoring it to make sure it is up to something worthwhile.”

Peter Schjeldahl

MOIRA DRYER

Big Mother, 1988
casein on wood and grommet
99 x 48 inches
(251.5 x 121.9 cm)



A photograph of a wooden surface, possibly a table or desk, with a red background on the left. A small insect, likely a beetle, is visible on the wood. The wood has a natural grain and some staining or discoloration. The text is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

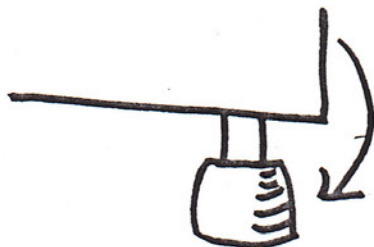
“Moira had a magical vitality; she saw all life with a creative scale... She looked at the world with effervescent eyes.”

David Moos

for INSTALLATION & HANDLING
OF "BIG MOTHER" 1988

① ALWAYS HANDLE PIECE WITH
WHITE COTTON GLOVES.

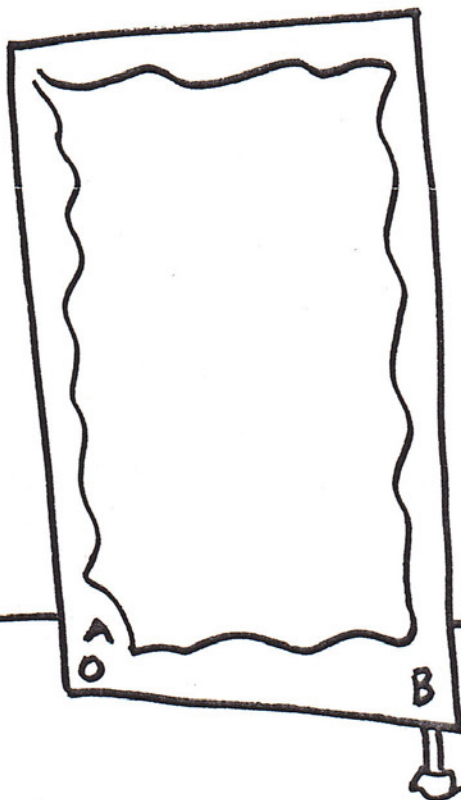
UNFOLD FOOT FROM TRANSPORT
+ LOCK DOWN FOR INSTALLATION



② DISTANCE OF
CORNER "A"
TO WALL: 10"

DISTANCE OF
CORNER "B"
TO WALL: 24"

BLUE/BLACK
FACE OUT.



HAVE
UPPER LEFT
CORNER
LEANING ON
WALL

UPPER RIGHT
PREESTANDING.



LAURA DE SANTILLANA

Tokyo-Ga (Sky Blue - Warm Brown), 2018
hand blown compressed shaped glass
12 1/5 x 8 2/3 x 1 1/2 inches
(31 x 22 x 4 cm)





MOIRA DRYER

Untitled, 1991
casein on wood
14 x 18 inches
(35.6 x 45.7 cm)



LAURA DE SANTILLANA

Untitled, c. 2002

hand blown compressed shaped glass
17 x 17 x 3 inches (43.2 x 43.2 x 7.6 cm)

NFS





Interview / Ross Bleckner on Moira Dryer

Rome, August 2013

James Barron: What was Moira Dryer like?

Ross Bleckner: She was a combination of restraint and wild thing. She was the Katherine Hepburn of abstract painting. She was beautiful and wind-swept and fierce and intelligent and she made things look very easy. There was a youthful mastery. Is that an oxymoron?

JB: I don't think so.

RB: You can't get your head around the emotion in her work. It's rare that the brush, mind, hand and object are so intertwined that they seem inevitable.

JB: Do you see a connection with Morris Louis?

RB: She liked the process of layering on and having things run together. But they are always well constructed, like Morris Louis. Chance—up to a point. Very controlled chance.

JB: And yet she was of her moment.

RB: She was really a Conceptual painter at a time when Conceptual abstraction wasn't really being considered. She was ahead of her time. Using the tropes of Minimalism and Conceptual art, she created work with a kind of presence. Her work had what I call a "vernacular soul." Her paintings were about the construction and re-construction of seeing. Of playing. It was soulful. It had energy, light, sensuality, wispy strokes, an ephemeral touch. She liked washedaway color. Color between color.

JB: She went to Italy and was moved by Giotto, Fra Angelico, and Piero.

RB: You look at Piero and see the delicacy of surface, openness and light. Simplicity of the formal construction.

JB: Take away Piero's figures and you have an altarpiece. A structure. An object. Moira's paintings are always objects.

RB: She played off the illusion and the object. The reality of the thing and the illusion of the thing. Her work was about the perception of where things are, how we look and remember. It related to theater; it all felt so natural, yet staged.

JB: Did she ever talk about what it was like to be a woman painter in the man's world of the 80s?

RB: She saw herself in opposition to many of the male artists of the 80s. She was doing well and she was happy. She had no anger. She had persistence.

JB: Do you think of her often?

RB: I did a painting a few weeks ago and I thought, *You know, I think I'm finally Moira Dryer here.*

JB: Maybe that's part of what you do: extend some of the ideas that Moira had begun but wasn't able to do because her life was cut short.

RB: That would be nice. I would take that as a compliment. She was the real thing. Obviously.



Interview / Laura de Santillana

Venice, April 2017

James Barron: Tell me about your concept of “books” and “pumpkins.”

Laura de Santillana: My glass has always reminded me of books. The people at the studio ask me, “Are you coming to make books or pumpkins?” “Pumpkins” is everything blown. “Books” are the idea of squeezing the bubble, instead of letting go.

JB: You’re trying to make a void?

LdS: Yes. It starts with the breath. I like working with glass because you put air—your breath—inside the material and you close it inside. It’s the moment between inhaling and exhaling. By trapping air inside, some interesting things happen in the process. The accidents are written inside the piece.

JB: And you accept the accidents?

LdS: Yes, you do something with the accidents. It’s controlled chance.

JB: Tell me about your color.

LdS: When I work with two colors, one is always harder. The harder color pulls, and then you get the softer one, which makes the line.

JB: What’s your favorite time of day?

LdS: I like to work late at night, two to four in the morning. It’s a time of suspension. It’s a moment of transition. I love to go to Murano at six AM by boat, in the morning light. The energy is fantastic.

JB: There’s a sense of illusion in Venice. The echoes, the light refracting on walls...

LdS: My work is about refracted light, low water and the horizon line. There is a very old technique, incalmo, which is the joining of two pieces. When you have incalmo on a round form, you don't see much. When you bring together two walls, then you get things happening. You get an ellipse, or it doubles up, or the rim is folded inside and you get double color. All these things you only see because you are bringing the two walls together.

JB: This work is the culmination of a lifetime of working with glass. It's in your heritage. In a way, you're crushing a portion of history. Instead of being utilitarian, your work is nonfunctional.

LdS: It contains nothing, but it's still a container, a vessel. It contains color and light. I say, look at the glass in a different way. That's what I am trying to say with my work.

