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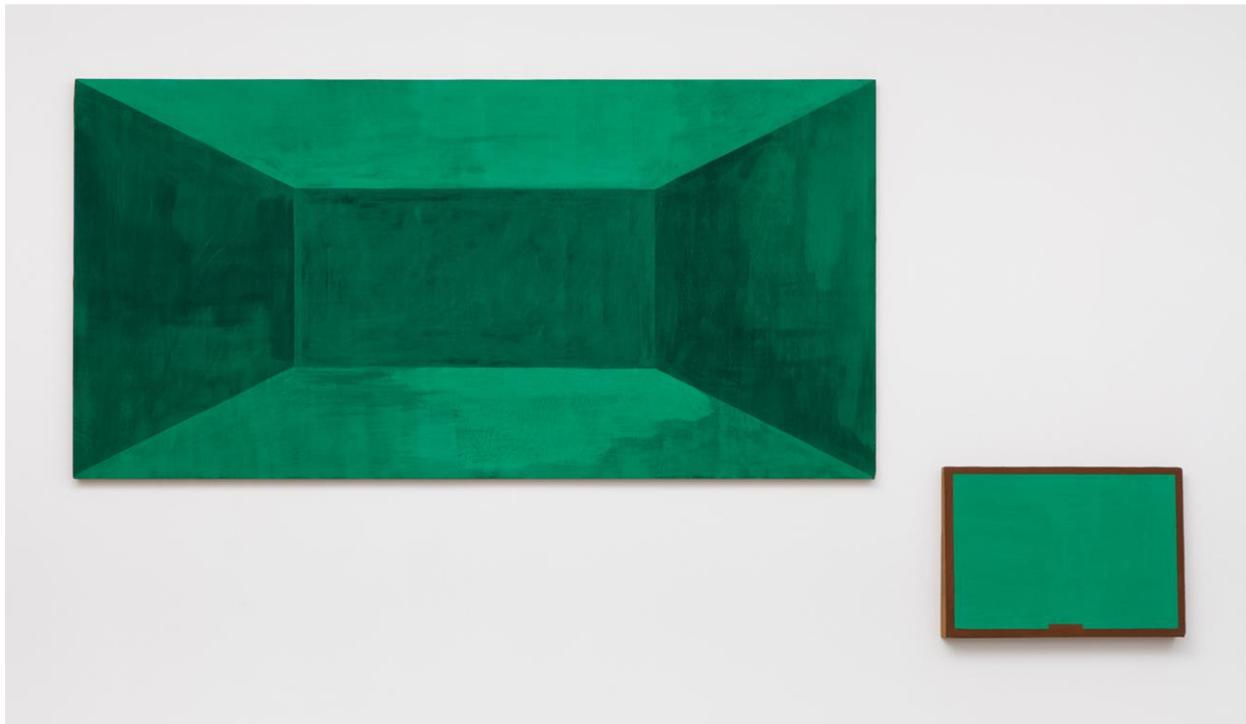
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THE PHILLIPS PRESENTS MOIRA DRYER: BACK IN BUSINESS

**The first comprehensive survey in nearly 20 years considering the work of Moira Dryer
from 1985–1990**



WASHINGTON—The Phillips Collection is honored to present 24 three-dimensional abstract paintings by Moira Dryer (b. 1957, Toronto; d. 1992, New York). Marking the first comprehensive survey in almost 20 years, the exhibition will consider the works Dryer created from 1985 to 1990. *Moira Dryer: Back in Business* will be on view February 8–April 19, 2020.

“This exhibition will highlight the thoughtful development of Dryer’s work over a short period of time and the references from which she pulled. Dryer used abstraction as a language to express her everyday experiences to elicit emotion in her viewers. The works are full of humor, pain, nostalgia, and criticality,”

says Lily Siegel, guest curator of the exhibition and Executive Director and Curator of the Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE) in Reston, Virginia.

“During her life, Moira Dryer had a dedicated group of admirers and she continues to influence artists today,” says Klaus Ottmann, Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Academic Affairs at The Phillips Collection. “The sculptural quality of her paintings, which were among the first to combine figuration and abstraction, embodied the independence of spirit, innovation, and experimentation that Duncan Phillips championed—and paved the way for many artists working today.”

From her artistic beginnings in the early 1980s until her death, Dryer pursued a line of work in dialogue with Modernist painting and abstraction while in consideration of more contemporary themes. Before devoting herself full-time to painting, Dryer worked as a set designer for the avant-garde theater company Mabou Mines. The theater continued to influence her painting and the way she spoke about her work. In a conversation with Ottmann in 1988, she described her paintings as props that put on plays. Similar to Mark Rothko who famously spoke of his mature paintings as performers in an emotional drama, for Dryer, “the paintings are the performers. It’s really up to the audience at that point to say what the specific production is. The pieces evolve from a very personal, emotional point, but then they become entities in themselves. I give them life and then they become their own.”

Moira Dryer: Back in Business considers Dryer’s development vis-à-vis her participation and interest in theater production, specifically the use of her paintings to define space. Her work progresses from recognizable theater references such as curtains and spatial representations to abstract portraits that begin to move toward sculpture. Dryer infused her works with a level of pathos that brought her paintings to life, creating abstract images with biographical elements that responded to her life in New York. The exhibition title is taken from a newspaper clipping found in the artist’s archive.

“Moira Dryer was a dynamic and innovative artist of her time,” says Dr. Dorothy Kosinski, Vradenburg Director and CEO of The Phillips Collection. “Museum founder Duncan Phillips was drawn to rich textures and bold colors, and her work, with its full-color saturation, strikes up dynamic conversations with pieces in our collection by artists like Mark Rothko and Pierre Bonnard.”

In addition to the presentation of paintings and sculptures, the exhibition includes a collection of notes, drawings, and photographs from the artist’s archive. Dryer’s position in New York and connection to established artists such as Elizabeth Murray (her mentor) and Julian Schnabel (to whom she was a studio assistant), as well as representation by Mary Boone Gallery, provided exposure of her work to her contemporaries and younger artists. Ephemera from previous exhibitions provide a historical context firmly placing Dryer at the center of the conversation regarding painting in the 1980s and 90s.

Siegel has also organized a satellite exhibition of Dryer’s work at the Greater Reston Arts Center, on view from January 18–April 18, 2020. The exhibition, *Moira Dryer: Yours for the Taking*, will provide a more intimate look at the works the artist left in the collections of friends and family, most of which have never before been shown publicly. The title, again, is taken from the artist’s archive in recognition of her generosity, confidence, and singular voice.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

The exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection with guest curator Lily Siegel.

With lead exhibition support and a Curatorial Fellowship from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.



The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact hbarton@phillipscollection.org or 202.387.2151 x235.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition catalogue includes an introduction by Klaus Ottmann, essays by Lily Siegel and writer and curator Valerie Smith, a bibliography, exhibition history, and an illustrated checklist.

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, presents one of the world's most distinguished Impressionist and American modern art collections. Including paintings by Renoir and Rothko, Bonnard and O'Keeffe, van Gogh, Diebenkorn, Daumier and Lawrence, among others, the museum continues to actively collect new acquisitions, many by contemporary artists such as Wolfgang Laib, Whitfield Lovell, Zilia Sánchez, Leo Villareal, and Simone Leigh. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips's impact spreads nationally and internationally through its highly distinguished special exhibitions, programs, and events that catalyze dialogue surrounding the continuity between art of the past and the present. Among the Phillips's esteemed programs are its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; well-established Phillips Music series; and sell-out Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to the art conversation on a global scale with events like Conversations with Artists and the International Forum. The Phillips Collection values its community partnerships with the University of Maryland—the museum's nexus for academic work, scholarly exchange, and interdisciplinary collaborations—and THEARC—the museum's new campus serving the Southeast DC community. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

IMAGE: Moira Dryer, *Untitled*, 1985, Flashe on panel, 24 x 48 in. and 11 x 15 in. © Estate of Moira Dryer, Collection of James Keith Brown and Eric Diefenbach

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