

MOIRA DRYER**GALLERY 400**

400 S. ROSA ST., 60607

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This retrospective was the first exhibition of Moira Dryer's work in Chicago. Dryer experienced success as a young painter in New York in the late '80s and early '90s, but only briefly, as she succumbed to a five-year battle with breast cancer in 1994. This work, with its delicate painted surfaces, perforations, rubber plugs, and additional hardware, reveals in the intelligence and irony of abstract painting and reminds us that art is, in a sense, feeling.

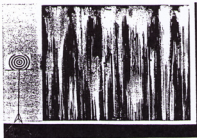
Following her graduation from the School of Visual Arts in 1980, where she studied with Elizabeth Murray, Dryer worked for five years constructing stage sets and props for Mabou Mines and other performance groups in New York. She was intrigued by sets and props, and believed they possessed a character uniquely their own. She described her works in a 1986 interview with Klaus Ottmann as "becoming, just by the nature of their physicality, figurative. It's almost a criterion for me to

feel that a painting is somehow alive and animate."

This exhibition featured ten works representing Dryer's most productive years, from 1989 to 1994. *Cond.*, from 1989, is a scallop-edged wood panel with a thin layer of alternating green and blue stripes. A spill of transparent medium in the upper left corner results in a blurring of the stripes that descends to an erasure of them as the spill covers the length of the piece. The playful, cloud-like shape holds the frail stripes as tentatively as drizzle on a gray day.

Several of the works are embellished with props, three-dimensional objects that serve Dryer's quest to create animate painting constructions. *Frontline*, from 1991, is a monumental panel painted with dark green and black vertical stripes. It appears impenetrable and closed, resembling a stage curtain, held up by an iron shoemaker's pedestal. The highlight of the exhibition, 1991's *Random Fire*, is a construction with a definitive narrative. This large panel, dripping with skeins of green paint, perforated with bullet-size holes, and accompanied by a music stand displaying a green target, is Dryer's response to the Persian Gulf war. These works are exemplary of the artist's conflation of abstract painting conventions and added hardware to infuse her work with narrative, irony, and emotion.

ELLEN STEWARD

**MOIRA DRYER**

Random Fire, 1991. Acrylic on wood, cardboard, and metal. 84" x 103" x 19". Courtesy of Gallery 400, the estate of Moira Dryer, and by Corney Modern Art.