

# Art For Rollins The Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art, Volume II, 2015

By Joao Ribas | January 1, 2015

## SONIA ALMEIDA

Sonia Almeida was born in 1978 in Lisbon, Portugal. She earned her BA at the Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade de Lisboa in 2001 and her MFA at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, in 2006. Almeida has had solo exhibitions at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Simone Subal Gallery, New York; T293, Rome; Chiado 8, Culturgest, Lisbon; and Croxhapox, Gent, Belgium. Her work has also been included in group shows at institutions such as the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts; the Serralves Museum, Porto, Portugal; the Muzeul National de Art Cluj-Napoca, Romania; the Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw; the Kijidome, Boston; Carl Freedman Gallery, London; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York; Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn; and STANDARD (OSLO), Norway. Almeida has also shown works at Portugal Arte 10 in 2010 and the Prague Biennial in 2011. Institutions that collect her work include the MIT List Visual Arts Center. She lives and works in Boston.

SILVER SCREEN, 2013

OIL ON MARINE PLYWOOD, AND GREEN LEDS

64 X 82 IN.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE ALFOND  
COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT  
ROLLINS COLLEGE, CORNELL FINE ARTS MUSEUM  
PHOTO: JOERG LOHSE

There is a science to bloodstains. Their shapes and patterns evince how the properties of our blood—viscous, red, emphatic—meet the physics of the world, its undeniable gravity and surface tension. The purpose of such a forensic formalism is evidential: the stain narrates, in its shocking muteness, an event, a trace. Is the brushstroke like a bloodstain?

For all the rigor of their many references, ranging from color theory to information science, the paintings of Sonia Almeida are encounters with the spatial, pictorial, and historical limits of a space. The canvases are more or less filled, motifs abutting within the picture plane; some of these depicted objects are obviously referential, literal or mimetic, while others are less so. Nearly all of the paintings hold subject and object matter in this dialectical play, attempting to resolve, within the defined illusionistic space of a painting, both what is represented within it, and what the painting itself announces as its subject. As such, the paintings offer an encounter with the physical and affective space of abstraction. Each painting seems to work over, and revisit, the internal space of illusion, both literally and ideationally; likewise, each mark, each gesture, confronts the space between abstraction and representation, precisely where a paint drop becomes a bloodstain.

Almeida's marks, gestures, and shapes don't simply function as evidential, however—that is, as so many expressive markers or registers of thinking, acting, or moving. Rather, her motifs suggest a tension between form and materiality, like that between the technologies for the spectral analysis of light and its qualitative evaluation by human sight. Is it experience that gives blood-red its marked difference from any other color? So the grid, which structures nearly all of Almeida's work in varying degrees, is sometimes literally present, while at other times it recedes, defining but diffused like a mist. In some paintings, the soft geometry of the loose mass of lines falsely hints at a freedom within the space of the picture. Yet for all their regulation—CMYK, parametric geometries, etc.—and the physical limits knowingly acknowledged in Almeida's paintings, color and space are also part of our intuition, our memory, our conjecturing about the world.

Abstraction, in its course through the history of twentieth-century art, is not only about space, shape, or form, but about a seeing of the world, or better, of the world *having-been-seen*. So forensics might be the science of bloodstains, but it is in the blood that the repulsion and fascination lie, both the pattern and the crime.

JOÃO RIBAS