

GERRI RACHINS
ALMOST EVERYTHING IS GOING WELL

Cover Image:

Almost Everything Is Going Well

Flashe, acrylic, graphite on Arches Aquarelle paper

30H x 22W

2022©

Gerri Rachins

Almost Everything Is Going Well

October 4 - 29, 2022

Essay by Barbara O'Brien

THE PAINTING CENTER

547 West 27th Street, Suite 500, NY, NY 10001, 212-343-1060
Tues 10-4 pm, Wed-Sat 11-6 pm, www.thepaintingcenter.org

Extraterrestrial Visitor in All Its Glory
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



No Need to Panic
Flashe, acrylic ink with collage on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2021©



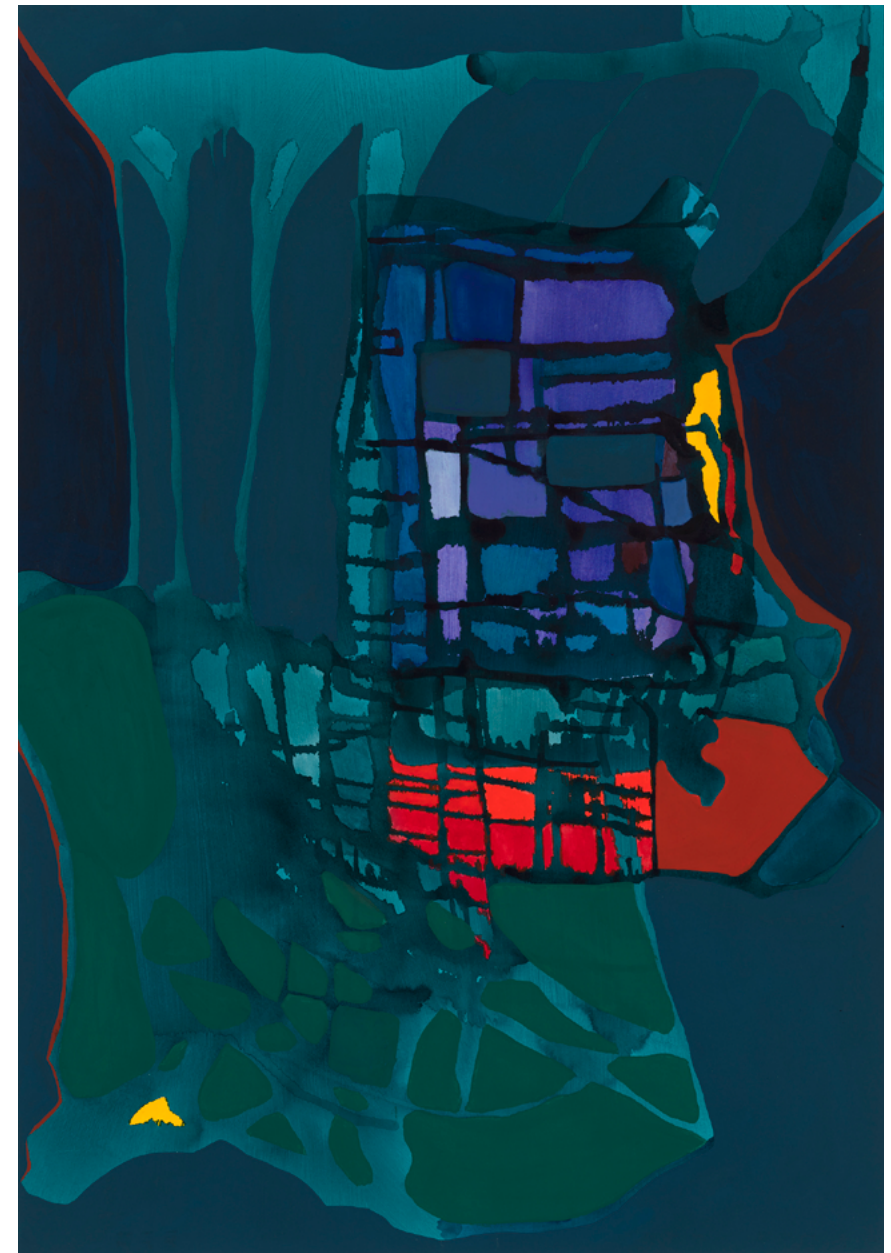
Similar to Where We Were
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



A Constant Stream of Predictions
Flashe, acrylic ink, gouache on Arches paper
44H x 30W
2022©



Algorithms About Trustworthiness
Flashe, acrylic ink, gouache on Arches paper
44H x 30W
2022©



A Sobering Revelation
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



Poured Lines and Other Mysteries: Paintings by Gerri Rachins

“Gravity pulls matter together, but rotation throws it apart.”

— Stephen Hawking, *My Brief History*

A painting by Gerri Rachins is by its nature restless. There is seldom a place for the gaze to settle; the composition is active, frenetic, pushing toward the edges of the paper and then returning to a central vortex of energy. If we imagine that we “see” something in these paintings, it is as much due to our own desire to create a narrative as to anything intended by the artist. Rachins is steadfast in her refusal to create pictures, or images, or scenes. She both tames and sets free the energy of her mediums in a sometimes synergistic, sometimes raucous, always deeply satisfying vocabulary of large painted passages.

For most of her career, Rachins has eschewed language to title her drawings and paintings, using only inventory numbers as a record of her practice. With this body of work, created during and post-pandemic times, she has embraced language as a link between social crisis, environmental concerns, and her studio practice. The signature painting in the exhibition *Almost Everything Is Going Well* is titled, as are all of the paintings on view, from a passage in the Science Section of the *New York Times*, one of her primary links to the world during the isolation of COVID. Of course, as the artist reminds us, the title “implies that some things are not going well.”

Rachins’ paintings on paper evoke the complicated zeitgeist of our time and suggest more questions than answers. They also reveal a preoccupation with the field of physics with its focus on themes of matter and energy, physical properties and the phenomena of perception, action and heat and light, and the interaction of matter in the universe. Rachins, who has evolved her studio practice over several decades, “began to use the contrast of visual elements to convey a type of personal meaning that addresses the ongoing uncertainty and turbulence of this current moment in time.” Looking closely at *Almost Everything Is Going Well* (2022), we see a vortex of thin lines in the same mat green as the surrounding ground that move our gaze across the surface of an organic, weighted form that exists in the middle ground. A similar vortex of lines binds a central form in *Extraterrestrial Visitor in All Its Glory* (2022) and *No Need to Panic* (2021).

Rachins’ compositions often feature the geometry of a square or narrow, banded rectangles, intersected by very thin, bent-but-not-broken lines. In *Similar to Where We Were* (2022), blue the color of an ocean seen at night surrounds a pulsing violet heart. Looking closely, we understand that the lilac shades of the ground—which grow ever more faint toward the edge of the paper—are the result of mixing and melding these two intense colors. The central figure here seems to be supported by a quartet of weighted “feet” from which a series of tendril-slim lines begin to cross-hatch a surprisingly vulnerable painting.

Rachins' last solo show at the Painting Center, in 2020, was comprised of large-scale works on paper that merged drawing and painting in a body of work committed to hard-edged geometric abstraction. Since then, she has directed her studio practice toward a painterly approach with the exploration of new materials including brilliantly colored acrylic inks and Flashe vinyl paint. Rachins divides her practice between a studio in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston and a summer studio on Cape Cod. On the Cape, the restless nature of her experimentation takes a turn toward a looser approach as her physical relationship to the environment is more integrated. The studio is a small shed with a driveway where Rachins can work with a physical openness; here she developed a method that has become a signature part of her vocabulary. Holding a large (30 by 22 inches) sheet of Arches Aquarelle paper in her hands, she directs the action of poured acrylic ink, noticing how liquid will "attract to puddles." When the inks dry, the resultant pattern becomes the catalyst for an underlying structure atop which more painting, pouring, and drawing occurs. "From the palimpsest of inky lines, inherent shapes are excavated," she shares. "With these new paintings I have considered the pouring of the ink to be like a drawing practice, and therefore truly merging my drawing with painting practices."

With this method, Rachins creates dramatic geometric abstractions that engage with both the impact of color and gravity as well as the emotional weight of a reckoning

with social, ecological, and political challenges. About her studio practice, Rachins explains: "I do not know whether my day at the studio will be a sanctuary, offering me comfort, or a battlefield in which I connect with the anxiety of the times. However, I know that uncertainty offers the opportunity to explore, without the pretext of knowing where you are going."

Paintings by Gerri Rachins hold the weight of the moment, which has no measure in ounces or pounds, but in the evanescence of breath held or the time it takes for a trail of paint to dry; the soft arc of hands turning the pages of the daily newspaper or a face averted from the midday sun. The experience of viewing her paintings places us in a space of dazzling complexities.

— Barbara O'Brien

Quotes from the artist were shared directly with the author in a series of video conferences and email correspondence, March – July 2022.

An independent curator and critic based in Milwaukee, O'Brien is the former Executive Director of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. She is an elected member of AICA – USA, International Association of Art Critics.

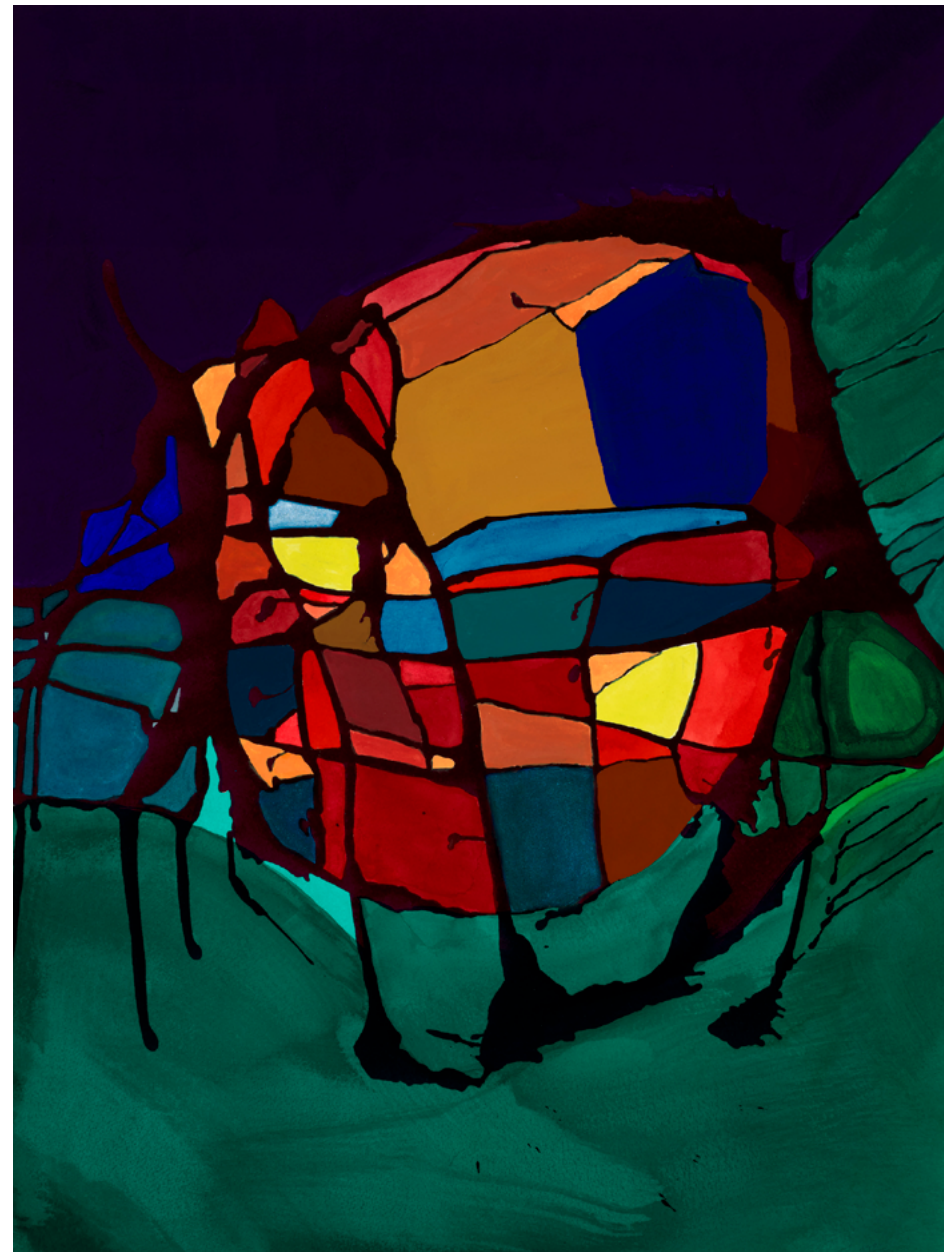
Lizards Ditch Their Tails
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



Not A Scintilla of Evidence
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



Perseverance (Percy for Short)
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



Recording the Final Verdict
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



Viral Recombination
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2022©



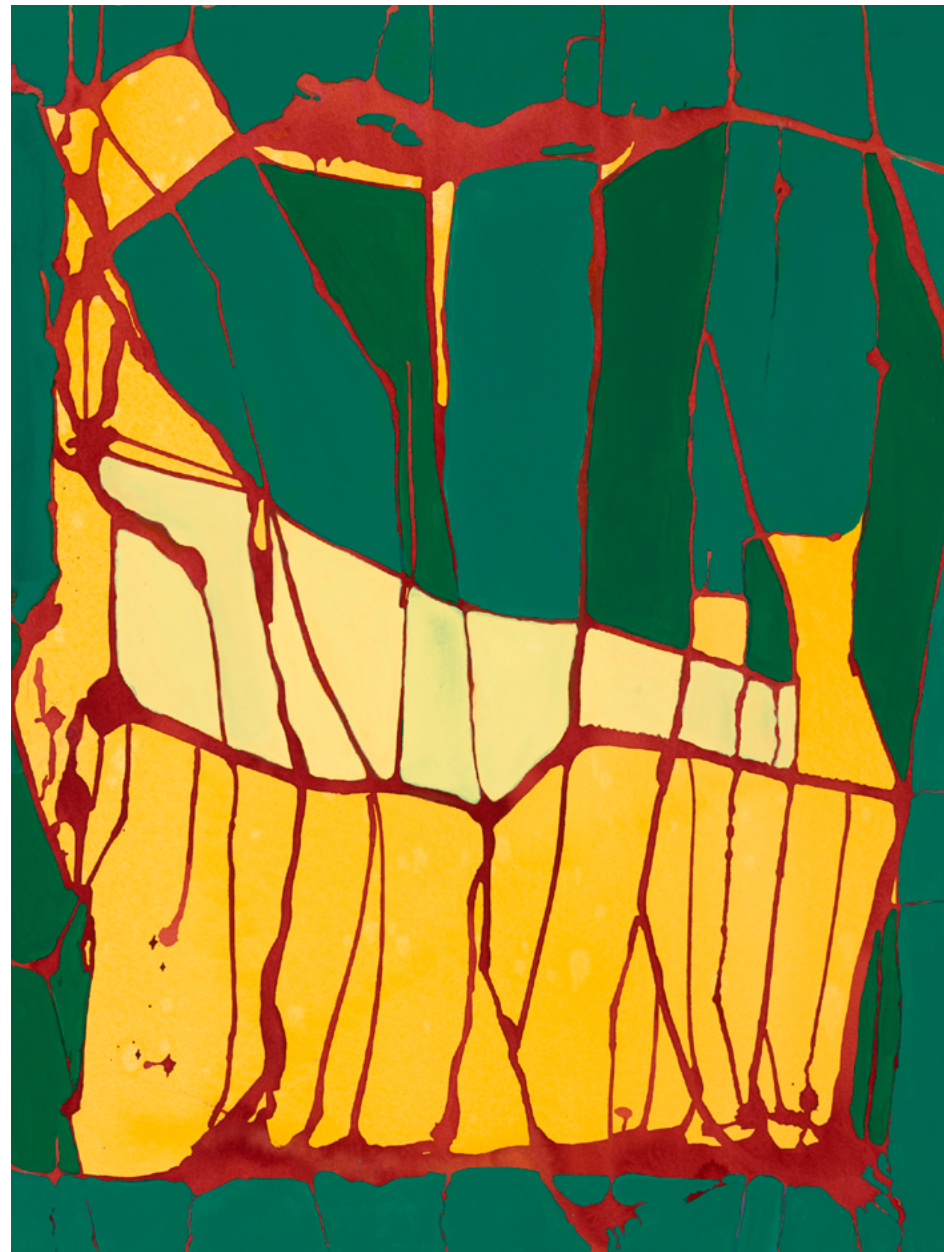
Clean Slate
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2021©



Escapee
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2021©



Fractured Emergence
Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2021©



Modern Civilization Would Be Impossible Without Measurement

Flashe, acrylic ink on Arches Aquarelle paper

30H x 22W

2021©



Solving Secrets
Flashe, acrylic ink, gouache on Arches Aquarelle paper
30H x 22W
2021©



Gerri Rachins

Gerri Rachins, born in 1955 in Brookline, MA, studied at the New York Studio School while earning a BFA from the University of the Arts, Philadelphia. In 2001, she earned an MFA from Massachusetts College of Art working in painting, drawing, and printmaking. Rachins' large-scale drawings are included in the collections of The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and The Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA. Her works are held in numerous corporate and private collections in the United States and Europe including Fidelity Investments, Bain Capital, and Berkshire Partners, Boston, and Neiman Marcus, Inc., Dallas.

She is represented by Mobilia Gallery, Cambridge, MA, who recently hosted a 20-year retrospective to celebrate their long-standing representation of her work. For nearly two decades, Rachins has been on faculty at the School of The Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, where she currently teaches Color Mastery. She has taught at Massachusetts College of Art & Design in Boston for more than a decade.

For more information, visit: www.gerrirachins.com and Instagram @gerrirachins.

The artist would like to acknowledge her family, friends, colleagues, students and The Painting Center for their continuous support.

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