

Gonzalez, Desi. *Cambridge, Mass: Sonia Almeida: MIT List Visual Arts Center*, Art in America, May 2014, print.

fragility of reality. In order to stay true to Cumming's white-on-black drawing, Bangsted shot the seemingly nocturnal scene using "day for night" techniques, which were frequently employed by Hollywood cinematographers in the 1940s and '50s to simulate nighttime while filming in daylight. By photographing a rotating metal disc that he fabricated and superimposing it on a waterfall, Bangsted adds a sculptural element to his photographic fictions.

—Elisa Decker

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
SONIA ALMEIDA
MIT List Visual Arts Center

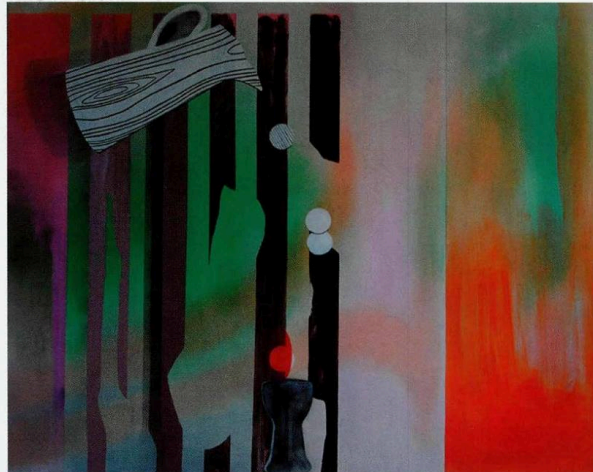
In the 18th century, Isaac Newton posited that color is a scientific property of light, existing outside of the human body. Goethe rebutted the point a century later, arguing that the perceiver experiences color subjectively. The Portugal-born, Boston-based artist Sonia Almeida revisited this fundamental tension in "Forward/Play/Pause," a small but robust exhibition of 11 recent paintings and a handful of sketchbooks.

The interplay of objective knowledge and subjective perception effected by Almeida's work was made all the more apparent by the exhibition's location in the same building as MIT's Media Lab, a high-tech, often-hyped interdisciplinary research center. But instead of lasers, holograms or robotics suggestive of a whiz-bang future, Almeida's medium of choice is markedly traditional. Attempts at Newtonian orderliness underlie many of her paintings: mathematical symbols and architectural motifs reveal a proclivity for the diagrammatic and rational. Yet Almeida's works also manifest a strong Goethean impulse, with gestural strokes and uneven swaths of garish color obscuring the more mechanical elements.

In *Red Signal* (all works 2013), what could be a trigonometric function graph, a double helix or an infinity sign—its crests and troughs alternating white, black and red—flows across the full expanse of the plywood surface. Behind it, a translucent white grid obscures blotches of blue, red and black. Though seeming to offer precise information, these motifs elude interpretation: if this work symbolizes infinity, the loop is broken; if it is a graph, we don't know what it measures.

Almeida's paintings also engaged the space of the gallery. Some protruded from walls while others were propped upright on the floor; two larger canvases were backlit with LEDs. The subtle glow emanating from behind *Silver Screen* lent the painted background of fading greens, orange and magenta an otherworldly quality. With these lights, the titular screen seemed to expand outward, encompassing the space around it.

Other works seemed to invite physical interaction. The two paintings from her "Knight's Move Thinking" series jutted out of the wall at 45-degree angles. Set on hinges, they tempted visitors to rotate the sheets of plywood. Underneath each of three inscrutable silhouettes depicted in *Forward/*



Play/Pause is one of the well-known icons—corresponding to the words in the work's title—that grace control panels on media devices. Flattened in oil paint, these inoperative buttons, usually engaged with a manual "click," functioned as a purely visual interface.

Instead of providing immediate aesthetic pleasure, Almeida's works are rich with layers that need decoding, and her sketchbooks serve as the key for doing so. On the cover of one of the books, the artist pasted what look like images of bejeweled medieval artifacts: a chalice, a disk (or is it a plate?), and a pitcher. These are the same motifs that are silhouetted, obscured or erased in *Silver Screen* and *Forward/Play/Pause*. In another sketchbook, precisely rendered streaks of blue ink call to mind refracted light rays. The drawing may suggest a mathematical model, but its deep, consistent color signals that the sketch is anything but a simple reflection of the physical world. As in her paintings, the artist's intervention is located somewhere between Newton's rationality and Goethe's intuition.

—Desi Gonzalez

PHILADELPHIA
DEMETRIUS OLIVER
The Print Center

New York-based Demetrius Oliver's exhibition "Canicular," which consisted of five newly commissioned installations and a single 2013 photograph, brought together two seemingly disparate subjects: the cosmos and dogs. Timed to coincide with the visibility of Sirius (the dog star), the show was open for only one hour each evening, weather permitting, rather than during normal business hours. Juxtaposing canine sensorial experience with imagery relating to the heavens, Oliver engaged viewers in an interesting push-and-pull, in which they oscillated between the physical condi-

Sonia Almeida:
Silver Screen, 2013,
oil on marine
plywood, green
LEDs, 64 by 82½
inches; at MIT List
Visual Arts Center.