



## ROSEMARIE FIORE CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

The emergence of pop art, conceptual art, performance, and the push towards new media that defined the 1960s inform the work of New York artist Rosemarie Fiore. So does the authority of the painter's hand, which provided the context for this emergence. These are broad categories, each possessing an extensive and varied aesthetic. As such, it may be possible to think that such diverse influences may amount to no influence at all for a single artist. But this particular interaction of artistic ideas produced an incomparable spirit of innovation and upheaval, which streams through Fiore's work. The forms and concept of her machine paintings from the last ten years reveal converging rhythms of Warhol, Kaprow, and Pollock. Yet Duchamp's influence lingers most persuasively. While the various paintings she realized through the use of household appliances—cake mixer, waffle iron, floor polisher—or machines—carnival ride, pinball machine—can be visually engaging, they rarely attain a profound aesthetic level. As Duchamp said of Warhol's Campbell's Soup can paintings in 1964: "What interests you is the concept that wants to put fifty Campbell's Soup cans on a canvas." Discounting the retinal image, Duchamp identifies Warhol as a conceptual artist. In Fiore's case, it is her desire to push the mechanical possibilities of painting that is primary—a conceptual drive anchored in historical, yet fluid critical definitions.

Fiore's mini-retrospective *Painting, Performance, Machines* presents the development of her ideas for post-historical painting since 1999—a sequence of paintings executed with mechanical brush replacements, some of which function as visual and conceptual puns on action painting or Futurism's obsession with motion [Second Street Gallery; May 2—31, 2008]. Fiore's reliance on repetition and pattern alludes to Warhol, just as her addiction to machines summons his famous statement, "I want to be a machine." Kaprow enters through the performative aspect of Fiore's use of

the mechanical gear of daily life. Humor is invariably part of the mix; ironically, the work appears as a string of one-liners. A few carry a strong punch and others sputter towards utter banality. And while Fiore's paintings are initially enjoyable and clever at a certain level, they become a bit of a shtick. Eventually, you know what to expect from the variation of gesture, visual pattern, scale, and surface, and you begin to crave a more fulfilling narrative or joke. Of course, the deeper story might be the overall collection of ideas, but as ideas they are more improvisations on an idea than a series of new ones.

Simultaneously at Les Yeux du Monde, Fiore's installation *View from Clear Creek* fuses conditions and attitudes that Duchamp supposed contrary: the retinal and the conceptual [May 1—31, 2008]. This delightfully freakish exhibition echoes Fiore's reliance on machines, with the difference that here she has become a machine herself—a painting machine that produced twenty easel versions of the same image. Fiore made each painting by carefully following the instructions of deceased television painter Bob Ross during one of his thirty-minute instructional programs. The twentieth take on this video session was made as a public performance at the exhibition's opening. The Ross video lasts thirty minutes, and Fiore completed the painting in sync with it, precisely following every instruction. Demonstrating that twenty paintings of the same image are twenty paintings with different images, Fiore constructs one-of-a-kind objects through machine-like repetition, and considers high concepts about originality through the low sensibilities of Sunday painting. The artist is consistently innovative, whether she relies on a machine or uses her hand in machine-like gesture. But this innovation becomes novelty, and most of the excitement lingers within the concept or the act.

—Paul Ryan

ABOVE: Rosemarie Fiore, painting from Bob Ross' instructional painting video "View From Clear Creek", 2008 performance (courtesy of the artist and Les Yeux Du Monde)