

About: **THE FIRE AND THE ROSE**

Visually, *The Fire and the Rose* series (2003-2005) evolved by the addition of painted frames to the ordered grid created by horizontal bands of color and words interacting with vertical drips that characterize my *Visible Reminders* series (2001-2003). The imposition of a frame creates a reordering, a “freezing” of the horizontal and vertical energies. In this newer series the “order” imposed by the painted frame often, is then “violated” by a “freeing,” disordering, gestural stroke.

Philosophically, *The Fire and the Rose* might be considered an exploration of Christian thought as filtered through **T. S. Eliot**. When Virginia Woolf - T.S. Eliot's fellow Modernist and patron - learnt of her friend's conversion to Christianity in 1927 she predicted that he would "drop his Christianity with his wife, as one might empty the fish bones after the herring."

While she was right about his wife - the increasingly deranged Vivienne, from whom Eliot was soon to separate himself forever - Woolf could not have been more mistaken about his Christianity, which endured until his death in 1965. Eliot was drawn to the Church of England, but recognized that that body had a mixture of Protestantism and Catholicism in its character and observances, being, from the viewpoint of the Catholic Church at least, not Catholic at all.

Eliot's solution was to align himself with the Anglo-Catholic movement in the Church of England which believed that that Church was part of the universal Catholic Church from which it had been regrettably separated at the Reformation (while still retaining valid orders and sacraments - a view rejected, of course, by Rome) and to which it was aspiring to return in full Catholic communion.

In the midst of much disappointment, despair and intellectual tumult, Eliot was writing some of his most elegiac poetry.

All the titles in *The Fire and the Rose* come from ***Little Gidding***, a poem by Eliot; also, the paintings embed lines from the poems within themselves. *Little Gidding* is the final poem of four in Eliot's masterpiece, *The Four Quartets*, as well as the last major poem he wrote and, in the opinion of many, a summing-up of his life-long aesthetic and spiritual quest.

The three previous poems in *Four Quartets* had taken, respectively, air, earth, and water as their "subjects"; *Little Gidding* focuses on fire, using its imagery to convey suggestions of destruction, purgation, and renewal along with its many other Christian allusions. [Note that fire has been a reoccurring preoccupation in my artistic evolution.]

The title for *The Fire and the Rose* series also comes from *Little Gidding*:

When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.