ALMINE RECH

Vivian Springford

Jan 15 — Mar 7, 2026 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to present Vivian Springford's third solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from January 15 to March 7, 2026.

Upon prolonged contemplation Vivian Springford's paintings can seem alive. The flowing colors and organic shapes of her compositions appear to breathe, to move. This vitality becomes all the more remarkable when one considers the artist's process, which emphasized gesture and energy, yet also demanded extraordinary control and exactitude.

Beginning in the 1960s, Springford poured diluted acrylic paint directly onto a primed, still-wet canvas, carefully guiding its sprawl with a brush. She then built up the composition with multiple delicate layers of pigment, using varying levels of solvent to differentiate each stratum. This ambitious technique relied as much on precision as it did on chance, revealing both Springford's technical mastery and imaginative vision. She sought a pure form of abstraction, and achieved it through her innovative stain paintings, which transcended line, among other compositional elements, to revel in the emotive potential of color and the dynamic energy of movement.

This exhibition holds a particular resonance, as Springford maintained throughout her career a deep affinity for the art of East Asia, especially Chinese calligraphy. In the press kit for a 1960 exhibition, she explained how these art forms influenced her: "I liked the direct approach of the early Chinese painters [...] Whatever they put down on paper stayed there; they didn't edit. They didn't copy nature, either; they interpreted it. In fact, some of the older Chinese drawings are much more abstract than anything done today. I adapted their rhythm and free motion to my own abstract paintings." [1] Springford's decisive, gestural style was greatly informed by Chinese art, as was her interest in drawing from nature. Many of her major series (Chromatic Pools, Cosmos, among others) reference and reinterpret natural phenomena, without seeking to depict them directly.

This intimate show brings together four paintings, two from the 1960s and two from the 1980s. Together, the works bridge two pivotal phases in Springford's career: the honing of her stain painting technique in the 1960s, and her last creative output before declining vision forced the artist to stop working due to deteriorating vision.

While Springford exhibited and attained a certain level of recognition during her lifetime, she never reached the renown of many of her contemporaries. By appreciating her sublime paintings today, we can hope this remarkable artist will soon take her rightful place alongside the masters of mid-century American abstract painting.

— Louisa Mahoney, researcher

1 *Vivian Springford*, Almine Rech Editions, 2018, p. 42.