

SPERONE WESTWATER  
257 Bowery New York 10002  
T + 1 212 999 7337 F + 1 212 999 7338  
www.speronewestwater.com

Miller, Michael H. “An Artist Who Leaves His Work Up to Nature — and Chance.” *www.nytimes.com (The New York Times Style Magazine)*, 30 April 2018.

## T THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE



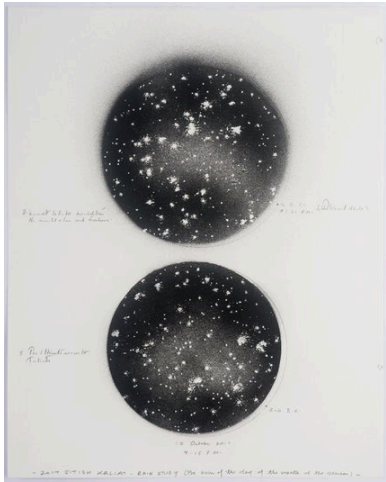
The artist Jitish Kallat in front of works from his “Sightings” series, which are detailed pictures of fruit printed using lenticular lenses. Credit Robert Vinas Jr. Courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York.

Jitish Kallat, the Mumbai-based artist whose first show at New York’s Sperone Westwater gallery opened last week, frequently uses unorthodox methods: He labors away in the rain at night, or douses drawings with inflammable liquids and sets them on fire.

For the series he calls “Rain Studies,” Kallat uses watercolor pencil to mark paper with a dark circle, then takes the drawing outside in the rain during monsoon season, which usually lasts for three to four months in Mumbai, leaving the work exposed to the elements, the splashes of rain making starlike dots on the dark circle. The drawings end up looking like astronomical charts, and the final product is mostly out of Kallat’s hands. “It’s almost like me not making the work,” he says on a recent visit to the gallery, where his show is being installed. “It’s nature making it.”

Kallat studied as a painter at the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art — the oldest art institution of Mumbai and the birthplace of Rudyard Kipling, whose father, Lockwood, was the school’s first dean — but his work has since branched out into other mediums, including sculpture and photography. He took a

**SPERONE WESTWATER**  
257 Bowery New York 10002  
T + 1 212 999 7337 F + 1 212 999 7338  
[www.speronewestwater.com](http://www.speronewestwater.com)



One of Kallat's 2017 "Rain Study" drawings. The series is subtitled "the hour of the day of the month of the season." Credit Jitish Kallat, courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York. Photo: Anil Rane.



A "Wind Study" by Kallat, made predominantly by using fire and wind. Credit Jitish Kallat, courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York. Photo: Anil Rane.

break from making art to curate the second edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, the largest art exhibition in India, in 2014. It was in the months following this hiatus (he had 11 months to curate the show, which included 94 artists from 30 countries) that Kallat developed many of the ideas in his current exhibition.

Eating breakfast alone at his hotel in Kochi — "when it's off-season, no one comes to Kochi except the curator of the biennale," he says — he studied the fruit plate he ate each morning, and started to think that "the sliced apples lovingly placed by the chef would suddenly look like star fields." When he returned to his studio in 2015 he began a series called "Sightings," extraordinarily detailed photographs of fruit that are printed using lenticular lenses, so they seem to distort and change color as a viewer moves around them. The images are befuddling to begin with — the top of a blueberry looks like aerial photography of some harsh and unfamiliar landscape — but the lenticular lens makes for a kind of hallucinogenic experience, as if breakfast has been reimagined via Stanley Kubrick's experiments with light and color at the end of "2001: A Space Odyssey."

Most intriguing of all are Kallat's so-called "Wind Studies," which begin as line drawings based on a pattern by the German mathematician David Hilbert. Kallat then places them outside and intermittently lights parts of the drawing on fire. What results is a burned section of the line and a dramatic shadow from where the wind directed the flame. Kallat will continue on like this, setting a portion of his drawing on fire and waiting to see what the wind will do. The works are a kind of transcript of the wind's movement, and the culmination of his games of chance with nature.

"All I'm doing in the work," Kallat says, "is letting the paper intervene into what is otherwise a minor turbulence on the minor surface of a minor planet in a sort of minor constellation of stars in a minor galaxy. And to me, that little shift that happens on the paper is almost an alchemy that happens beyond me."