

amy myers

CENTRIC 60



HYPOND LATTICE/GROUND STATE, 1999

## acknowledgments

The UAM wishes to extend heartfelt thanks to Todd Hosfelt and his staff for their time and effort involved in helping to bring this work to Long Beach from the moment the work was first seen at Hosfelt Gallery in San Francisco last fall, Todd has assisted with this exhibition every step of the way. We offer our warmest thanks to the artist for her enthusiasm and participation in our CENTRIC series. Amy, whose geniality and dedication we appreciate immensely, has donated her time and effort to the organization of the exhibition, including the interview in this catalogue and the UAM's children's programs. The UAM is deeply indebted to the generous lenders whose willingness to part with their works of art has made this project complete.

We are most grateful to those organizations and individuals whose support made it possible to produce the catalogue that documents the exhibition: Luis Schump: Scott Olivet: Anne Fougeron: Arthur Reeder at King Printing: and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco.

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CENTRIC, which began in 1981, is an on-going series of small, timely exhibitions dedicated to introducing the UAM audience to work by individual artists that has not previously been shown in Southern California.

## an interview with amy myers

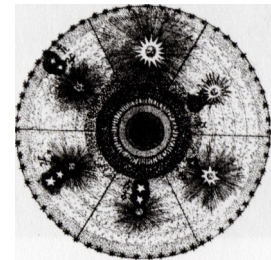
by Mary-Kay Lombino

mary-kay lombino: Many artists consider their drawings to be secondary to their work in other media, but for you drawing seems to be your medium of choice. What initially appealed to you about drawing?

amy myers: I really began to focus on drawing when I was in art school. As an undergraduate, it was a way of creating space for myself to work privately. In that environment, painting was the main focus and drawing was a means to an end. At a certain point, I needed to separate from the entire dialogue of painting in order to work privately. So I just started drawing as a way of creating a quiet space where I could work uninterrupted.

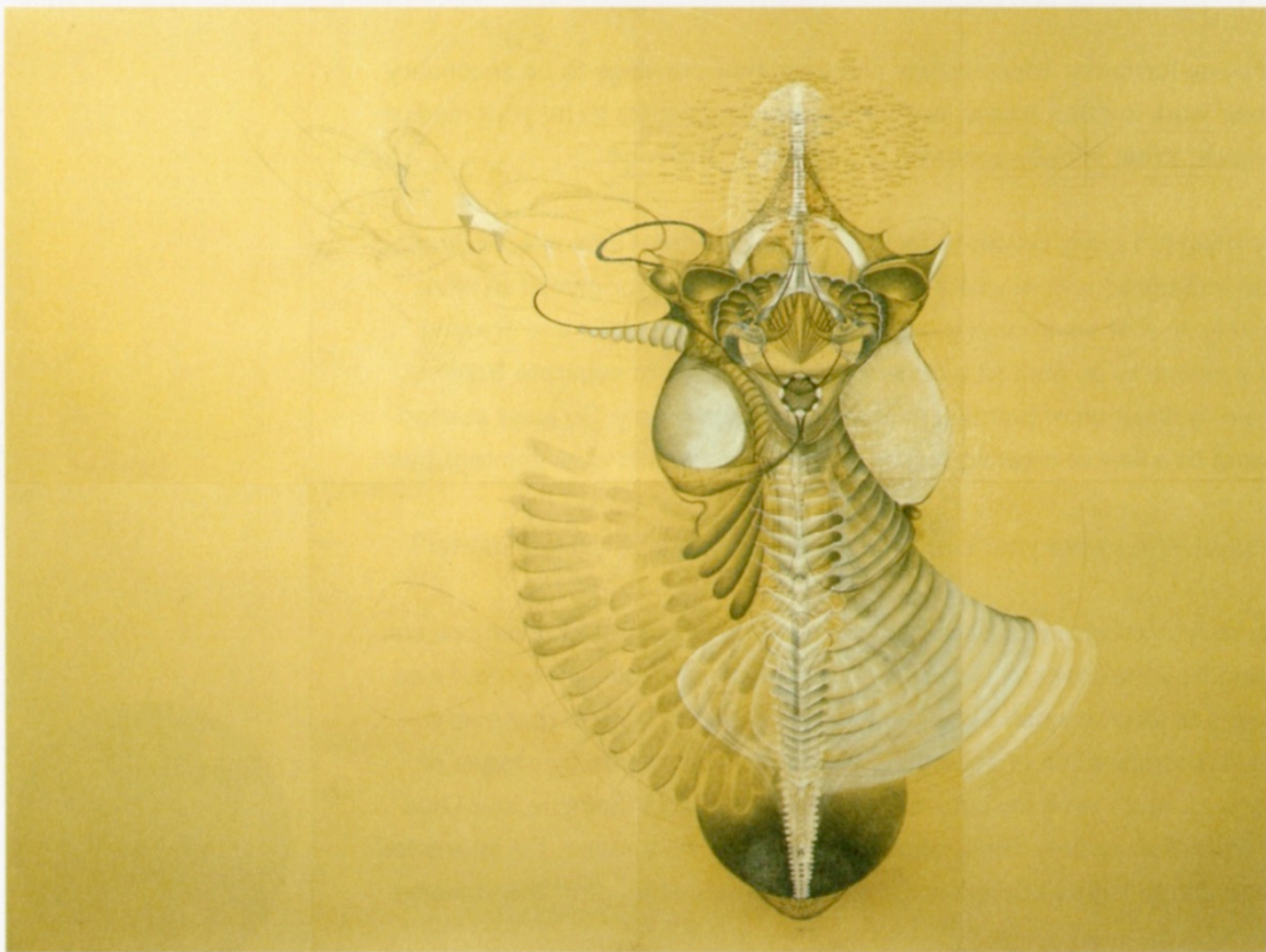
lombino: What were your early influences in regards to subject matter?

myers: My father was a physicist, so I grew up with a set of questions concerning how the universe works, and why things function as they do. I was exposed to ideas concerning experimentation and the notion that every thing is a combination of something else. I was surrounded by images of molecules, and I think my subject matter stems from a dialogue that I had with my father and my family about such images. As a result, I'm interested in the internal logic of things and the unpredictable nature of the universe.

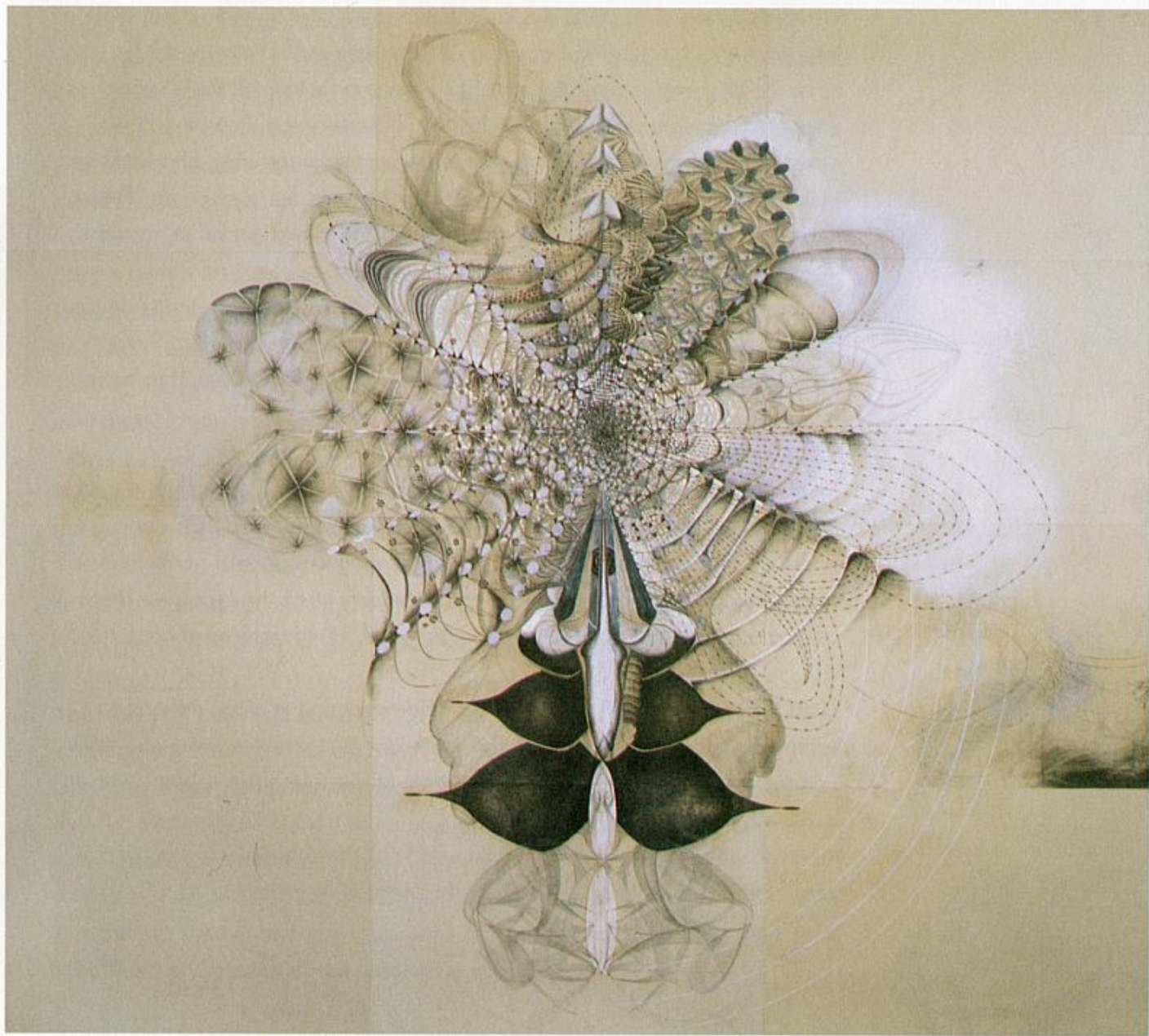


GENESIS, A. FLUDD, UTRISQUE COSMI, 1617





VIRTUAL UNDERGROUND, RED PHASE, 1998





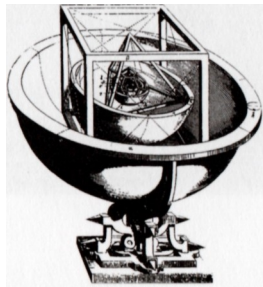
Often discoveries, such as Kepler's discovery of the Martian orbit, play into my work. A scientific discovery like that can actually be quite serendipitous, yet it provides access to the previously unknowable, or answers to once unanswerable questions. There was a time when the questions we look to science to answer were explained through myths and philosophical theories, which today seem mysterious and esoteric. These same questions are the driving force behind the investigation in my work.

lombino: There is a kinetic energy in your work that infers varying degrees of motion and activity. It brings to mind a comment that Richard Serra once made about seeing drawing as a performative act. Does that notion relate to your work?

myers: The constant changing nature of things drives the work and guides the process. Therefore the performative aspect of my work is present in the activity of drawing. Working on a drawing is a private performance without an audience present. The audience only sees the record or the relic of the activity. The drawing acts as evidence of the experiment.

I find it interesting that in looking at my drawings, it is often difficult to separate the artist's hand from the work. Yet, at the same time, as I draw, I disguise my hand through different tools and through the subject matter.

lombino: In recent years there was a shift of the scale in your work to a very large format. What led you to the decision to make big work?



myers: The drawings have to be big in order to achieve what I want to accomplish with them. My work is very much about restraint and limitation. and so the scale evolves in the process. I used to make much smaller drawings and within that boundary I reached a plateau. I discovered that while I need walls around me in order to work, I also need those walls to allow for expansion.

I begin with a 30 x 44 inch sheet and I follow the inquiry of the work. When I reach the edge of the sheet. I realize I need more paper. A dialogue begins to take place between the work and the paper. Sometimes I add another sheet of paper in order to answer a question and ironically. the new sheet creates another question. So that second sheet of paper now

needs a third. This additive process continues until I feel the drawing is resolved. The resolution is achieved by creating systems that respond to the inquiries I set up. I like to allow the work to grow according to the inquiry.

lombino: You've recently moved from Chicago to Los Angeles. I wondered if you've noticed any changes in your work as a result of the move?

myers : I don't want to state the obvious, but the quality of the light here is really intense. The light has effected the work in a subtle way. In Chicago, the drawings felt more continuous and they existed in a space that felt very dense. Here, the images are starting to break up...not necessarily dissolving but dispersing. It's similar to the difference between analog and digital information. There has definitely been a shift in the work in regard to spaciousness and perhaps that is *my* reaction to the intense light and the vastness of the landscape in L.A.



myers: I start out with certain narratives, zones of characters, functions, and locations. The characters find function and relate to one another. Then you need an environment. The images are created through narratives and symbols. I don't preconceive the finished image because the image is only the evidence of complex interactions of systems. And I constantly revise as I go along; I act as the mediator of all the activity.

lombino: What do you mean by the term "system"?

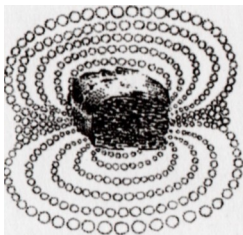
myers: Systems are areas of activity. For instance, in HELIOCENTROPY, thirty-three systems appear in the drawing. I remember that specifically. One section has floating discs. I call them quantametronics.

lombino: Is that an actual scientific term?

myers: No, I made it up, but the word has meaning. "Quanta" means packets of things and "metronics" refers to a mechanical method.

The same discs appear in VIRTUAL UNDERGROUND, RED PHASE, near the top. These quantametronics all have very specific functions. They always exist outside of the central core of the image. They are on the margins because their function is to gather information and inform. There is also connective tissue that binds the quantametronics. And there are symbols-five-sided cone shapes-which also have a function.

lombino: One intriguing component of your work is the ambiguity-the fact that there is no fixed meaning. Therefore, for the viewer, there is a push and pull between allowing some access into the subject matter, yet at the same time being denied full disclosure.

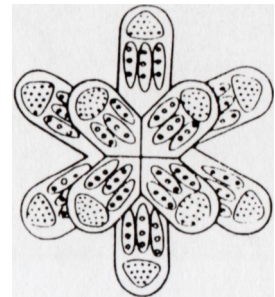


myers: That's absolutely right about the work, although I don't think that denying full disclosure is necessarily intentional on my part. I work in a very pragmatic way, and when that is satisfied, I will swing into a very intuitive method...and once that's satisfied, it shifts back. There is a constant motion between two worlds, never settling or staying in one. The process itself is like a pendulum, and perhaps that's what sets up the push-pull for the viewer.

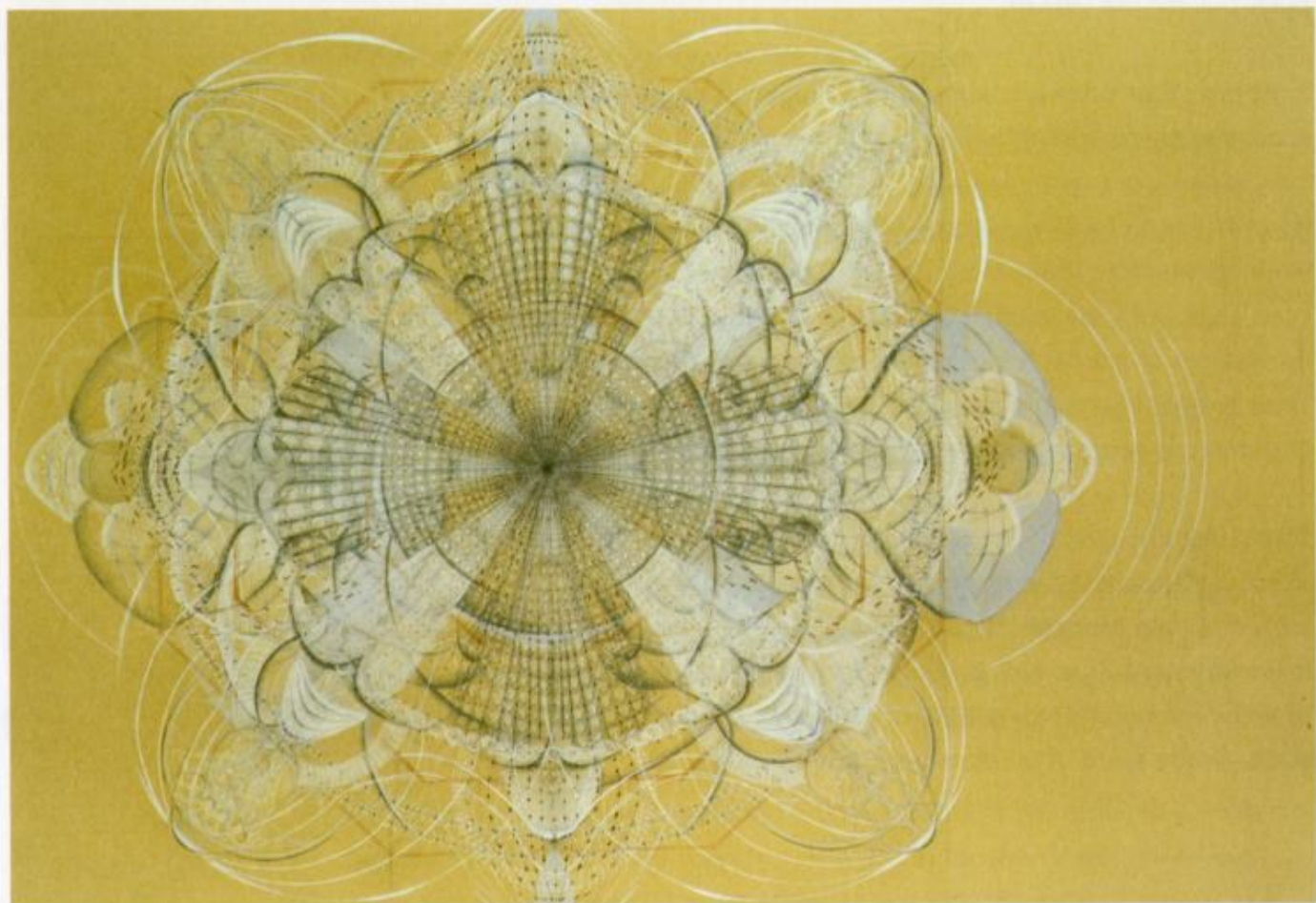
lombino: Your titles are somewhat ambiguous as well. Does the issue of access apply to your titles?

myers: The titles always come from a place of invention, because the work comes from that place. The work demands its own kind of language. I can't apply my knowledge to it or speak about it in my terms, so I give it its own set of words. My titles are indicators or proposals for the work. They are not truths. It's fairly arbitrary, like an astronomer naming a star, or planet, or some other previously uncharted body.

Take HYPOND LATTICE/GROUND STATE for example, "hy" refers to hydrogen, which is the simplest known element containing only two components—a proton and an electron. "Pond" refers to a self-sustained, complete aquatic environment. "Lattice" is a type of diagram mathematicians use to show the ordering of events or elements. "Ground state" is the home state, or the state of an element's lowest energy.



LEADBEATER AND BESANT.  
OCCULT CHEMISTRY. 1908



NOVA-C, 2000 (AND DETAIL)

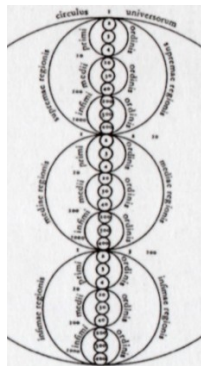
In CUMULAPNEUMA (THE THIRD THING), "cumula" is a type of cloud formation and "pneuma" refers to breath. "The Third Thing" is a reference to a poem of the same title by D. H. Lawrence. The poem is about a molecule of water—two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, plus a third element present that completes the molecule but remains unknown and somewhat mysterious.

So the titles are descriptive, and they also have function. They function synergistically with the work by adding another layer of meaning. They are usually added at the very end.

lombino: There is a delicate balance in the drawings between what looks like very scientific, symmetrical diagrams on the one hand, and something that recalls an intuitive gestural dance on the other. Can you address the relationship between the two contrasting characteristics?

myers: There is a great deal of discipline here. Every mark on a drawing is related to something else. It's all a system. It's not haphazard, there are no whimsical marks and it's not like design. There is a scientific reason behind everything.

lombino: Would you consider it a pseudo science?



NIKOLAUS OF CUSA. DIAGRAM OF THE UNIVERSE. 15TH CENTURY

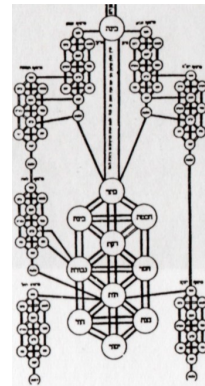


myers: No, it's very mathematical. When my father looks at the work, he recognizes mathematical expressions. I don't consider science to be a strict set of laws. Progress in science is about fumbling through the dark and stumbling onto discoveries. I feel that I use a similar kind of process. I'm fumbling my way through. Even though my process is grounded in science, it is still a serendipitous kind of adventure.

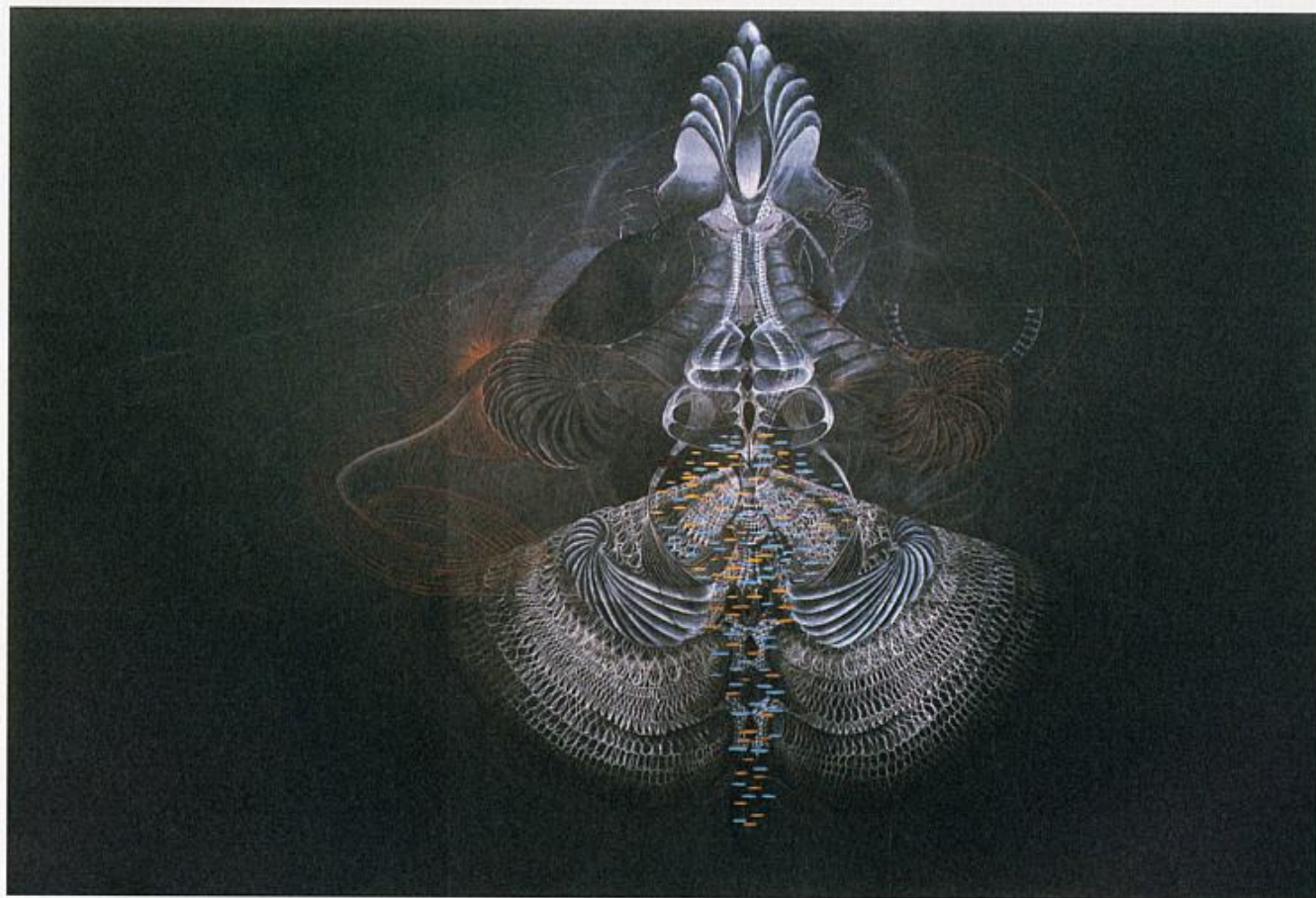
If I became too disciplined, the work would be dead. I would be merely executing a preconceived idea. I wouldn't be discovering or inventing. It would be about execution. For me, there's no possibility there. That's not creation.

lombino: In that way, your inquiring allows you to have more freedom than a scientist working on an actual experiment .

myers: What I share with scientific inquiry is the goal of finding the beauty of a perfect equation. In a way, scientists are driven by the search for that elegance. When an equation works, there is a certain rhythm that completely relates to art. Imagine a scientist at work on an equation filling notebooks for days and days. At one point it would break, and answers would flow out. After that, a weight would be lifted. I imagine it would be similar to the sense of completion I feel when I resolve a drawing. It's a moment to step back and rest.



SEPHIAOTH SCROLL, POLAND, 19TH CENTURY



HOSTESS, HEINOUS, HUBRIS, 1998

## biography

Amy Myers was born in Taylor, Texas in 1965. She received a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute, Missouri in 1995 and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1999. She has had one person exhibitions at Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco and Rhona Hollman Gallery, Chicago. Her work has been exhibited in group exhibitions at the Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, California, Barrett House Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York, and Johnson County Gallery of Art, Overland Park, Kansas. Myers's work has been published in various art publications including ART ON PAPER, ART ISSUES and ART & AUCTION, in addition to THE NEW YORK TIMES

and the SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN.

This exhibition marks the first showing of her work in Southern California as well as her first museum exhibition.

## checklist of the exhibition

dimensions are given in inches

height precedes width

### heliocentropy, 1998

Ink and graphite on paper, 120 x 133  
Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery,  
San Francisco

### hostess, heinous, hubris, 1998

Ink and graphite on paper, 90 x 140  
Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery,  
San Francisco

### virtual underground, red phase, 1998

Ink and graphite on paper, 88 x 120  
Private Collection, San Francisco

### cumulapneuma [the third thing], 1999

Ink and graphite on paper, 120 x 133  
Collection Craig Robins, Miami Beach

### hypond lattice/ground state, 1999

Ink and graphite and gouache on paper,  
90 x 44  
Private Collection, New York

### NOVA-C, 2000

Ink, graphite and gouache on paper, 90 x 130  
Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery,  
San Francisco

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