

Lifting the Veil: Artist Amy Myers is drawn to the fabric of the universe

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A sense of scale: the artist and her work.

The gallery looks almost bare when one walks in. Then the eye roves about the room and the rich combination of texture and tapestry beckons: Come closer, pull up a chair, sit down and let's talk.

“Contemporary Cosmology” contains half a dozen drawings – all but one of them the size of a magic carpet – by Amy Myers. The exhibition, which opened last week

in the Creative Arts Center in Manhattan Beach, was curated by Homeira Goldstein and is being presented by Arts Manhattan. Whether or not it proves to be a popular show seems beside the point: The work is thoughtful, intelligent, and engaging. The artist, in her mid-40s but looking much younger, holds degrees in painting and drawing from the Kansas City Art Institute and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her father worked as a physicist and Myers isn't shy about declaring her interest in Newtonian physics and quantum mechanical physics. So it's not surprising that her work has titles like "Red Giant," "Partner to Quark," and "Zero Mass."

Her artist statement is a bit daunting, more Descartes than Degas, but worthy of reprinting in full. Now, take a breath:

"The perspective of particle physics is one of a universe without 'stuff.' All particles exist with the potential to combine with and become different particles. They are intermediate states in a network of interactions and are based upon events, not things. My drawings are the reality of a new physics that currently considers general relativity and quantum mechanics as foundation stones. The drawings are progressive formulations of contemporary cosmology, immaculate systems and events that until now have only been described by 'maths' of the highest order."



Curator Homeira Goldstein and artist Amy Myers at the opening of "Contemporary Cosmology."

Goldstein met Myers ten years ago in Chicago.

“I was so mesmerized and enthralled by her drawings,” Goldstein says, “that I bought her work on the spot. I don’t even want to call them drawings as they are much more compelling, powerful, and directional like an anatomy of tissues. They are like living cells that gobble you in and keep you searching for a clue of life.

“I personally appreciate artwork that keeps me seeking, searching, and questioning our life phenomenon. For this, Amy is one of my favorite artists because she keeps me on my path.”

Stepping beyond the surface

Amy Myers was asked a few questions about herself and her work, and she responded succinctly.

You’ve found a wonderful supporter of the arts in Homeira Goldstein. How did this particular exhibition come about?

“I love Homeira. I met her through Rhona Hoffman out of Chicago. We became friends and kept in touch throughout the years. I contacted her when I moved back from New York City five months ago and she suggested a show.”

How do you begin each piece? Do you make smaller sketches for them, or do they emerge organically as you work?

“No sketches,” Myers replies. “All in the moment. I work on three or four at a time. I read physics as an impetus or springboard into the imagination. It is an area which is not covered by our knowledge.”

Presumably an artist is drawn to a certain scale for subjective reasons. Why do you prefer larger over smaller?

“I like scale that requires the audience to either step into an unknown field or surrender to an experience larger than their physical body.”

Could you say something about your choice of materials?

“My materials are mostly dry, low-tech tools that directly reference the hand.”

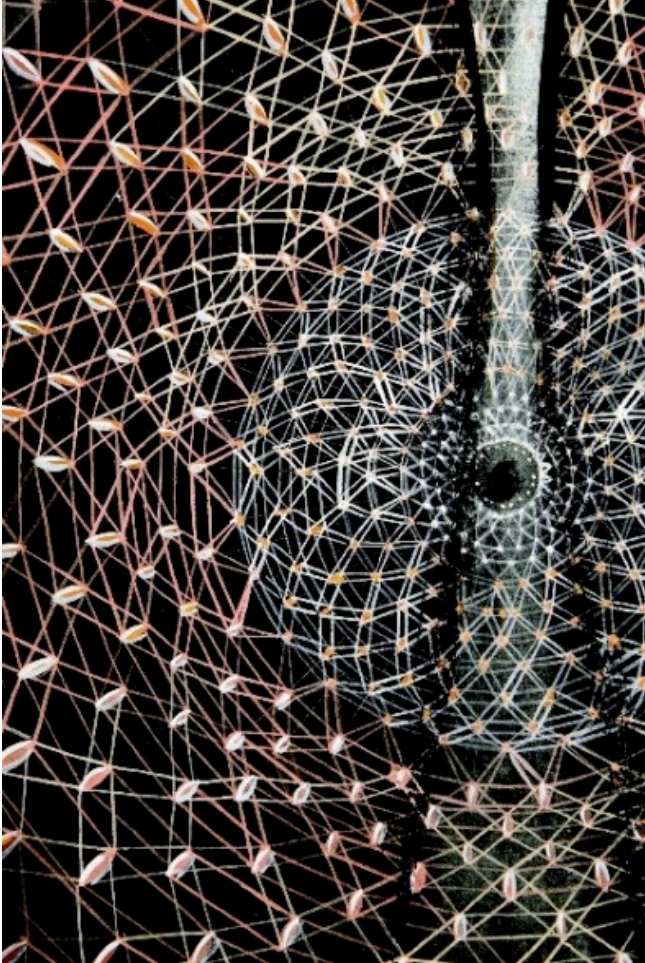
(Myers uses graphite, conté crayon, and gouache – on sheets of paper, not canvas)

Who are your antecedents, role models, or inspirations?

“Da Vinci, Johannes Kepler, Duchamp, Louise Nevelson, and Lee Bontecou.”

When you work, do you require large, uninterrupted blocks of time?

Exactly, Myers replies. “I fall into a zone and lose track of time.”



Red Giant between Sun and Earth - detail

As for what she aims to accomplish:

“My highest goal is to contribute to the lives of others through what I make. I know as human beings we are capable of great achievements. We can feel great wonder. We can evolve our world and ourselves to a spectacular arena of peace and prosperity for all humans, and art is the pathway.”

The handful of drawings... well, maybe “handful” isn’t the right word... that comprise “Contemporary Cosmology” have an intriguing off-center symmetry, as if Myers has plumbed the depths of the microcosmic and the macrocosmic all at once. It’s Nature’s calligraphy on the one hand, with hints of Asian or Middle Eastern calligraphy and perhaps a dash of H.R. Giger and

other “alien” life forms. Others may find the pictures suggestive of subatomic or galaxy-sized mandalas (or mandibles as Mr. Spellcheck seems to think). The important thing is that we look and look. Something unexpected will begin to emerge.

The last word, however, should belong to the curator.

“To me,” Goldstein says, “science at its highest degree of complexity meets art and Amy’s work is an ideal presentation of this phenomenon. Growing up in a family of science and art has [nurtured] her sense of imagination and has burst her curiosity to present us with such mysterious and intriguing work. Her sense of exploration has created these overwhelming apparatuses that are highly feminine, open to take you in, and dazzle your mind and emotions.”

Contemporary Cosmology is on view through January 12 at the Creative Arts Center, 1560 Manhattan Beach Blvd., Manhattan Beach. Hours, Tuesday 2 to 6 p.m., Wednesday 4 to 8 p.m., Thursday 2 to 6 p.m., and Saturday 1 to 5 p.m. Closed Sunday, Monday, Friday and holidays. (310) 802-5440.