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Critic's Picks: SF Bay Area

by Dewitt Cheng

Partisans of textile decoration, biology, botany astronomy, Op Art and visionary art--comprising a surprisingly wide-ranging demographic--find common ground in the exquisitely rendered, visually stunning, and thematically rich paintings of Barbara Takenaga, who returns to Gregory Lind Gallery for a fifth solo show. Formerly a printmaker, the painter employs the systematic, even obsessive, approach that is required in certain printing processes for creating her simple, geometric subject matter--spheres by the thousands, in general, of various colors (some done in iridescent metallic interference paints), radiating out in strings or tentacles: excited, animated subatomic particles in cosmological mandalas. Spiral nebulae and soap bubbles; mathematical progressions and plant/animal growth; endless metamorphosis and the less comforting astronomical reality of Big Bang and Big Crunch are other interpretations of these paintings, fractal ball pits for metaphysically inclined grownups. One critic, Carol Diehl, likened Takenaga's recent work to Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, updated for the digital age. Another, Nancy Princenthal, discerns, in the appearance of horizon lines in the new works, and thus spatial division, references to the artist's native Nebraska, "limitless, unmarked expanses...of matter-of-fact infinitude," and no vacuum, but a plenum (or completely filled space) charged with "a kind of electrifying, animist spirituality."

From May 3 to June 16 at Gregory Lind Gallery.