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Energies Illustrated: Barbara Takenaga at Gregory Lind Gallery

by Franklin Einspruch

Your reporter has admired the paintings of Barbara Takenaga since seeing them for the first time at the deCordova Museum in Lincoln, MA in 2007. The artist, who divides her time between New York City and Williamstown, MA, works up fields of dots into vertiginous, magnetic abstractions. Think Yayoi Kusama, but with less obsessive-compulsive disorder and more feeling for paint. Earlier this month, Takenaga's works went on display at a solo exhibition at Gregory Lind Gallery in San Francisco.

"Takenaga has expanded on her lexicon of simple shapes – dots, lines, circles, and undulating wave patterns of varying scales – with the inclusion of a flat line that is both horizon and division," says the gallery. "In this series, Takenaga includes her signature light-saturated, reflective surfaces and an opalescent palette of pulsing color schemes that often radiate out from a vanishing point in multifarious swirls, evoking landscapes and mirrored images.

"In works such as 'Blue Haze,' a kaleidoscopic terrain of undulating metallic dots is suggestive of celestial objects. 'Minus Red' presents a feverish yet contained explosion of rays of color against a backdrop of a primal, amorphous fog, before melting into a vermillion event horizon of perceptual space.

Takenaga's repeated shapes are balanced by the exuberance of her compositions. While her work has been referred to as 'psychedelic,' this is sensory profusion that never becomes visual overload. Her painstaking precision and references to larger processes in nature are, then, an apt visual metaphor for the cosmic energies that pervade our space in both obvious and undetected ways."