

SKY KIM

*EACH ONE ALL*

February 28 – March 27, 2019

In her first solo show at Thomas Jaeckel Gallery, Korean artist Sky Kim presents an exhibition of intricate and powerful watercolors that stunningly push the medium far beyond its traditionally assumed visual and conceptual limitations. Imbued with a sense of calm but profound mystery, the paintings in *Each One All* evoke the gentle presence of a flower in bloom, or the quiet self-assertion of a breathtaking array of stars in a clear desert sky. Kim's mesmerizing masses of undulating interlaced strands and radial vortexes evoke the endless beauties of nature while retaining an eerie alienness that vests them with a vaguely otherworldly aura.

Kim's paintings have a systematic and coherent internal logic that mimics the complex interplay of order and dissolution found at every level of the cosmos. Each image hints at as-yet-undiscovered natural forms lurking just beyond our perceptual horizons. The untitled pieces in her *Multiverse* series have the feeling of fantastical galaxies congealed from thousands of tiny, shiny spheres that resemble pearls, glass beads, or steel bearings (in one piece, these forms are juxtaposed against actual Swarovski crystals, creating a fascinating contrast between her illusionistic rendering and their literal presence). In a piece from the *Wavelength* series, thousands of painstakingly rendered strands are woven into a hairlike mass that floats in an indeterminate gray space; the resulting form is both an integral entity and a dismembered clump at once. The *Vortex* and *Portal* series hint at fragile aquatic forms including brittle sea urchin shells, delicate clusters of octopus eggs, and soft globular colonies of our most ancient unicellular ancestors in the primordial seas. Kim's bridging of scales from the cosmic to the microscopic and her spanning of the gulf between the organic and inorganic brings to mind Arthur Koestler's idea of *holons*, structures found throughout the universe that are both wholes made up of smaller parts and parts of larger structures. Each of Kim's paintings is both a self-contained microcosm—a universe in miniature—and a fanciful yet believable snapshot of the

innumerable processes and interactions through which the cosmos unfolds, and by which it persists and thrives.

Both formally and conceptually, these watercolors are a fascinating study in the natural emergence of tremendous complexity from the most rudimentary elements. Given the minimal nature of the basic forms at play in these works—the sphere, the circle, the smooth linear strand—it’s astonishing to see the variety of moods and effects that emanate from them. Hundreds of undulating strands made of small, shiny spheres intertwine into a mass much like a cloud, a deep-space nebula, or an tangle of kelp bobbing on the surface of a tide pool. Petal-like blue teardrops cluster around a dark circular void; each seems to push slightly in a distinct direction within the system’s vaguely concentric overall flow, creating a subtle tension that suggests a delicate balance between corporate harmony and individual struggle. Other circular or ovoid constructions split and double via mitosis; extend pseudopod-like protrusions; or cling to one another with delicate arrays of beaded tendrils in a delicate dance that subtly echoes the give-and-take rhythms of life. Kim’s use of color often reinforces these associations in subtle ways. Most of the paintings are dominated by somber shades of black and gray, but set against them are also soft watery blues, deep violets and lustrous shades of dark turquoise that suggest bioluminescence, and the intense red of both blood and nature’s exuberant palette.

The show’s centerpiece is a 30-foot-long scroll running down the gallery wall and out into the exhibition space. At the top looms a circular, mouthlike vortex comprised of soft teardrop shapes; down from this extends a thick, undulating appendage that meanders and loops along the paper’s length with the seeming abandon of spores carried by a playful, untamable breeze. The tentacular form disappears into the rolled-up end of the scroll, allowing us to imagine its journey continuing on forever, like that of life and the cosmos itself.

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