

IOTA
LINNEA SPRANSY

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Curated by Suzanne Dittenber

AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2016

OPENING RECEPTION AND

ARTIST'S LECTURE:

SEPTEMBER 8, 6PM

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On the illuminated Chi-Rho-Iota page from the *Book of Kells* manuscript (800 CE), there is an embellished Iota letter woven into the larger Chi-Rho initials as a complex visual commentary on the birth narrative of Jesus from Matthew 1:18. The vellum page is filled with intricately overlapping lines and geometric symbols, an early artifact demonstrating the monastic practice of decorating sacred codices with ornate illustrations. Indeed, the history of art is rich with repetitive and tedious line drawing as a form of meditation. Manuscript illumination is one of the Christian tradition's earliest forms of visual art, a kind of scriptural hieroglyphics where monks and scribes transfigured strokes into sacred symbols as a type of *lectio divina* prayer practice. In a similar manner, Tibetan Buddhism has a monastic ceremony surrounding the creation and destruction of the Mandala, a horizontally-layered sand painting symbolically depicting a spiritual interpretation of the cosmos. Utilizing geometric precision to compose intersecting circles, squares and labyrinths, the Mandala is meticulously assembled until the image is deemed complete and then scattered over water, symbolizing life's ephemerality.

What these two artistic rituals share is a phenomenological practice of time-oriented line composition as a liturgical rite through varying mediums. The rigorous devotion of repetitive actions are not merely concerned with the conclusive product, but rather how specific practices ritualistically transform the artist. Attending to the particular is a discipline of self-imposed restrictions, a kind of ascetic practice that cultivates an awareness of Zen. The 'Zen' element is inductively discovered and practiced by the intuitive artist who nourishes a hospitable vision to see the marvelous in the quotidian.

In Frederick Franck's *The Zen of Seeing*, he writes "what really happens when seeing and drawing become {Zen} is that awareness and attention become constant and undivided, become contemplation. {Zen} is not self-indulgence, a "pleasant hobby," but a discipline of awareness, of unwavering attention to a world that is fully alive. It is not the pursuit of happiness, but stopping the pursuit and experiencing the awareness, the happiness of being *all there*" (8).

In "Iota", Linnea Gabriella Spransy situates herself within these cultural histories inherited from eastern and western canons, as a visceral painter whose structural schemas thrive on ascetic limitations and a qualitative perception of "Zen" sensibility. Sharing typologies with manuscripts and mandalas, her geometric modules echo building blocks of visible and invisible structures in scientific sequences and anthropological symbolism. Spransy perceives the essence of cosmic engineering—a tension between pattern and chaos, predetermined and chanced—where free will and surprise can intermingle and co-exist. By tracing and outlining behavioral motifs within nature, her modules evolve into biomorphic landscapes, geometric worlds, and cartographic maps. Excavating her archeological surfaces thru countless layers of luscious paint, Spransy's maneuvering mazes of colorful lines articulate the architecture of the universe. In essence, Spransy explores time's accumulation through the very material of paint—archiving a memory of where she has been and is going—as

lines build and converge at unanticipated junctures. This painstaking and time-intensive process is indicative of Spransy's patient attentiveness and openness to taxing methods as her painting reflexively works back on her. This disposition and rigor might remind us of the phenomenologically astute Agnes Martin (d.2004), a fascinating foil to Spransy in style. Martin's minimalist and monochromatic grid paintings capture the meditative self through abstracted moods and Zen-like states, evoking serenity and dispossession. In contrast, Spransy's paintings are pregnant with the exponential energy of a chemical bond, the death of a star or the fertilization of chromosomes. Active in gesture and vibrant in palette, Spransy offers microscopic wonders in her compressed, yet lively works.

Among the smallest letters in the Greek alphabet, the "iota" character indicates minutiae, smallness, an infinitesimal amount: "Until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota or one tittle will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). From tiny icons and portrait miniatures to Paul Klee's squares, small works have allowed artists the necessary space to test ideas on a compact scale as a "study" before risking larger compositions. For the exhibition of "iota", Spransy chose to anchor her smaller works with a single large-scale piece, demonstrating not only the contrast in size, but also a sampling of her modules' beginnings, anticipatory and imaginative of what they might become on a grander canvas. Their limited parameters depict creativity's restraint while bursting with energy and dynamism in their curious trajectories.

"A painting is a cast made of the painter's movements," critic James Elkins reflects, not only recording their presence through latex, oil, water and acrylic, but also by transfiguring these lowly substances into an essentially new thing. Thus, painting too is a type of alchemy within the phenomenological dimensions of spiritual disciplines, regardless of size. "iota", then, beckons a closer observation, a "Zen" awareness of what is "there", as its own form of meditation.

Julie Hamilton

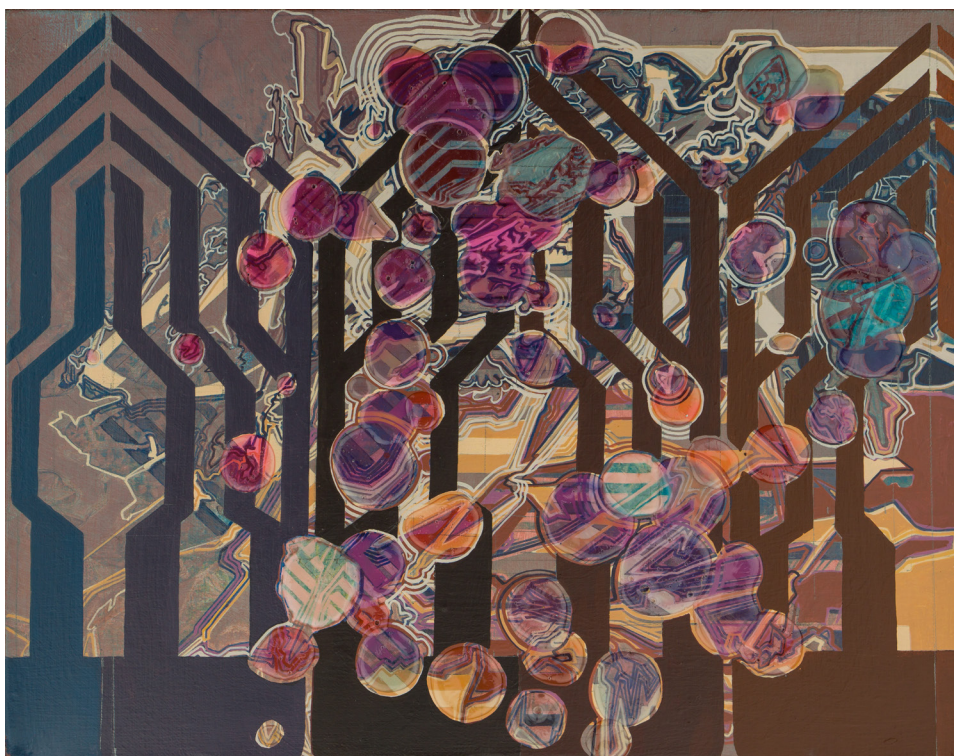
Julie Hamilton, a Baylor bear and Duke Div grad, is originally from central Texas and has worked in North Carolina and New York as a humanities instructor and fashion stylist. An art critic and editor for The Other Journal and The Curator Magazine, she collects records, adores baseball and appreciates good bourbon.



MEGILLAH
10 X 14 INCHES | ACRYLIC AND INK ON CANVAS | 2016







COSMOPOLIS MINOR
10 X 14 INCHES | ACRYLIC AND INK ON CANVAS | 2016

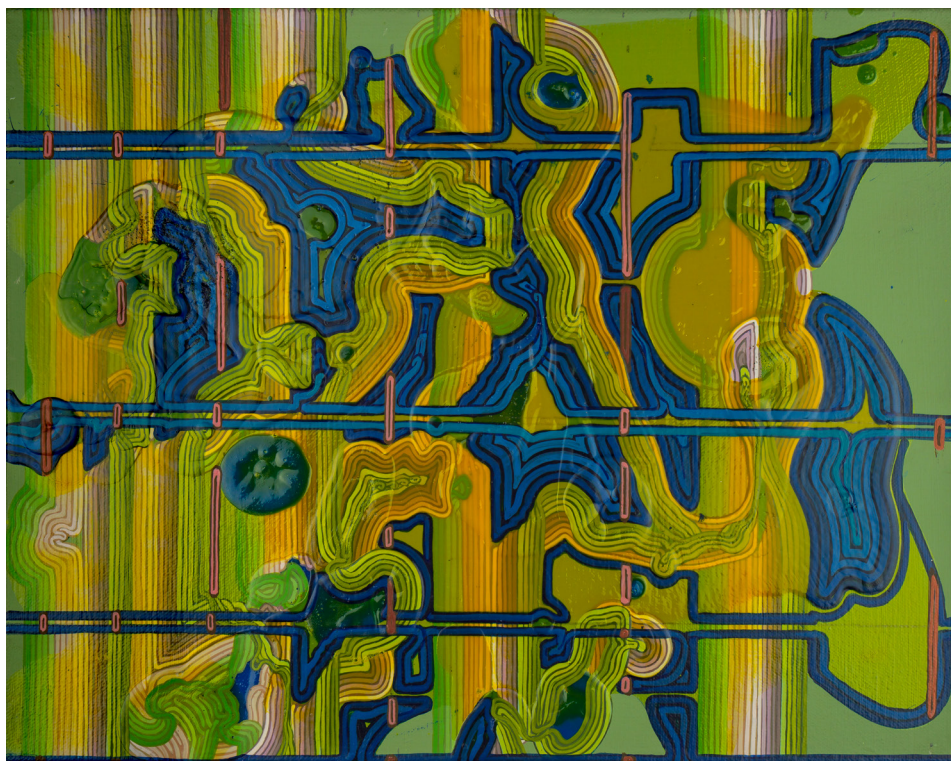
PREVIOUS PAGE:
UNTITLED
90 X 60 INCHES | OIL ON CANVAS



VIRGULE
10 X 14 INCHES | ACRYLIC AND INK ON CANVAS | 2016



CHAISMUS
10 X 17 INCHES | ACRYLIC AND INK ON CANVAS | 2016



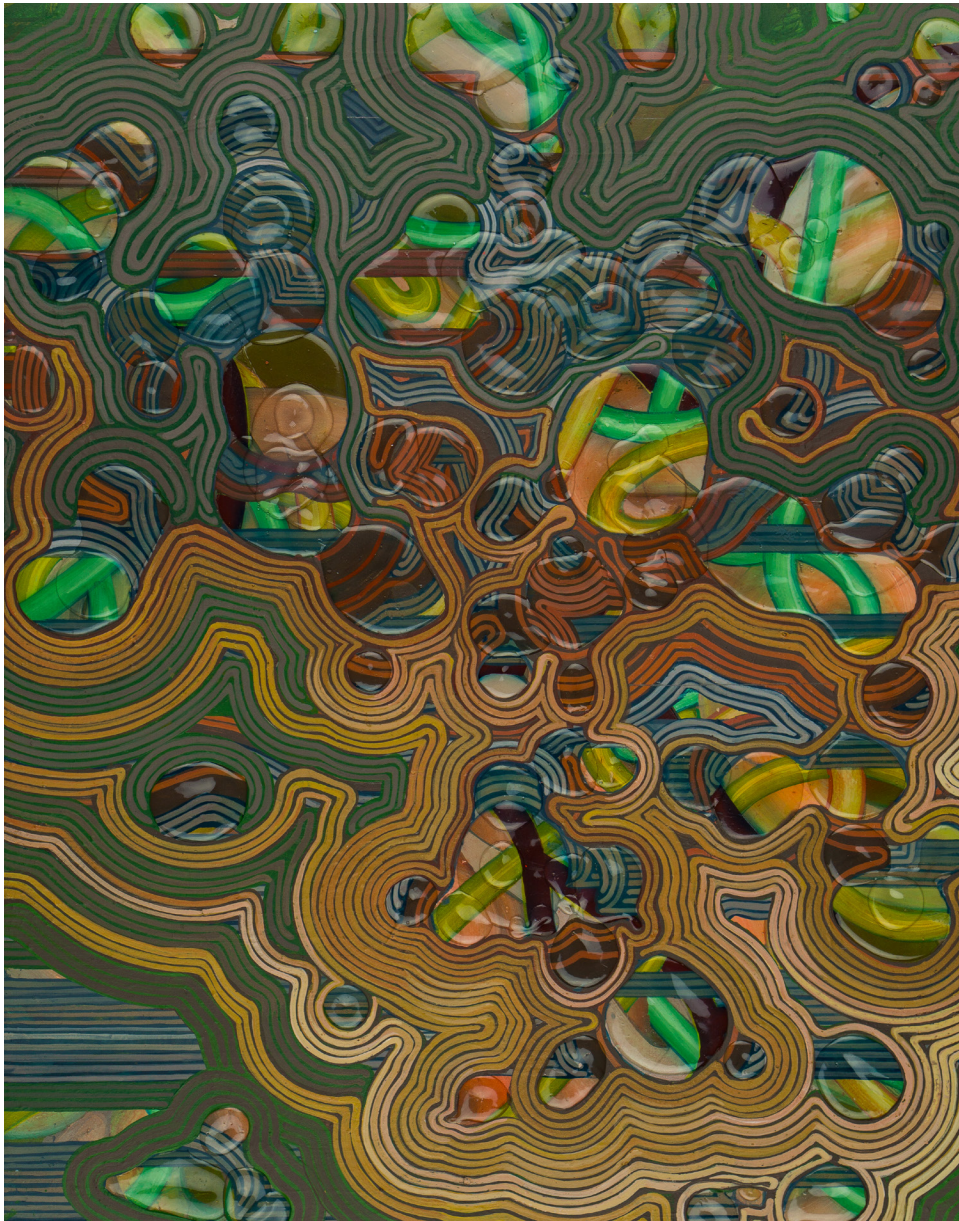
INSOUCIANT GRID
10 X 14 INCHES | ACRYLIC AND INK ON CANVAS | 2016



TOURBILLION
16 X 16 INCHES | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 2012



VELLEITY
10 X 14 INCHES | ACRYLIC AND INK ON CANVAS | 2016



AREOLA
10 X 14 | ACRYLIC AND INK ON CANVAS | 2016

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY | LINNEA SPRANSY

Linnea Spransy's paintings, drawings and installations are generated using systems and rules which are distillations of her interest in emergent theory, quantum mechanics, theology and chaos theory. Her work has been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally at numerous academic institutions including Princeton University, both commercial and non-profit galleries such as White Flag in St. Louis and Rhona Hoffman Gallery and is featured in numerous corporate collections. Her collaborative work and performances have taken place in NYC, London and in Dundee, Scotland. She is currently living and working in LA and has begun the process of forming an arts organization there, which will entail international artist residencies, a studio program and exhibition space.

Spransy was born in 1976 in a town called Oconomowoc, WI. Her formative years were spent in a 75 member community in Oregon with a one room school house and a 'comon-purse' economic structure. Her father was the synth player in one of the first Christian glam bands to ever tour. In 1999 she moved to New Haven, CT to attend Yale University and earn her MFA, which she received in 2001. At this juncture, her latent interest in science, philosophy and quantum physics came to the fore, which lead her life and work in new directions.

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Gallery hours: Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm