

VISUAL ARTS

Going round and round with color and shading

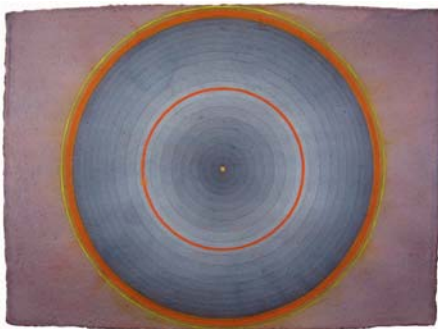
By Debra Wolf
For the Journal-Constitution
Friday, August 15, 2008

REVIEW

“This Moment as It Is: A Connection to the Whole”

Art by Don Cooper. Through Sept. 20. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Tuesdays - Saturdays. Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia,
75 Bennett St., Atlanta. 404-367-4542, www.mocaga.org

Bottom line: A handsome body of work shows Cooper's fine hand at balancing warm and cool tones, combining color with meticulous geometry, and his affinity for subtle exploration of process.



Indigo Bindu (Wheel of Life)

Don Cooper is well known for successfully shifting gears over the years, sometimes dramatically. His latest works — 32 paintings on canvas and paper — offer a subtle expansion on his mesmerizing geometric abstractions and make up a beautiful exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia.

Most of these handsome compositions, which make up the second of MOCA GA's Working Artist Project series, are anchored by a small central dot (Bindu) referring to the point of origin and destination in a variety of Eastern philosophies and practices.

Cooper configures concentric circles around the central point. He methodically layers acrylic over a gesso ground on canvas, or applies watercolors to handmade papers. Underlying circles are at times delineated by color selection and lines. At other times they are blurred and blended as their hues bleed into each other.

The artist's confectionary and neon palette is joined, in newer works, by less frequently used inky blues, purples and deep grays, and circular forms take on a moodier, more languid presence.

“Carbon,” one of several large, monochromatic paintings, shows off a dappled orb against a blackened background. A watercolor version, “Carbon Gray,” suggests an eclipsing planetary body. In “Mars Gray,” a single circular band of translucent raspberry cuts through another meditation on dark and light, highlighting the artist’s ability to achieve an impeccably edited element of surprise.

While the paintings as a whole may be focused on process and materials, one senses an underlying environmental consciousness in many of the works.

Equally lovely are Cooper’s watercolors on Indian Village handmade papers, running the gamut from vivid to dreamy. The textured paper he uses absorbs pigments in varying ways, resulting in an appealing grainy quality as in “Indigo Bindu (Wheel of Life).”

“Opening Eye Bindu” is the first painting Cooper created for the MOCA Project (in 2007). Anything but quiet in temperament, its vibrant reds and greens along with a central eye converge in a striking and enigmatic painting, an example of exuberance and restraint.