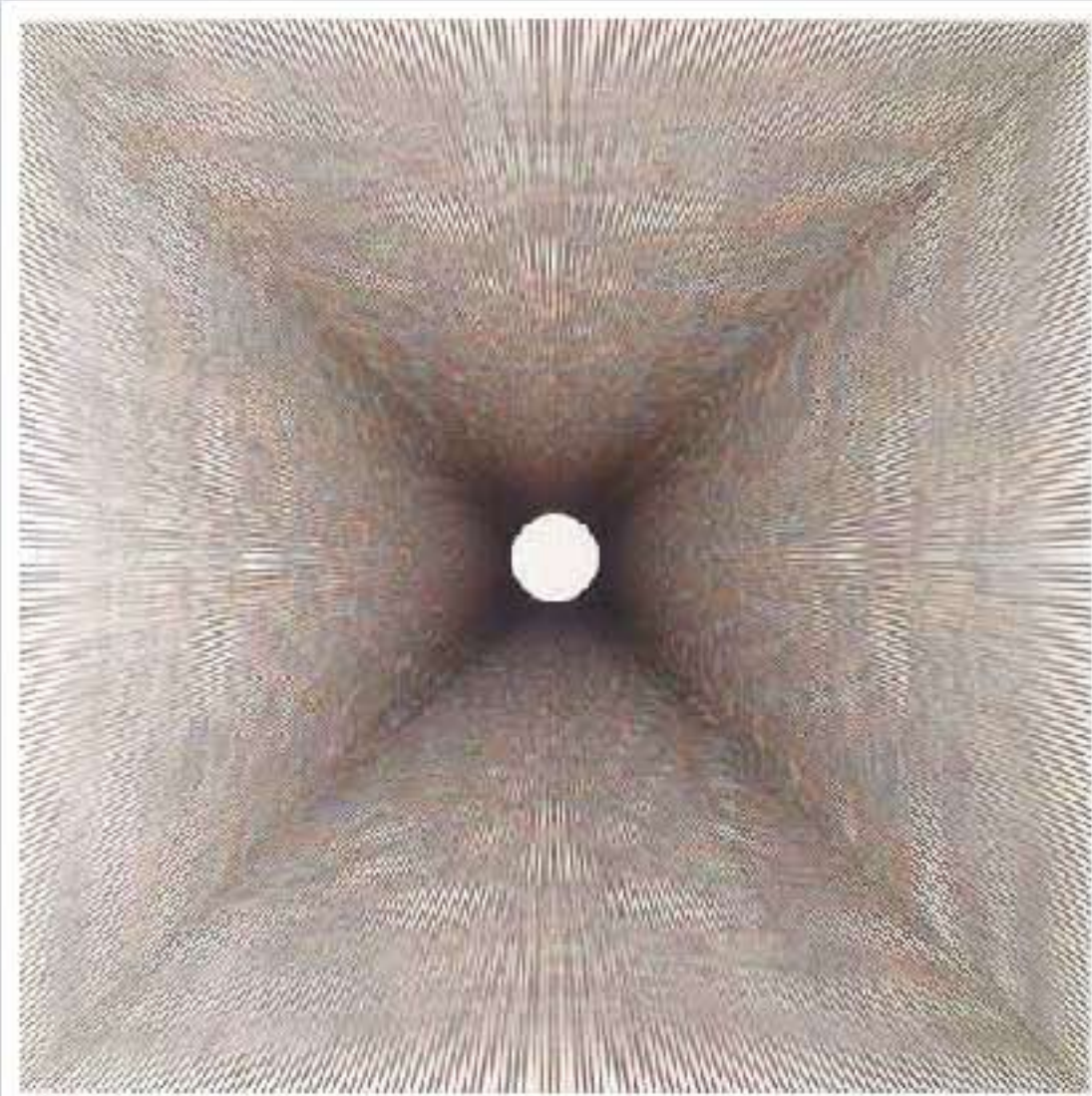


## Arts & Entertainment:

### Lyric Representations of Sacred, Unattainable Worlds

By Peter Selz, *Special to the Planet*  
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"June 11, 2007" by Alex Zecca produces fields of visual energy, creating an object of meditation.

Abstract painting has been with us for about a century. At times it has descended into mere decoration or design or "color-field" painting with its thesis that painting addresses only the eye. Abstract painting, however, even more than figuration can communicate what philosophers have called the Sublime.

The pioneers of abstraction, Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian created pure abstract visions that embodied involvement in the metaphysical sphere. The most seminal text of abstraction was an essay by Kandinsky, entitled "The Spiritual in Art" (1912).

American abstract artists, Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt and others continued in this tradition, creating works of immanent spiritual content.

Again, here and now there are artists who pursue this direction, and the Berkeley Art Center is to be congratulated for presenting the work of 11 Bay Area artists in this exhibition curated by Jamie Brunson and Michelle Mansour and for publishing a fine catalogue with its essay by Professor Mark Levy.

Some of paintings with their expanded color areas retain a suggestion or evocation of landscape, as seen in works by David Ivan Clark, who applies layers of pigment onto stainless steel supports, or Jenn Shifflet, whose panels suggest mysterious cloud formations.

The organic world is also implied in David King's fascinating collages which allude to views of cells seen under a microscope or heavenly bodies observed through a telescope. Cellular infrastructures and cosmological orbits are also suggested in the dynamic swirls of Michelle Manour's panels.

Totally non-objective is the luminous triptych with its modulated tonalities of grays by Lori del Mar, and so are the square canvases of translucent colors by Keira Kotler and the panels of veils and lattices by Jamie Brunson, which are based on her Kudalini Yoga practice.

The Indonesian-born Freddy Chandra is represented with a rectangular resin block in which a modulated range of colors are arranged with musical rhythms.

David O. Johnson presents the only freestanding sculptures in the exhibition: two identical cubes that recall the formalist works by the Minimalists. Johnson's pieces are made of concrete and are animated by small curved neon tubes, which emerge from and illuminate the solid forms.

I found the works by Alex Zecca and Habi Tabatabai of particular distinction. Zecca who was seen recently at the BAC in a juried exhibition, presents two dizzying large-scale pen-and-ink drawings. In "June 11, 2007," multiple lines converge at a central target.

The lines are drawn to create a moiré pattern, stimulating the viewer's eye to see emerging and contracting forms in a field of visual energy. The precision of this artist's craftsmanship together with his vision create an object of meditation.

Finally Tabatabai's "Wax Piece 34" (2008), is made with geometric elements which give the work the appearance of floating in space. The artist seeks to unite the sensibility of Eastern thought with the more systematic ideology of the West and truly succeeds in a work which makes us think of Agnes Martin's grids, which she called "moments of awareness."

These are actually lyrical works, capable, as Friedrich Hegel asserted, "of grasping the most sacred moments in the inner world which are inaccessible to words."