

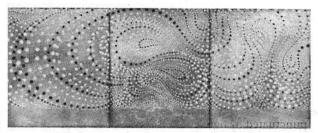
BARBARA TAKENAGA New Paintings

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at DC Moore, a series in which she challenged herself to paint the same painting 30 times. Each work was 12 by 10 inches, and started with a small circle, which became the origin of a widening spiral of variously-sized circles. Takenaga's approach has always been incremental, with one similar, often circular form generating another, like cells undergoing meiosis. As much as I admired the self-abnegating challenge that the artist had undertaken in Langwidere, I also felt it was one that she should not repeat, that the structuring device of a mandala-like swirl of circles might have run its course and even may have become a burden on the artist's inventiveness.

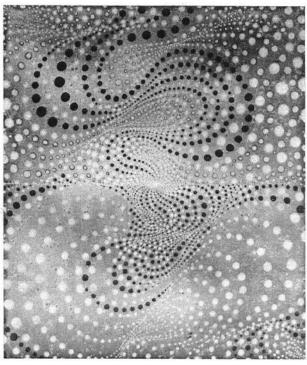
Given my growing peevishness over the mandala-like form, Takenaga's exhibition was a discovery. Gone are the centering forms, which, I thought, gave the viewer too much to hold onto, basically conveying a sense of security and comfort. In these new paintings, Takenaga has relinquished some of the control, introducing overlays of disruptive elements into her strong desire for organization and reliability. It would seem that she has accepted that pandemonium and turmoil cannot be kept at bay, that they are every bit a part of the way time unfolds. In paintings such as "Red Echo" and "Midline" (both 2011), it is as if dissimilar systems (differently sized and colored bubble-like circles, swirls, torquing lines, and cloud- or tissue-like smudges of paint) are invading each other's territory. Dissonance undermines as well as threatens



Barbara Takenaga, "Rise/Fall," 2011. Acrylic on wood panels, 54 x 135". Image Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York.

every sign of order, from repetition to organizing structure. In the larger, panoramic-scaled paintings, despite the horizon line and orderly rhythm of the undulating waves of tactile dots, it is easy to get unmoored in the looking. Also, Takenaga has started using interference paints, which come in metallic colors whose hue changes with the angle of the light. Constant instability is the ground on which the artist plants her signs of order. While the source of these changes may be personal, as Nancy Princenthal suggests in her sympathetic and illuminating catalogue essay, the artist makes no overt allusions or references to any specific trauma in her work.

The other major change is that the artist has moved from evoking the cosmos—from the Big Bang to the nebular—to evoking immense landscapes, earth and sky. The deep space one encounters in "Ronin" and "Forte" (also 2011) are stand-ins for infinity and change in a more unsettling way than what one encountered in her earlier paintings. At the same time, the panoramic triptychs, such as "Rise/



Barbara Takenaga, "Doubleback," 2011: Acrylic on wood panel, 42 x 36". Image Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York:

Fall" (2011) and "Forte" mark a new direction as they convey a larger ambition.

The unearthly light doesn't strike me as being spiritual. Rather, there is something disquieting and other-like about the changing metallic light. It seems as if the cold, vast aloofness of the universe—its indifference to all our loves, desires, and sorrows—has become the deepest subject of Takenaga's recent paintings. It takes a strong and special constitution to maintain the level of scrutiny that the artist has initiated in her work. So far so good. 1