



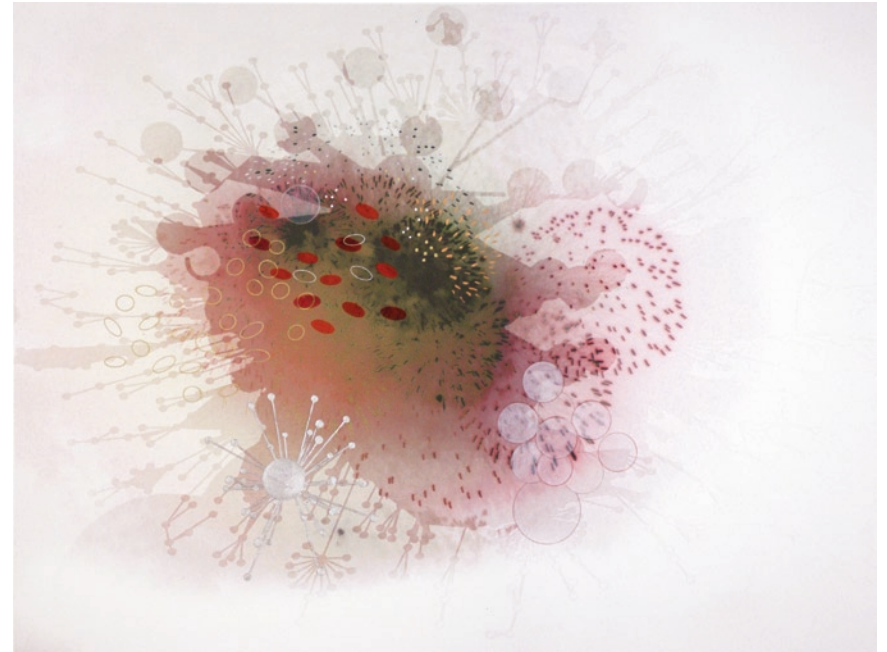
Spatial Constructs  
BARBARA ROBERTSON

Front Cover:  
*Remix*, 2007. Mixed media on paper on panel. 20 x 16 inches.



*Black Point*, 2008. Mixed media on paper. 53 x 42 inches.

Back Cover:  
*Astro Park*, 2008. Pigment print, acrylic, drawing on paper. 36 x 28 inches.



*Pink Explosion*, 2007. Pigment print and acrylic on paper. 36 x 45 inches.

## Barbara Robertson: Space Matters

Barbara Robertson creates works of great depth and beauty that explore all types of matter from the particular to the universal, and question the relationship between micro and macro. Incorporating printmaking, drawing, painting and collage techniques with digital printing, the artist produces complex works that are multi-layered in both process and meaning.

The fields of mathematics, physics, astronomy and biology are inspirational for Robertson, and provide a wealth of source imagery. Organic and inorganic shapes float in ambiguous spaces infused with energy and light, creating what the artist calls “space-scapes of materializing and dematerializing forms.” In this manufactured space, scale increases and diminishes, and shapes shift and transform meanings according to their changing contexts. Spheres metamorphose from geometric figures to astronomical orbs to individual cells. Repeated circular patterns suggest the orbital paths of planets, molecular models, or arcs of moving light. Lines connecting dots can be viewed as constellations, routes on a map, points on a graph, directions in space, and even musical notes. Fields of color can resemble clouds, or oceans, ectoplasm or diffused light. The fluidity with which forms move back and forth across disciplines combined with the constant shifting between microcosm and macrocosm creates a dynamic energy that activates Robertson’s spaces.

By calling her works “space-scapes” the artist raises interesting associations with established art historical genres. We understand the term “landscape” as the representation of an expanse of natural scenery; similarly, a seascape or cityscape is a view of a specific kind of locale. Robertson’s space-scapes are harder to define. Do they refer to inner or outer space, or perhaps both? They can be read as vast celestial expanses filled with forms suggesting planets, stars, nebulae, energy and light. Yet they are equally credible as highly magnified examinations of cells, molecules or even the infinitesimal particles of atomic space. Whether we believe we are looking through a telescope or a microscope both spatial perspectives are panoramic.

Robertson’s work is compelling not only for its representation of visual space (both inner and outer) but also its utilization of space as a formal compositional element. We are acutely aware of the contrast between the illusion of three-dimensional space and the reality of the two-dimensional picture plane. While the forms seem to hover in a deep and atmospheric space, they are also assertively aligned to the surface, engaged in the classic push-pull dialogue of modernist space.



*Strings*, 2007. Mixed Media on paper. 30 x 22 inches.



*Bang*, 2008. Mixed Media on paper on panel. 45 x 40 inches.

Robertson acknowledges a lifelong admiration for the early modernist artists Vasily Kandinsky, Kasimir Malevich and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. (For years she has had postcards of their paintings hanging in her studio.) She observes an austere quality in their work—a purity of form that uplifts and transports the viewer—and she strives for the same in her own art. There is a recognizable affinity between Robertson’s work and Kandinsky’s abstract improvisations, Malevich’s suprematist compositions, and Moholy-Nagy’s constructivist paintings and photographs. Robertson also feels attuned with the utopian aspirations of these artists since she too yearns for a better world. Perhaps that is what she has ultimately created—at least on paper.

**Mary Birmingham**, Director of Exhibitions, Hunterdon Museum



*Ultra*, 2007. Pigment print, drawing, acrylic on paper. 38 x 46 inches.

## What’s Out There: New Work by Barbara Robertson

If Barbara Robertson weren’t an artist, she would likely be a space explorer, or a research scientist pursuing new frontiers in physics, medicine or mathematics. That’s the way she thinks. Always experimental, curious and adventuresome, and inspired by her love of astronomy and biology, she boldly imagines the outer edges, where there are more questions than answers, then directly and fearlessly travels there. With this new suite of richly textured, mixed media works on paper, Robertson reports on the mystery and dynamism of the universe, producing a joyous tribute to inquiry and discovery with works that shake, vibrate and hum. The pieces in this exhibition are individual force fields of metaphysical energy. Ephemeral objects of uncertain origin appear in a spectrum of colors. They spin and collide, or burst apart across multiple planes. Symbols, fragments and diagrams are combined and recombined, suggesting events that take place on both a galactic and molecular scale, in both real and imaginary time. Infused with motion and light, these are not cautious, contemplative works of art, but brave, vital, complex compositions that deliver a fresh and powerful experience each time they are encountered.



*Bang 2*, 2008. Mixed media on paper on panel. 46 x 41 inches.

Establishing meaning and visual order in the midst of purposeful chaos would be a daunting enterprise for anyone, but Robertson is unquestionably up to the task. The artist's technical virtuosity in multiple mediums, including printmaking, digital photography, drawing, painting, collage and assemblage, is everywhere in evidence; it allows her to take inspiration from a wide range of source material and manipulate, process and reintroduce it in highly unconventional ways. But make no mistake: Robertson's work is more than a festival of special effects. She strikes a masterful balance between what is and is not revealed, preserving what is essential, working and reworking the surface, and somehow, magically, redefining space itself.

**Peggy Weiss**, Independent Curator, April 2008

## Education

University of Washington, Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking, 1979

## Grants & Awards

Neddy Artist Fellowship Award, 2006, Behnke Foundation  
 City Artists 2004, City of Seattle, Grant for production of new large scale work  
 Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, CA. 2002 Fellowship in Digital and Traditional Print Art  
 Washington State Arts Commission, 2002, Professional Development Grant  
 City of Seattle, "Printworks", 2000, Commission  
 King County Arts Commission, 1997, Special Projects in Visual Arts

## Publications and Presentations

*Events*, Artist Collaborator with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Joyce Theater, New York, December, 2004  
*An Exploration of Aesthetics in the Digital Age*, Southern Graphics Conference, Boston, MA, April 2003  
*Medium Crossings: Working Across Boundaries*, Southern Graphics Conference, Austin, TX, March 2001  
*New Media/New Aesthetics*, Southern Graphics Conference, Miami, FL, March, 2000  
 Contemporary Impressions, Fall, 2000 "Balancing Act: Man and Technology in the Digital Age," by Brad Shanks  
*Contemporary Printmaking in the Northwest* by Lois Allan, 1997

## Selected Public Collections

State of Washington, Percent for Art Public Collections  
 King County, Percent for Art, Airport Project  
 City of Seattle, Portable Works Collection  
 King County 4 Culture Portable Works  
 Tacoma Art Museum  
 Safeco Corporation



*Hadron*, 2008. Pigment print and acrylic on paper. 30 x 37 inches.



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310 South Washington Street • Seattle, WA 98104

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