



Karen Margolis and the Deconstruction of “Apparent Order”

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BY ALEXIS CULOTTA

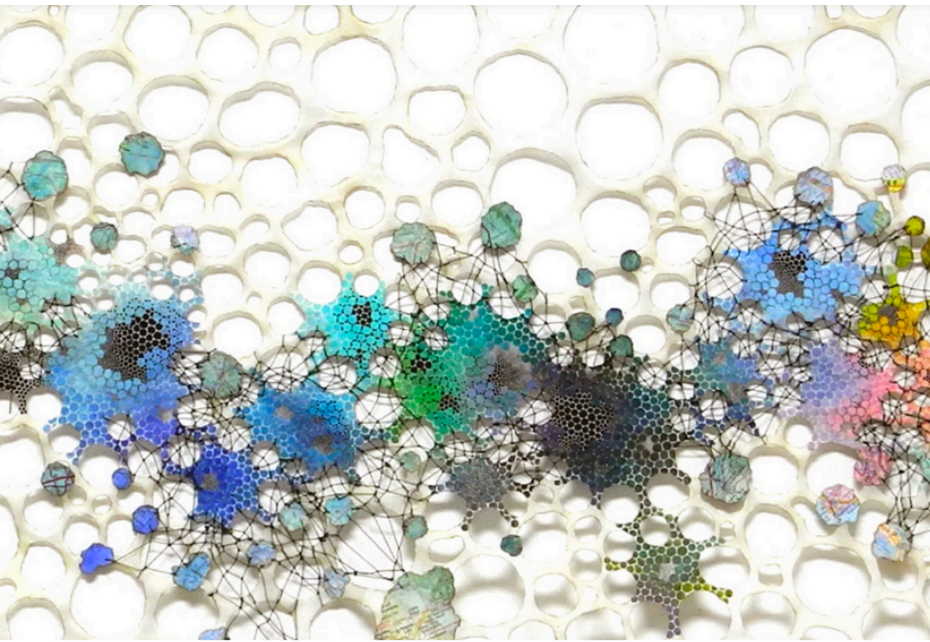
Channeling the chaotic yet compelling aspects of the natural world in her mixed media watercolor compositions, artist Karen Margolis has added her artistic brilliance to various exhibitions in recent years. Her contributions to the 2015 “Apparent Order” showcase at the Garis & Hahn Gallery of New York underlined this splendor in a selection of works that exemplified the powerful harmony possible when various artistic voices come into creative concordance.

The theme of the “Apparent Order” exhibition was the questioning of whether a selection of several leading twentieth-century artistic voices conjured through various techniques could come together in a gallery space to form their own harmonious dialogue. Based upon the Neo-Confucian philosophical principle of “Li,” which stresses the foundational order that can be found in even the seemingly disconnect elements of the natural world, “Apparent Order” brought forth this connectivity between the works of several artists. Margolis’ contributions, however, brought these connections into full alignment.

A view of the installation of several of Margolis’ works in the Garis & Hahn 2015 Installation.

— Alexis Culotta





In compositions like *United States* (2018), Margolis maps a new terrain of the American landscape that seemingly reflects both massive scope and genetic specificity.


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Perhaps this spectacular symbiosis stems from the fact that Margolis' artistic credo is in part inspired by the parallel Buddhist symbol of *ensō*, whose circular form alludes in part to the perfection of pure creativity. For Margolis, this motif features prominently in her art, as she breaks the smooth surface of her preferred Abaca paper with a repetitive yet varied web of circular penetrations. Stretching from edge to edge, these circular extractions transform her surface into its own organic landscape that is further accentuated through her addition of woven threads, map fragments, and painted patterns.

Seen in intimate perspective, Margolis' small patches of color and pasted map portions intrigue the eye and pull the viewer across the composition; from a distance, Margolis' vibrant palette and ethereal surface can be read as an evanescent veil of nature. Works such as *Vestigial* (2017), for example, could be seen as showcasing a smattering of starfish stretched across the seafloor; *Enantiomer* (2017) appears as if documenting a cluster of glowing nebulae dancing in the Milky Way. As the viewer moves across the composition




glowing nebulae dancing in the Milky Way. As the viewer moves across the composition and engages with each work from a variety of vantage points, Margolis' mixed media masterpieces come together to offer their own fascinating artistic conversation.



Enantiomer(2017) appears as if documenting a cluster of glowing nebulae dancing in the Milky Way.

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At the same time her dynamic compositions probe the depths of the universe, there is also a sense of her looking inward. In works such as *Disassociations*(2010), for instance, the simplicity of the layered ivory white Abaca paper bearing her characteristic circular patterns reads like the microscopic, organic voids seen in a cross-section of bone. Though distinct from the other art that she included in the exhibition, selections like *Dissociations* nevertheless complement the unity of her presentation in that they reflect the undeniable connectivity between ourselves, our bodies, and the larger natural world.

Karen Margolis is based in Brooklyn, New York, and has clearly infused her art with her degree in psychology from Colorado State University and her subsequent Certificate in Microscopy from the New York Microscopical Society. Her powerful blend of art and science has been featured in a variety of publications, the first of which was *New American Paintings* (1999), and she has also contributed to numerous group shows, including “Apparent Order” (Garis & Hahn, New York, 2015) and “Paper Biennial Rijswijk 2016” (Rijswijk Museum, the Netherlands, 2016). Her work has also been celebrated in a series of solo showings such as the Galerie Beate Berndt in Augsburg, Germany in 2017. For more on Margolis’ art, particularly her compositions included in the “Apparent Order” exhibition, please visit the Garis & Hahn [website](#).

– Alexis Culotta