

Amarie Bergman

new works

Tin Sheds Gallery
University of Sydney
Sydney, Australia

Reviewed by Carole Driver
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For those of us who move from land to land, from continent to continent, from cold to warm, from North to South, there is a need to comprehend our new place in the world, to get our bearings, to know where we are, who we are in this new environment.

For Amarie Bergman, migrating from Western Canada to Eastern Australia, the night sky provided the focus she needed to get her own bearings. Even though the stars and constellations were not familiar ones she took comfort in their encompassing light in the dark void. They provided a beginning place for her explorations into an inner space.

*'For the time being I am in the Milky Way. I dream and reflect and remember, mapping constellations of my inner space. I make connections between specific points – or stars of awareness – and although each point appears to be solitary all are related.'*¹

A series of large, at first glance simple, black, and one palest white pink, paintings line the gallery walls. They appear to have white dots on them.

A further glance reveals pattern in the placing of the dots, still further in and constellations of the night sky appear.

Bergman has chosen to use a limited set of forms in the painted voids. These forms correspond to constellations identifiable by four stars seen in the Southern Hemisphere. Octans, Sculptor, Chamaeleon, Fornax, Corvus, Sextans - such evocative names. The 'stars' are controlled swirls of white paint placed on a small square of handmade rice paper. Each work is a painted wooden panel; two or three are placed flush together.

The effect is of doors into the void or the doors of the void. Sucked into, we can freefall into this black void. That the work is painted with an extremely fine texture also adds to the feeling of portals into this endless space.

The white star circles are points of reference that stave off disorientation: they are points of security. The circles glow pink tinged in the black. They are surrounded by squares that invite a defined stability and counteract any overwhelming feelings of isolation aroused by the expanse of black

There is one palest of pink square painting. As a foil to the black paintings, here the paint seems to refer more simply to inner space. The colour sits to the foreground of the work, the work echoes empty mind of contemplation.

Throughout these paintings there seems to be a dialogue between an inner and outer void, with points of contact that connect these spaces.

Bergman says, '*We are each mapping individual constellations. Their emanations become part of our collective experience ...*'ⁱⁱ

Bergman is in the tradition of minimalist painters whose preoccupation is the exploration of internal/external space. The depiction of silence. Agnes Martin's quiet canvases come to mind here, as does the work of Ad Reinhardt's 'black paintings'. As Donald Kuspit says, '...Deliberate silence, deliberate negation, is a major way of sustaining the elusive spiritual atmosphere of the abstract work by ruthlessly reducing the artistic (tasteful outer beauty) to an absolute minimum.'ⁱⁱⁱ

'*Space*. If there were one word it would be *space*.'^{iv}

Bergman's achievement in these works is the dialogue between an enigmatic inner and outer space, we shift between the two as we gaze at the work, we fall into the painting and find ourselves falling into our own minds, minds which have reached a quietude by our gazing at the painting, and so we shift from inner to outer, outer to inner, until reaching an equilibrium we are able to move on.

ⁱ Bergman Amarie, Statement (Sydney: 2003).

ⁱⁱ Bergman Amarie, Statement (Sydney: 2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ Kuspit Donald, *Concerning the Spiritual in Contemporary Art, The Spiritual in Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Abbeville Press, (1987)(pp.313-325)

^{iv} Gass William H, *Reading Rilke: Reflections on the Problems of Translation* (New York: Basic Books, 1999)(pp37-38). *Substitution made for Raum (Space)*.