

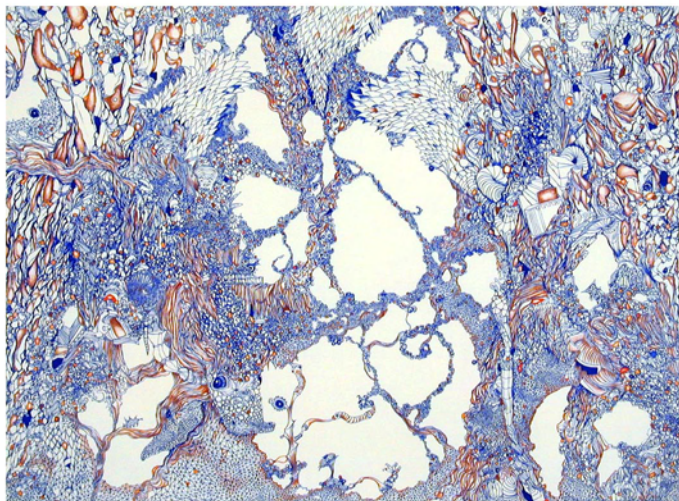
Time Out

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Art | Reviews



Michelle Segre

Derek Eller Gallery, through Jun 26

(see Chelsea).

Michelle Segre's vortical works of ink and gouache on paper merge the biomorphic and the architectural: Clustered forms alternately suggest cells and blocks of cement; faces emerge, as do castles and bodily organs. Assumptions about perspective and proportion are intentionally tortured in the eight medium-size works on view. Bugs outsize turrets. Looming eyeballs give the impression of immensity. The precision of Segre's style suggests both futuristic fantasy and scientific illustration. Her swirling currents of ink allude as much to the physicist's Big Bang as to the zealot's Apocalypse.

Segre's alchemical mix of science and science fiction is bound together by a sense of awe. Echoing this is her technique, which is itself awesome. The nearly incomprehensible minutiae and complexity of Segre's drawings border

Michelle Segre, *Swamp Eyes*, 2004.

on the mystical. The fact that every ink line is permanent—there's no erasing, no turning back—creates an inherent momentum in the work. Segre, pressing forward without latitude for error, forces the viewer to entrust his or herself entirely to the artist's custody—despite the unsettling possibility that the artist may aspire to be nothing more than an astonishingly accomplished doodler. Within this dichotomy—skillful focus versus free association—the artist offers little refuge. Her work does not lend itself to easy discussions of Surrealism or abstraction or figuration. Neither will it foster political or philosophical ponderings.

A child doodling enters a meditative state—and this is what Segre captures, in an infinitely more detailed and adult incarnation. She opens the window onto the imponderable—laughable, grotesque and continuously churning.—*John Reed*