

emergence

CAROL PRUSA

emergence

CAROL PRUSA

September 9–October 16, 2010

COLEMAN BURKE GALLERY

636 West 28th Street, New York, NY 10001

Introduction written by Nicholas Alexander
Director, Coleman Burke Gallery

Introduction

“Ultimately, all of us are faced with the same dilemma; the pictures we draw, the systems we build, can never fully embrace the richness and the unruliness of creation. Yet it is endemic to our species that we keep trying, huddled on our tiny planet, shining our flashlights into the darkness.”

George Johnson, *Strange Beauty*

Carol Prusa is interested in the mechanics of understanding: how are we able to make sense of anything in a hugely complex and constantly changing world?

Emergence expresses the novel and unanticipated complexity of structures emerging from a multiplicity of simple interactions. While existence can seem impossible to decipher, Prusa’s work is reminiscent of concepts that can describe patterns found in nature, such as the golden ratio or fractal geometry. Similar to these co-operant forces, Prusa’s extraordinarily beautiful and coherent whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Here a universe of newly created worlds impregnate the space and entangle us in the immeasurable gap between consciousness and the material world.

Working meticulously in silverpoint to initiate the work, Prusa blurs the determined underdrawing into dissolution with a graphite wash, erasing previous conditions and thus opening up a new *liminal* location of pure possibility. This allows Prusa to intuit novel structures and relationships, birthing an articulate, alternate world out of the ashes of the former. Meditating on the distended and undifferentiated hemisphere, new forms coalesce as Prusa carefully resolves them by heightening with white pigment in acrylic binder. Hundreds of hours are spent sensing out the emergent patterns, resulting in a kaleidoscopic unfolding that appears to crystallize from an epicenter. The new landscape brings to mind the human need to construct meaningful order in a world filled with too much information.

Expressing flux and shifting scales within the geometry of the orb, other technological adjuncts such as light and video reside within the core. An orchestrated pattern of flickering lights play on the surface from miniscule pores drilled through the dome, each connected with fiber optic cable to a programmed sequence of light-emitting diodes. Videos play on iPods inside the dome, viewed through optics opening up the vault.

Encountering Prusa’s work in the dark, the added dimension of bio-luminescent punctuation leaves the viewer unmoored in space, caught between an experiential collision of reality and divine imagination. It is in this transient moment on the path to understanding that we are cognizant of our diminutive place in the world. We are merely “*shining our flashlights in the darkness,*” trying to decipher the quiet mechanisms of a larger power, and are given a framework to do so through the numinous reductionism of Prusa’s works.

Published on the occasion of the exhibition “Emergence”
at Coleman Burke Gallery, New York.

September 9–October 16, 2010

Curated by Nicholas Alexander

Designed by Patricia Pereyra, www.patricia-pereyra.com
Catalogue printed and bound at Jacaty+Associates

Printed in an edition of 1,000 copies

Copyright © 2010 by Coleman Burke Gallery and Carol Prusa
All pieces © 2010 Carol Prusa
All text © 2010 by their authors

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any
form by any means without permission from the publisher or artist.

ISBN 978-0-578-06497-0

Published by Coleman Burke Gallery, 636 West 28th Street
New York, NY 10001

Cover: *Pentacle* Detail

Prusa's Art: Rapture and Form

“When I'm dreaming back like that I begins to see we're only all telescopes.”
— James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake*

Idealism motivated much art in the early twentieth century and continued to prevail with the artists of the sixties such as Smithson and Hesse. Idealism continues to motivate artists to this day, but a prevalent cynicism and superficial spectacularism has in recent decades seemed to gain the upper hand. A sneering rictus has paralyzed much of the art world and the resulting lack of astonishment and predictability of result has proven a deadening influence. Against this pervasive, glamour drenched malaise, artists struggle to maintain their focus and their idealistic purity of purpose.

Prusa is one such artist who endeavors to disclose the sublimity of nature through artifice of form. Using the dome as vehicle and support, Prusa draws forth mental diagrams of the immense architecture of living spirit.

The ancients understood the techniques whereby celestial influence could be harnessed and brought to bear on the terrestrial plane. Using diagram and fire alike, talismanic operations bestirred the etheric attention of “middle beings” that might conjoin to do the bidding of the magical operator. In its highest manifestation, the motivation driving the mage was desire for *sapientia*, wisdom. Incorporated in this wisdom was a fundamental belief in our habitation in the cosmos, the diagrammatic operations among other things establishing a *locus mundus*, a place, a center, a fixed point, in the chaos of being.

The desire for a center persists as a strong psychological need in the human soul. The contemporary viewer has most often become the cadre of a cultural drift that settles on nothing in particular as she or he browses the infinite differential of the incomplete.

Prusa has striven for a completion of Form that rests within itself. This Rest, space as container of the particular, is modulated into orbs of darkness and light acting as receptacles of potentia, and then diagrammatized by fine graphic skill to reveal the operative modes whereby the cohesion of form and light within this Rest is achieved.

Robert Yarber lives and works in Central Pennsylvania and New York City and has been represented by Sonnabend Gallery since 1985. He is a Distinguished Professor of Art at Pennsylvania State University.



The Eye, the World, the World as Eye, the Eye as World

The bisected orbs serve as viewing stations. The exteriors provide curvilinear patterning that might serve as templates for the processes attendant to approach and use. Functioning alternately as cosmological mapping strategies and biorhythmic flow charts of the oceanic life force of which we are nodes, the half orbs englobe hermetic chambers wherein the polarity of Darkness and Light reside. The half orb also references the eye. This cosmic eye, observer and observed, reveals within an inner eye, the eye of light, hidden yet exposed to the investigator, initiating a new reciprocity of The Gaze and its Other in a unity of seeing-seen.

The globes are adapted to darkness, and display sidereal arrays of light via ports in the domes' surfaces. These fiber optic light ports provide signals for talismanic encoding of the surrounding space.

Emergent Orbs

The curvilinear grids, the markings and graphic flow charts visualize the invisible fields of force working the surface of the orbs. These radial grids encompass the hemispheres. The hemispheres must be recognized as emergent orbs, the antipodes of which occupy “real” and “virtual” space. The tensor-lines meet at the foremost limit of the curvilinear grid, the epicenter, wherein the originary point makes its abode. The surface strains to recede from, and return to, this point. Strictly speaking, as is commonly understood, this originary point lies within itself without dimension. The wall is the flesh through which these orbs tear. Flash-burn marks may be observed at the circumference where the hemisphere strains away from the wall. The orbs strain to meet not only the hypothetical eye of the observer, but more than that, they seek to conjoin “in the middle” of whatever space they occupy within an enfoldment of interpenetrating orbs so as to recover the stasis of the One. The drawing forth of the orbs is drawn into the surface; the surface thus marked impels the orb's locomotion. In the field where Prusa's globes intend, thus is built up a matrix of yearning as orb seeks orb. The hyper orb, The World, or Earth, is compelled telematically to empower this conjoinment of cell with cell, and the wellbeing of the environs wherein these globes oscillate in their inert torsion, are nourished by this Eros of geometries.

The inlaid silver line gives metallic seeding to the fecund surface. Prusa carefully moves the point of contact to reveal the metric of desire inhabiting each orb. The surface is dormant and passive when receiving this insemination, however the surface subsequently issues forth the Form whereby the globe is personified and made agent to its primordial drive. The daring circumnavigator braids the fluxion of points across the

corporeal plane, enacting a registration of the inner core, the dark, on the outer surface. This enfoldment of the dark, within the sphere of light, protects and harbors the Darkness, the essence of which gives fruit to the appreciation of this undertaking. As known to the Aereopagite, *The Dark stands behind, and is the tabernacle within which, the higher, immaterial light might be approached.

This gathering and protection of The Dark therefore stands as a principle endeavor of Prusa's work. In contemporary science, dark matter is said to occupy vastnesses of material being. The light of this dark matter, the negative illumination of the Cosmos, remains to be studied. However Art in its intuitive richness can gather up this Dark light, the imago of the mind. Prusa's orbs therefore ultimately serve as a mapping of mind. The immaterial, and infinite extension of dormant Mind, undergirding, yet yearning for, the Omega Point, the end, and the beginning.

* Pseudo-Dionysus the Aereopagite, Sixth Century CE, *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

Carol Prusa's Conceptual Voyages

9/11 changed Carol Prusa's artistic trajectory. Like many artists, she felt that the enormity of the event required an artistic response. Hers was to become a "conceptual voyager," to chart an interconnected universe with its links and interstices. Her newer work reveals the isomorphism she finds between the self and universe, and it lays bare the web connecting every particle in nature and every human thought, theorem, and artwork, past, present, future, and possible. Her vision of the interrelatedness of everything extends from the cosmos to society to science and the artworld.

Formally, after 9/11, she "stopped using color and began working in gray" on acrylic. At once, the world took on the hue of smoke, ash, ghost, and cloud. Although she subdued her palette by working in silverpoint and graphite, she remains every bit a colorist, showing us an unexpected platinum luminosity and nuances of grays that radiate flashes of crystalline blue, lavender, yellow, or pink. It is as if Prusa saw in the rubble a gestating newness that would inform her artistic and social activity. An ardent environmentalist, she then would discover an artistic solution for creating new worlds, in each of which everything is interconnected and nothing exists atomically.

Caroline Steinberg Gould, Ph.D., is a Professor of Philosophy at Florida Atlantic University. She publishes widely in Philosophy of the Arts, Philosophy of Psychiatry, and Ancient Greek Philosophy.



In 2004, she abandoned flat surfaces to make her hemispheric domes. She paints the exteriors and illuminates them from inside with mirrors, tiny lights, and, in some cases videos on iPods. The domes have a multiplicity of meanings. Each dome represents the creation of a new universe and a new universe in creation; each represents her brain at a new moment, and each discloses the dynamic links that connect human beings, as in *Optic Nerve*. The viewer is struck with a sense of a universe in constant process.

The domes, she says, represent "the domes of heaven." That said, she reverses medieval cosmology, for we do not live beneath the interior of her dome, but on the outside of it. The interior represents the unseen, the possible, what physicists postulate as dark matter, which accounts for observed cosmic phenomena. In the human sphere, the inside of a dome represents the limitless possibilities of human creativity and emergent modes of living.

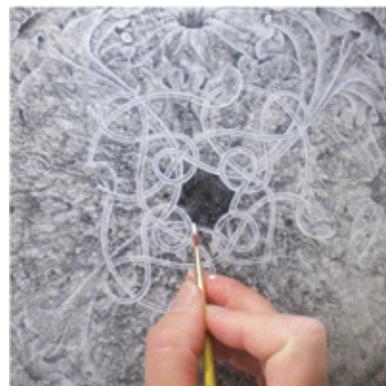
These possibilities materialize on the convexity of a dome by the type of movement she depicts: Some (*Optic Nerve*, *Internal Architecture*) percolate with the excitement of communication—between neurons in a brain that are the origins of creative thought, or between human beings in conversation that are the source of social change, or between light and painted acrylic that gives rise to flickering surfaces. Some domes (*Sip*, *Delphys*, *Pythia*, *Threshold*) undulate with the pulsations of emerging life—the contractions of orgasm, of labor, and of the heart and lungs of a living body—which make each moment one of renewal and beauty. Finally, some of the domes, like *Pentacle*, emit kaleidoscopic movement that represents Prusa's own—and every artist's--changing relationship to the artworld and to her own art. In her use of the ancient art of silverpoint, one sees flashes of her stylistic predecessors, such as Albrecht Dürer, Masaccio, and Leonardo da Vinci; in her designs and use of fiber optics and videos, one gleans the visual language of her contemporary, Pipilotti Rist. In the dome form, one sees perhaps a dome in a sacred cathedral, a circular mandala for meditation, or a swirling chakra, the chakra conjuring images of the human interior, images to which she remains transfixed, decades after her youthful moment of epiphany.

Unusually conversant in science, Prusa was trained first as a medical illustrator, as one can see in the intricacy of her detail and her organic motifs. There is nothing clinical about her work, however. It is warm, fluid, luxuriant, and voluptuous. She still remembers feeling awed by its beauty the first time she saw the inside of a living human body. She once remarked, "you cannot imagine how many colors, textures, and forms exist inside of us." Thus, her works allude to intestines, brains, capillaries, and genitalia. *Internal Architecture* is a blueprint of her own brain and in *Oracle*, she uses video images

of her own eye. When the eye blinks, a new world is born. For Prusa, the world did not begin with the Word, but with the blink of an eye.

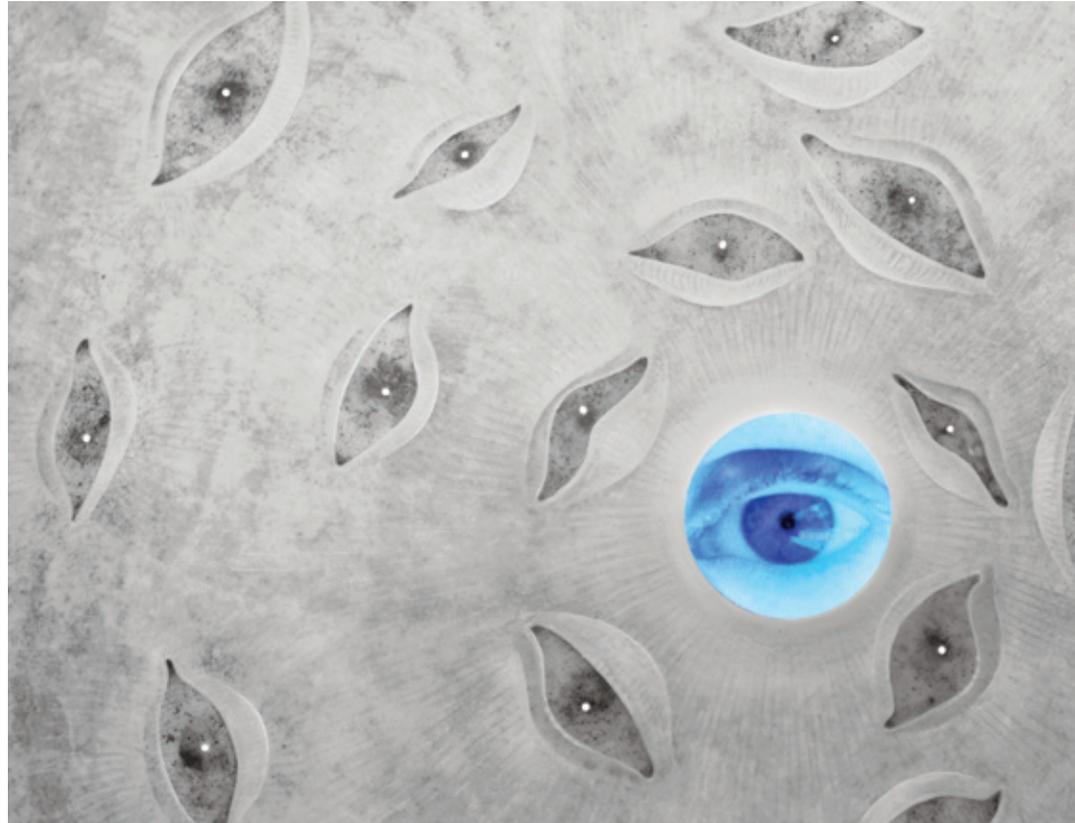
Creating a dome is far more athletic than blinking. In a feat of impressive physicality, Prusa spends up to seven hundred hours making a dome. She orders the acrylic domes from Canada where they are fabricated to her specifications. After first sandblasting the dome and covering it with gesso, she sands it smooth and does the silverpoint drawing. She describes her first drawing stage as “ego driven.” She then runs a graphite wash over it to obliterate her painstakingly drawn images. She waits for new forms to emerge and to disclose images she had neither intended nor foreseen. She proceeds to use titanium white pigment to highlight images that she selects from the unexpected emergence. Thus she engages in a dialectic between intention and chance, between what is “ego driven” and “non-ego driven”. Ultimately, she drills holes from which lights or images will emanate.

In an artistic gesture reminiscent of Ariadne, she offers us a silver thread to help us escape from the labyrinth of solipsism. For in the act of creation, Prusa makes visible the unseen, indifferent force fields that link all human beings with one another and link human experience with nature. Her gestures are grand and humanistic, beneficent and terrifying.



emergence

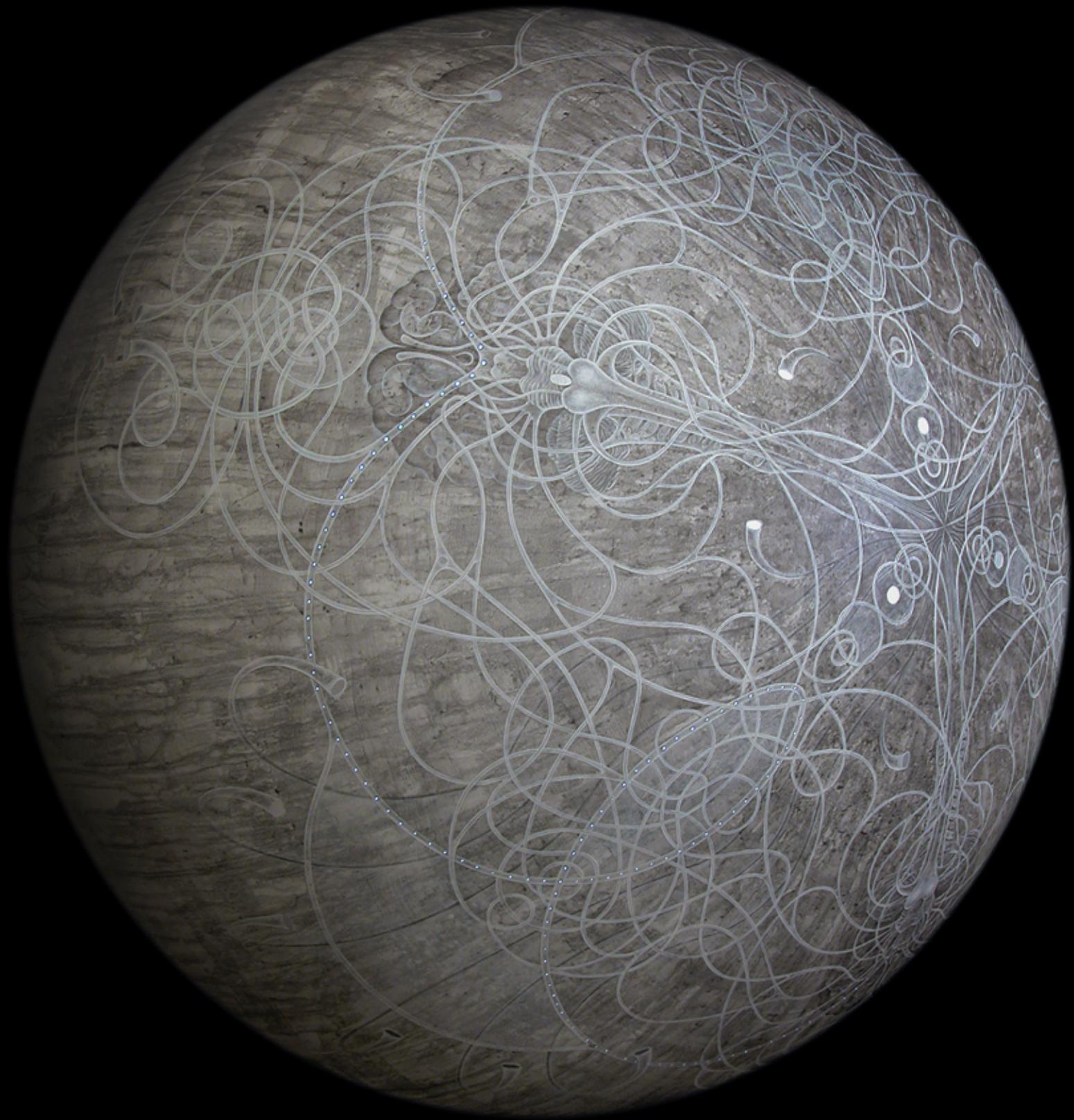
- PLATES -

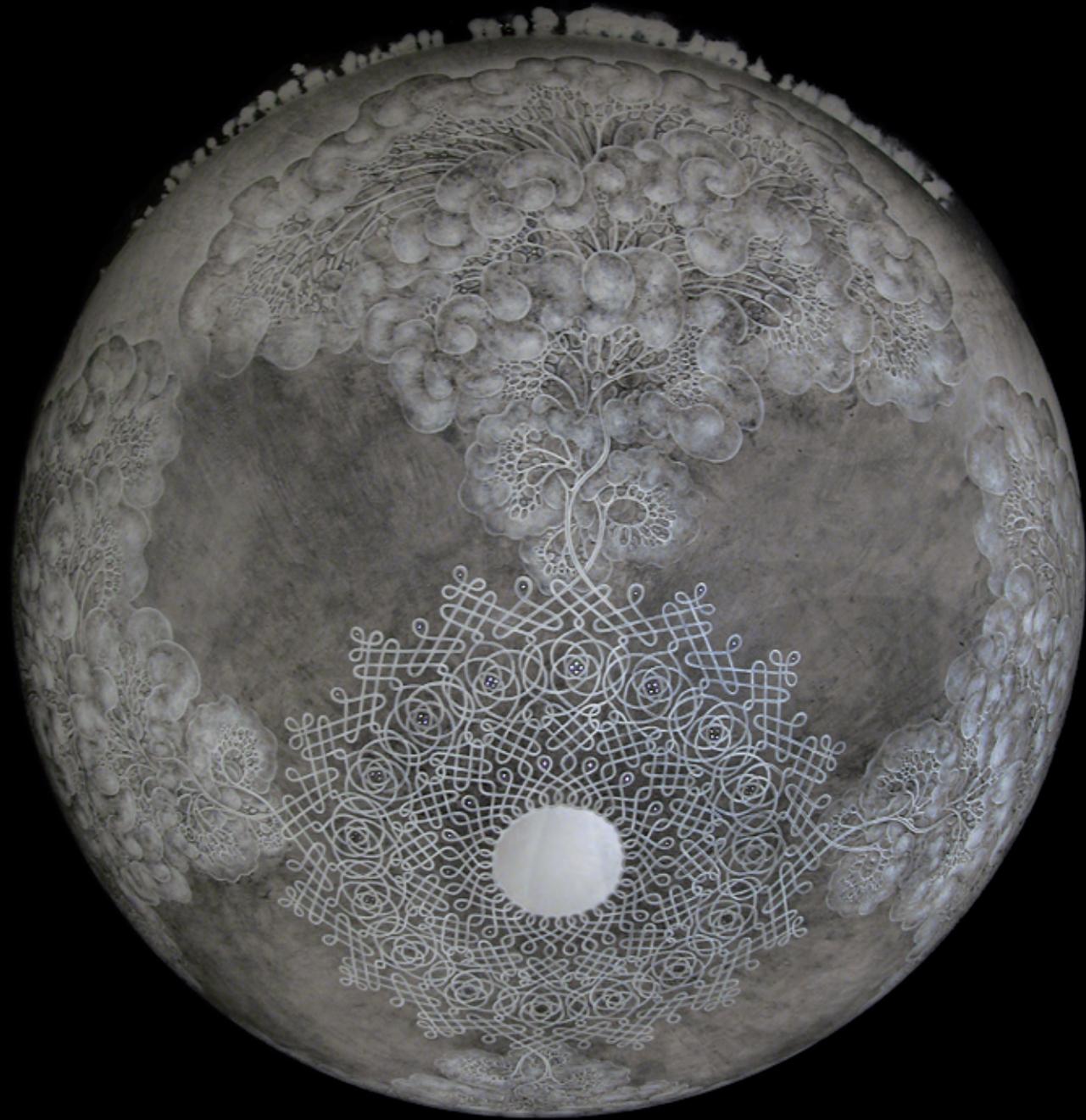


Search Engine (Oracle) 2009

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics and video
30" x 30" x 15"







(previous page) **Optic Nerve** 2007

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics

36" x 36" x 18"



Threshold 2007

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics

36" x 36" x 18"

Limen 2008

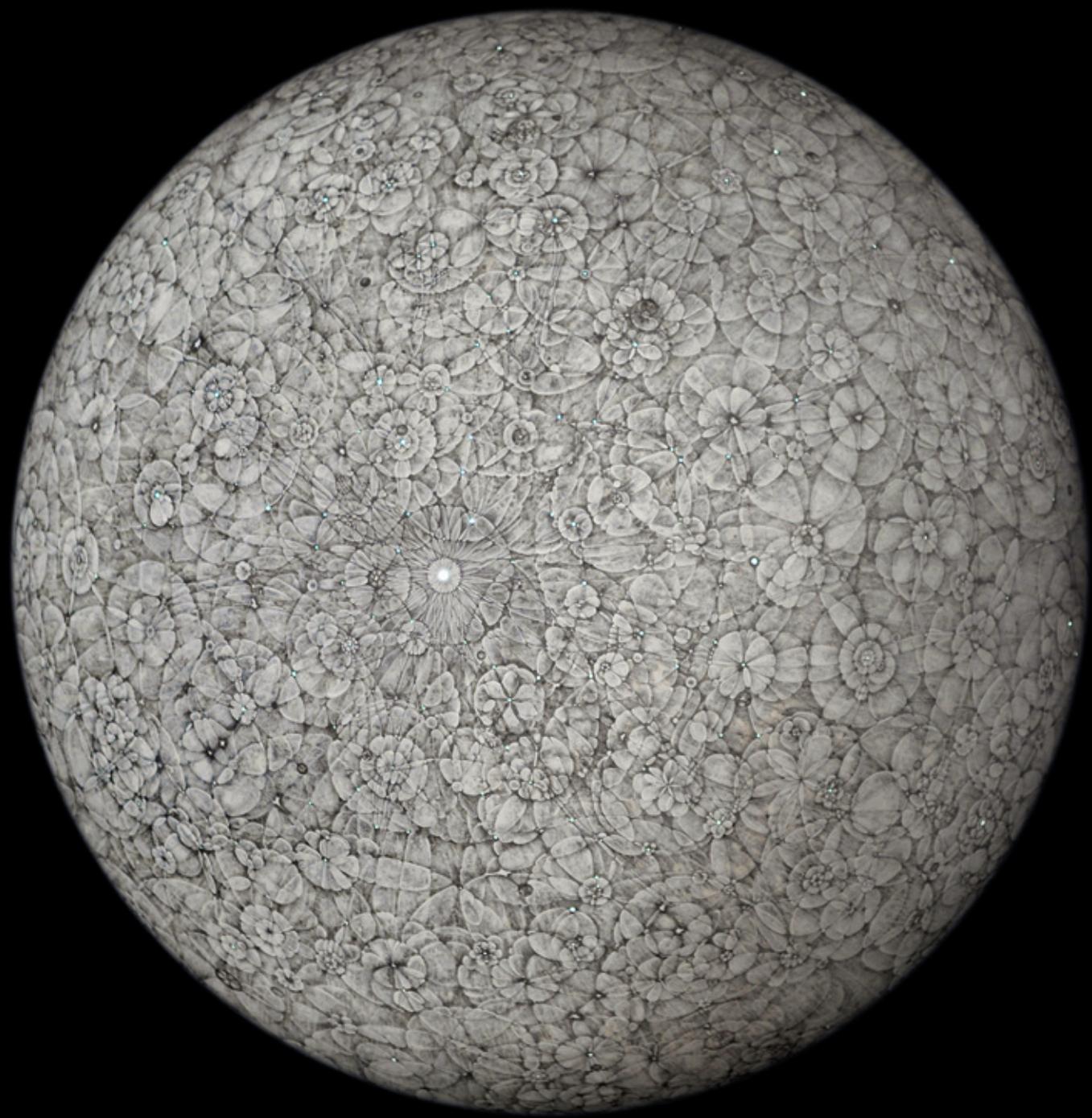
silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics

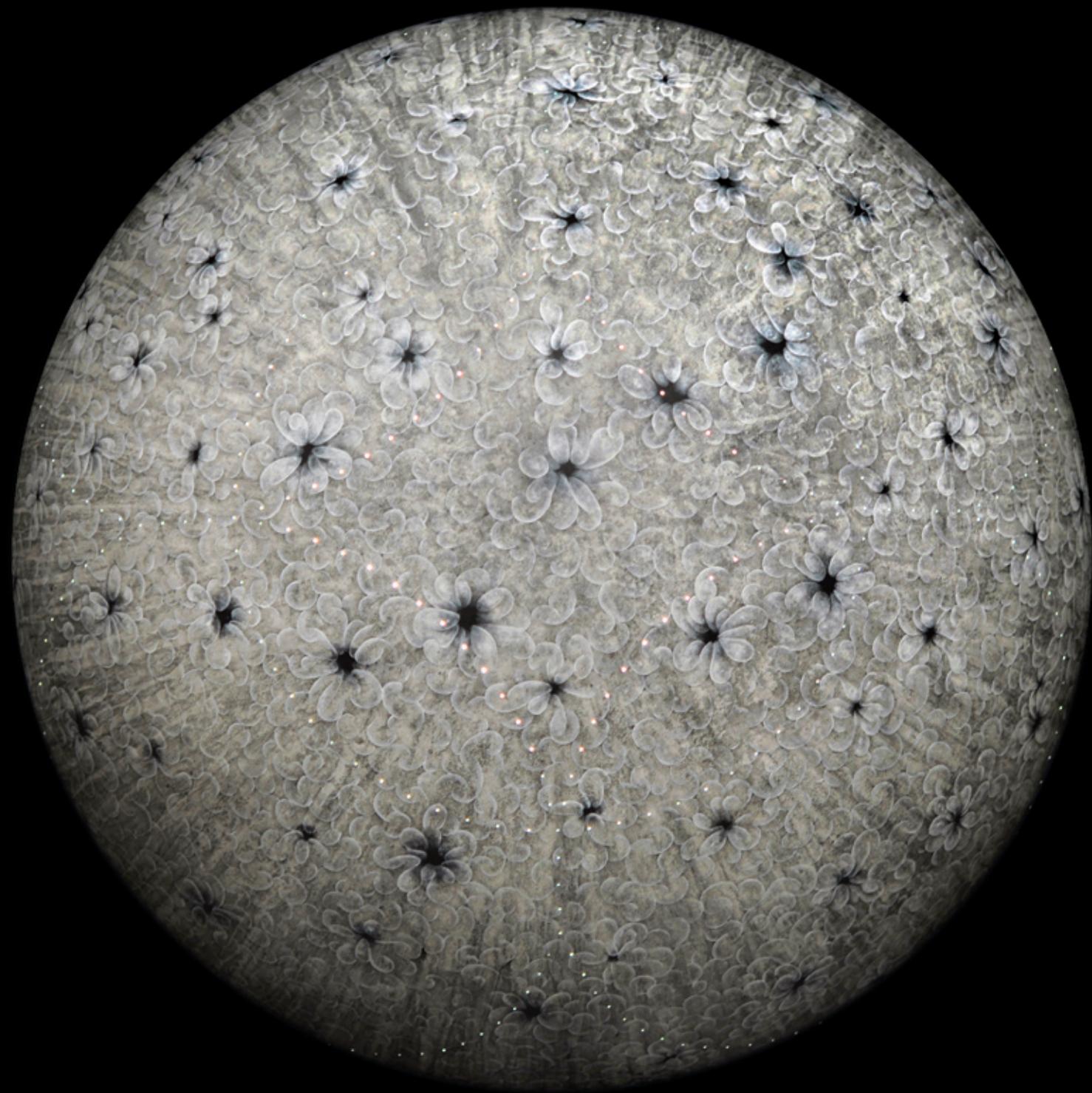
36" x 36" x 18"

Latona 2009 *(next page)*

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics

30" x 30" x 15"





Chaosmos 2009

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics

30" x 30" x 15"



Pythia 2010

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics

20" x 20" x 10"



Breath 2008

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics

12" x 12" x 6"



Seekers/Feelers 2008

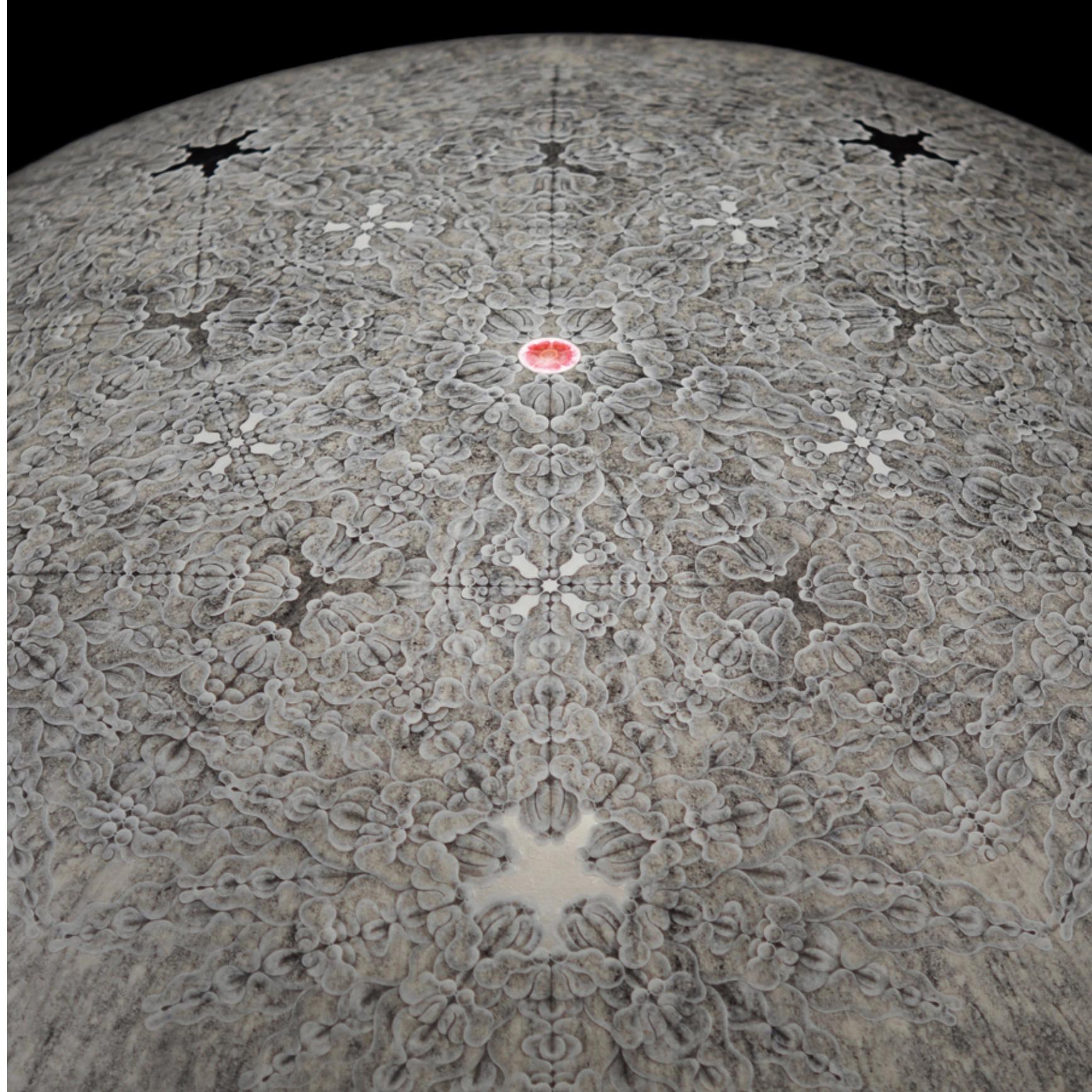
*silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with
acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics*

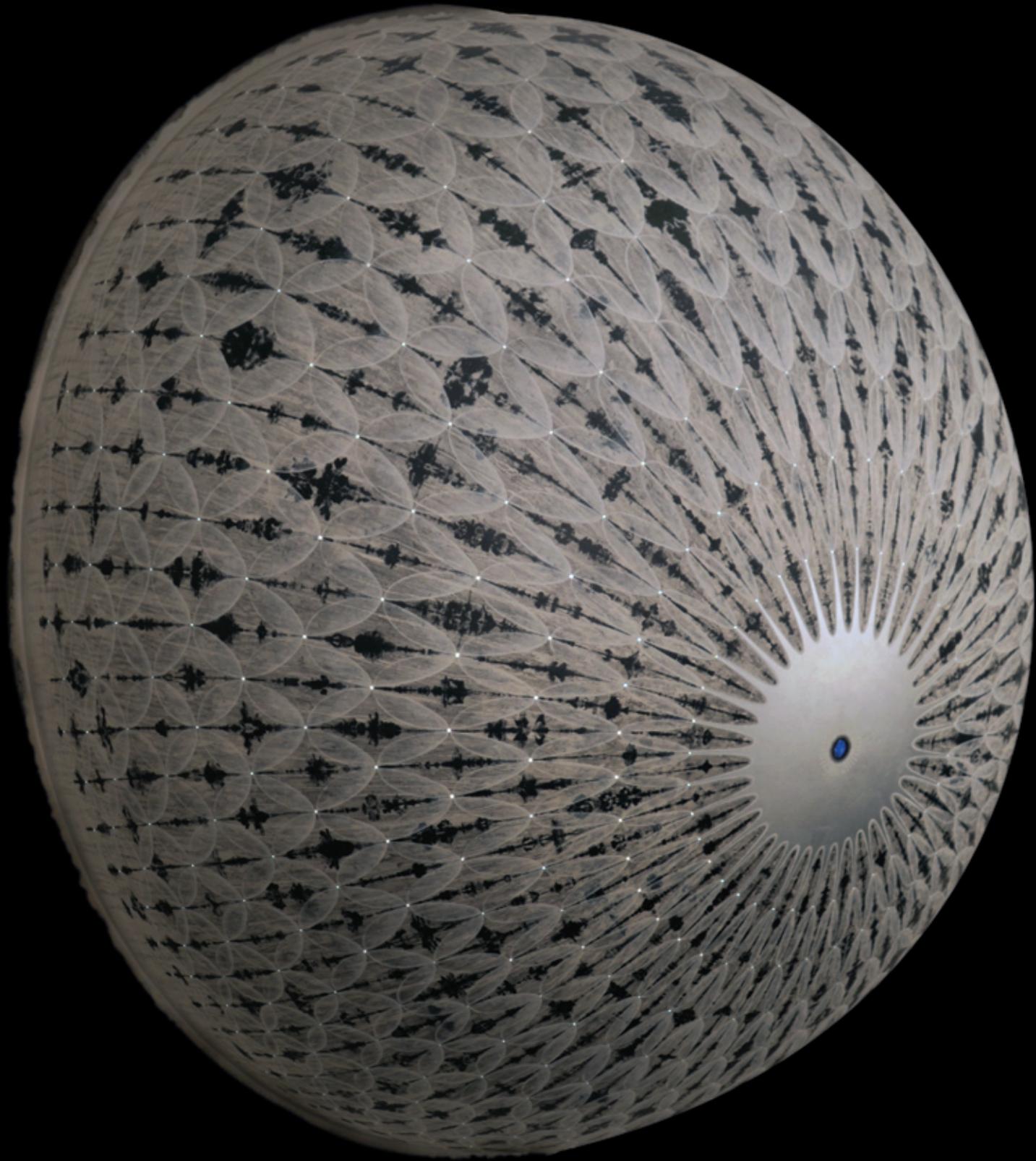
20" x 20" x 12"



Pentacle 2010

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics and video
49" x 49" x 10"





Entanglement 2009

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics and video

60" x 60" x 30"



Aporia 2010

*silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder
on acrylic hemisphere with aluminum leaf and fiber optics*

18" x 18" x 9"



Delphys 2008

*silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder
on acrylic hemisphere with aluminum leaf and fiber optics*

24" x 24" x 12"



Multiverses 2008

*silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with
acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics*

48" x 48" x 24"

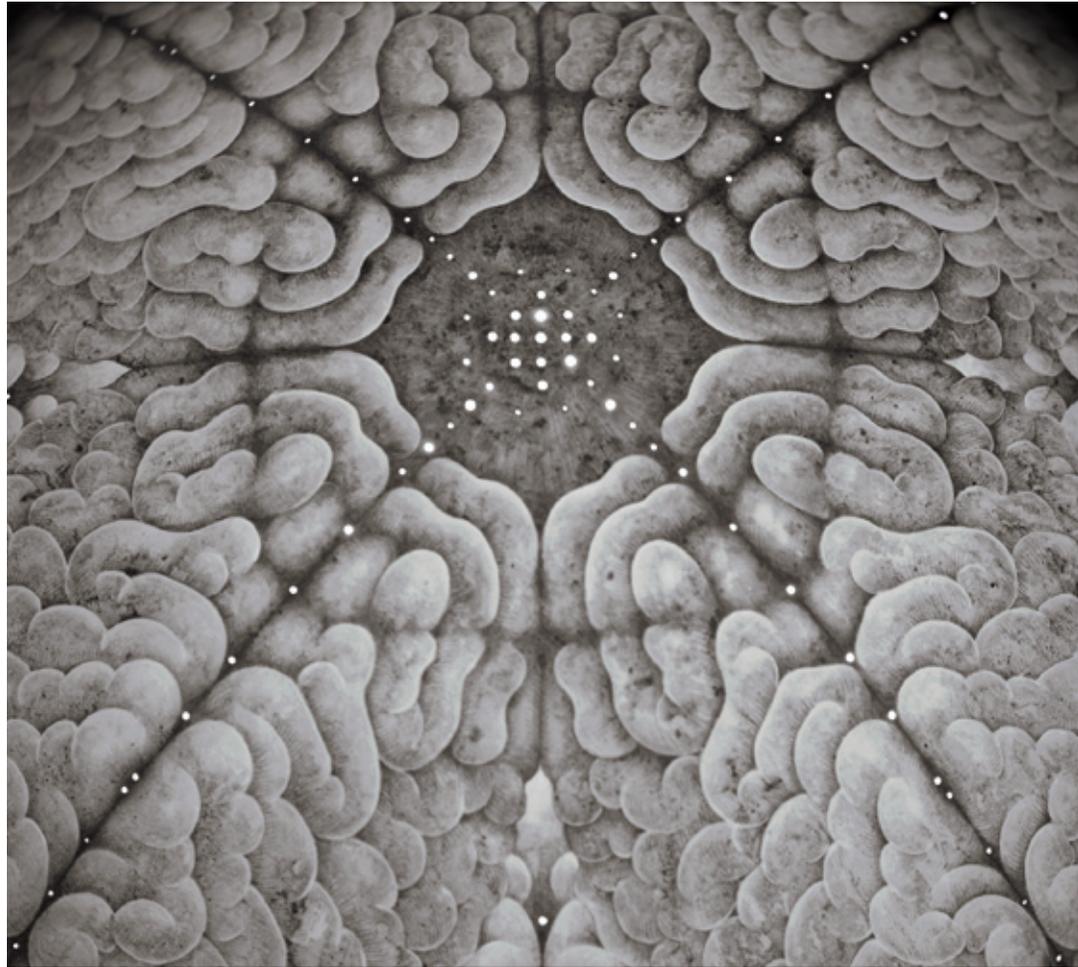




Internal Architecture 2009

silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics and video

22" x 22" x 11"

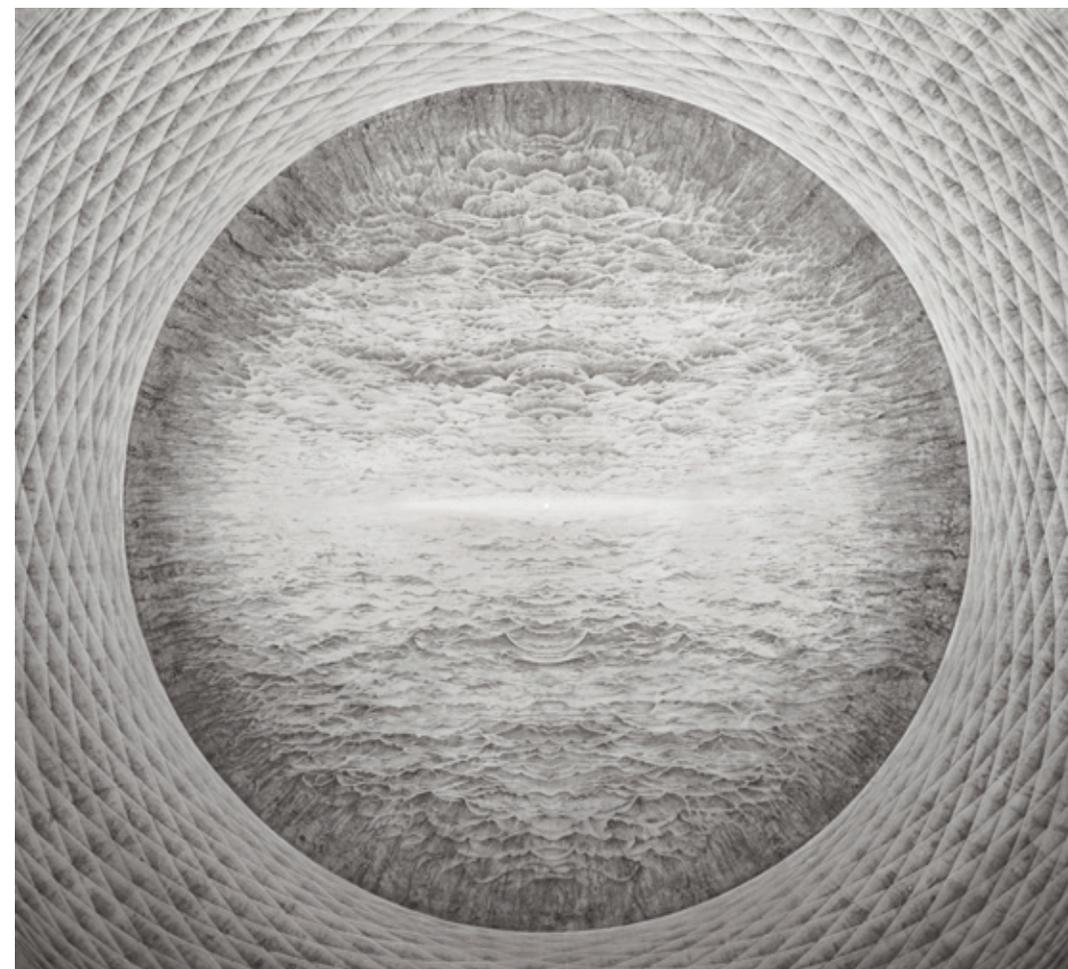
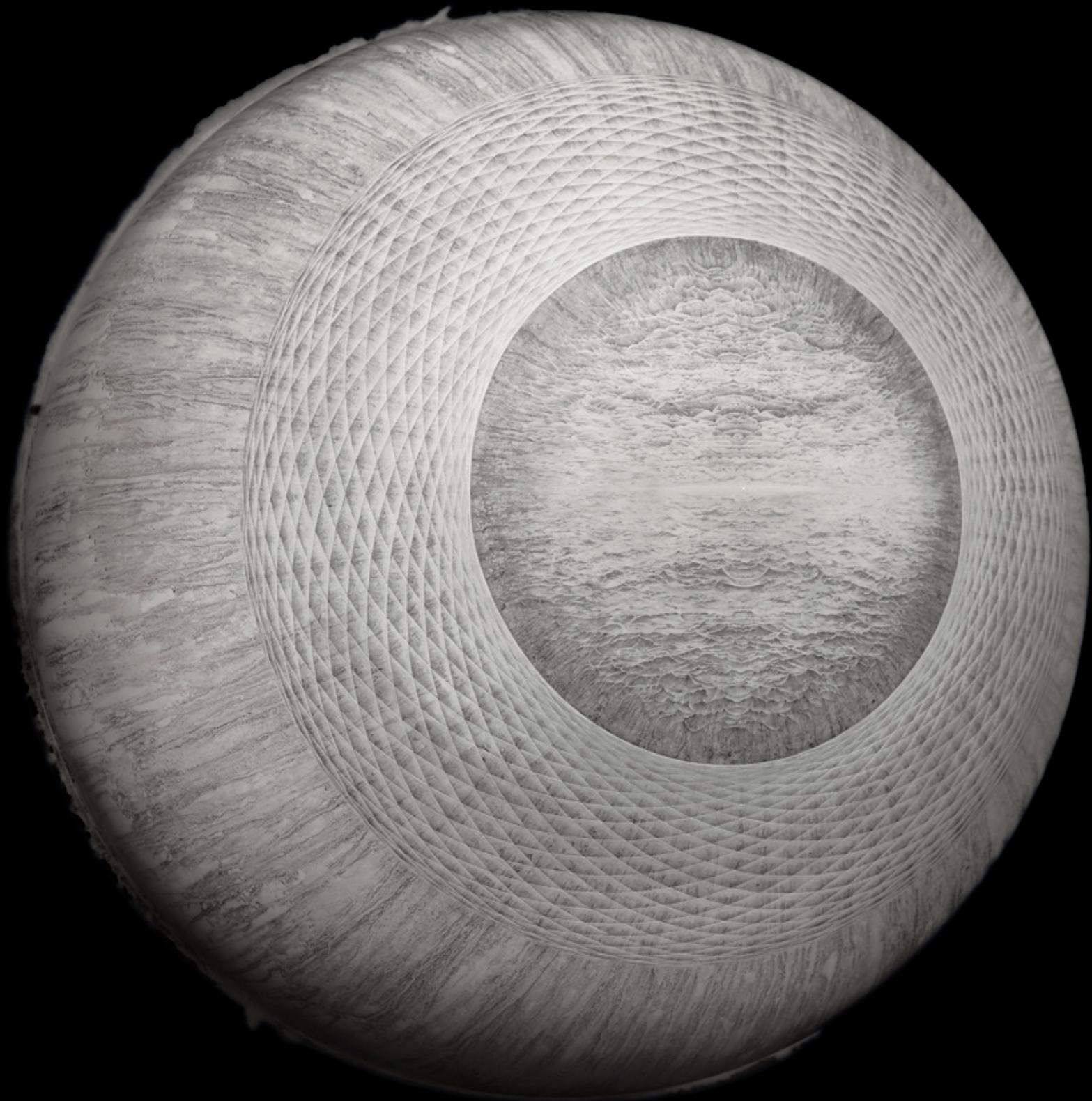


Grey Matter 2009

*silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder
on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics.*

18" x 18" x 9"





Sip 2010

*silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment
with acrylic binder on acrylic hemisphere*

32" x 32" x 15"



Rose (for Jay deFeo) 2010

*silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment with acrylic binder
on acrylic hemisphere with fiber optics.*

48" x 48" x 10"



Artist Biography

Carol Prusa has exhibited her work in many museums including the American Museum of Arts and Design in New York City in the Triennial Exhibition of German and American Artists that traveled to the Museum for Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt. Recent museum shows include the Miami Art Museum, DeCordova Museum - Boston, Museum of Art - Ft. Lauderdale, Louisiana Museum of Art and Science, Frist Center for the Arts - Nashville, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art - North Carolina, Telfair Museum of Art - Savannah, Boca Raton Museum of Art - Florida, Naples Museum of Art - Florida and Evansville Art Museum - Indiana. Solo museum exhibitions include the Arkansas Arts Center, University of Maine Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art - Jacksonville, and the Polk Museum of Art - Florida. She has also shown at Tomio Koyama Gallery - Tokyo, Lakatamia Municipalia - Nicosia, Cyprus, and the Kentler International Drawing Space - Brooklyn. She recently completed public art commissions for the University of Florida and Florida Atlantic University. Prusa has been awarded visual arts fellowships from the South Florida Cultural Consortium, the State of Florida and the Howard Foundation through Brown University. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Miami Art Museum, Museum of Art - Ft. Lauderdale, Arkansas Arts Center, Daum Museum of Contemporary Art and Telfair Art Museum, among others.

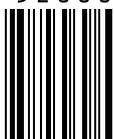
Prusa, born and raised on the south side of Chicago, received her B.S. in Biocommunication Arts from the University of Illinois. She went on to study painting and drawing, receiving a M.F.A. from Drake University. Prusa currently lives and works in South Florida where she is represented by Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Miami. Her work is documented in *Miami Contemporary Artists*, ed., Paul Clemence and Julie Davidow, Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2007. Her website and galleries can be found at: www.carolprusa.com.



COLEMAN BURKE GALLERY

636 WEST 28TH STREET NEW YORK, NY 10001 WWW.COLMANBURKE.COM 917.677.7825

\$20.00
ISBN 978-0-578-06497-0
5 2000 >



9 780578 064970