

Left: *Time and Space*, 2009, acrylic, pigment, chalk on paper mounted on panel, 60" x 180".

Right: *Nocturne for My Father*, 2010, acrylic, pigment, chalk on paper mounted on panel, 60" x 180".



TANJA SOFTIĆ: MIGRANT UNIVERSE

Bosnian-born artist Tanja Softić inscribes her 10 large works on paper with the delicacy of a miniaturist and the scope of a cosmologist. Grace and tension, intimacy and transformation vie with each other so energetically to claim the viewer's attention that one feeling seems to ignite its opposite, one glimpse open a shutter upon another.

Looking at "The Heart of the Matter" (2011), I can't describe the sum of the materials – acrylic, pigment, chalk on paper mounted on panel – as evoking more a soulful calm or an uneasy transformation. For moments, my apprehension rests on a waterfall of fruit-bearing branches, so boldly and delicately limned that I can't suspend my belief in the hurly-burly of the present, the disruptions of time.

And yet, even as I rest, a more restless dimension is knocking. From the lower

right corner, stylized orange flames lick at the two-tone grey of sky and branches. Portals glowing like embers open into my cool arbor with alien geometries: a glimpse of arches, the right angles of an archeological dig or a building razed to its floor plan. Uncertainties sprout in the claim I've staked; the lyrical turns elegiac.

My turns of emotion and conviction enact fragile boundaries that are everywhere ingeniously visualized and then perforated in "Migrant Universe."

The matter of "Time and Space" (2009) is every bit as magisterial as its title: tensing toward every corner of its 60" by 60" size, the web of a black-hole swallows oval planets distorted almost to invisibility as they fly toward its center. And yet, untroubled by the boundaries of our daily three-dimensionality, commentaries swim both

in front of and in back of this cosmic disruption, unconcerned and undisturbed. Two bowls buoyed up by their art-historical reference to Vermeer's "The Milkmaid" spill their milk into thin streams with a gravity and whimsy that defies the cosmic sinkhole they are both of and not of.

A stream of smoke – or cloudy water plumes – in leisurely arabesques, too self-involved, too casually imperious to notice the very ground and sky of their world bending inward toward collapse. As we notice other seemingly ephemeral shapes making solid connections in dimensions that shouldn't even exist, we begin to doubt, like Alice, our sense of scale, if not our very sense of self. And yet, like astronauts whose up is now down, we adapt with a frisson dipped both in discomfort and something like expectation.

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