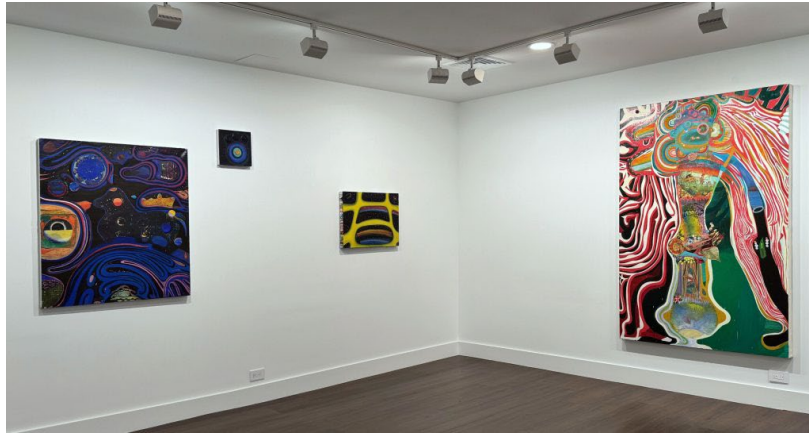


# ARTSPIEL

## Small Myriad: Sharon Horvath at Bookstein Projects

Etty Yaniv | February 7, 2024



Installation view, detail, photo courtesy of Etty Yaniv

Sharon Horvath's paintings in *Small Myriad*, her current exhibition at Bookstein Projects, create a sense of an alluring universe where dazzling colors, interflowing shapes, and tactile surfaces merge, meander, and as a group form an enigmatic universe unified by a mysterious code. Horvath's spiraling lines and patterned forms create ebbing and flowing movements echoing

Theodor Schwenk's anthroposophical approach to the unifying principle of all movement and form. In his book *Sensitive Chaos: The Creation of Flowing Forms in Water and Air*, Schwenk posits that water movements reveal fundamental, archetypal patterns in natural and human-made environments. This deeper order finds resonance in Horvath's paintings, but simultaneously, her imagery and use of collage also lean toward the enigmatic, paradoxical, and absurd.

Hilma af Klint, medieval cosmic charts, abstracted illuminated manuscripts, and some of Romare Bearden's dynamic collages come to mind, only to dissolve upon closer inspection of the paintings, where I discover amidst complex and meticulously intertwined details recognizable images and materials from everyday life—a deer, a car, a cupcake, a woman's shoe, a plastic cap. Benjamin Degen's observation in the exhibition text captures this duality beautifully: "Is it a manifestation of the sacred geometry of the universe, or a piece of plastic packing material? I see that it is both and rejoice in the realization that my kitchen recycling bin is filled with sacred presence."

The paintings are magnificent, each engaging me with its unique enigma. I am particularly drawn to *Horse Head Nebula* (2014-2023) and *Horse of Orange*; interestingly, both feature an equine element. The former might reference the nebula in the constellation Orion, resembling a horse's head silhouette against glowing red lines. These bold linear strokes cascading from the painting's sides remind me of early Japanese Hell images, and at the same time, they could also be seen as the horse's hair. At the center, sandwiched between the red fury, a solid, white-contoured equine shape leads the eye upward, and the eruption of psychedelic spirals is remarkable.



Sharon Horvath, *Horse Head Nebula*, 2014-2023, Pigment, polymer and photo collage on canvas, 72 x 48 inches.

The world within this horsehead shape draws me in with its exquisite details—a sphere abstracted in blue, purple, and yellow, leading to geometric forms resembling a child's game, a woman's foot in a golden loose-strapped shoe, and a figure holding a canopy of grapes or olives, suggesting some ancient ritual.

Above the intertwined body parts with swarming fish, houses, and flowers, a deer gazes into the abyss, its blazing orange-red horns leading my eyes upwards, culminating in twirling spheres with buildings, text, and shapes, altogether floating within dazzling colors. The core of this vivid horse nebula is contained and seems to be moving vertically within the contour. Only at the top does it erupt and spiral, fusing with the swirling red on both sides.

*Horse of Orange* could have been a close-up within the previous nebula, where a space vehicle—a vast horse machine in vibrant orange—is depicted in front of a cosmic horizon, hinting at a civilization beyond as seen through the windows and all around. It is an image of an excursion to an odd terrain where a collaged astronaut from what could be a television screenshot spacewalks on top of this disorienting mechanical horse.

The body of work in the show spans the last ten years, during which Horvath transported her pieces between her Brooklyn Navy Yard studio since 2002 and her barn studio in the Catskill Mountains. The shifts between these landscapes and paces may influence Horvath's pictorial world, possibly reflecting the unifying forces of impermanence, visual paradox, and woven space. Horvath's process, using plastic packaging and glassware as palettes for mixing Guerra pigment and polymer, then incorporating these elements into her canvases, embodies the "small myriad" theme of finding the cosmic in the everyday. Horvath says, "I place these obstacles in the path until they are subsumed and become part of a composition where everything is in the right place." Sensitive Chaos, indeed.



Sharon Horvath, *Horse of Orange*, 2019, Pigment, polymer and collage on paper mounted on canvas, 45 x 58 inches.

**Sharon Horvath: Small Myriad at Bookstein Projects**  
January 11 – February 23, 2024; Mon- Fri, 11:00 to 6:00