

Centering

Written by **Katherine Murdock**

Trestle Gallery Chief Curator Katerina Lanfranco reverses her role from curator to artist. In *Mystic Geometry—Circling the Square*, she organizes symbols to generate a sense of visual and intellectual order. Lanfranco invites the viewer into her semiotic sanctuary to find reprieve from outer chaos and the frenetic pace of contemporary life. Employing curatorial techniques, she draws connections and juxtaposes historical, philosophical, and art references in her imagery and encourages viewers to find comfort in contemplation.

“Circling the Square” references a geometric principle known as “squaring the circle,” a concept utilized for centuries in sacred sites. Prominently positioned in the center of the nearly square gallery is a mandala constructed out of blue, gray, and silver vinyl. In Sanskrit, mandala means “circle.” Mandalas can be found in sacred spaces and are often used as a tool for meditation. Soft beanbag chairs and an ornately decorated quilt provide comfort during viewers’ contemplation. Surrounding the floor mandala are seven large-scale paintings: *Everything All the Time*, *Twilight Ether*, *Dawn Air*, *Morning Spring*, *Afternoon Summer*, *Evening Fall*, and *Night Void*. Together these polychromatic paintings create an immersive panorama.

Layers of text, symbols, botanical imagery, and suggestions of landscapes all contribute to the painterly and ethereal quality of the work, which contrast with the formulaic structure of the underlying compositions. Incorporating ethereal painting and structured compositions are unexpected qualities to combine and is unique to Lanfranco’s work. The composition on each canvas is similarly structured, beginning with a centrally located geometric form associated with elements of nature and mystical concepts. Counterclockwise from the right lower corner are alchemical signs and I Ching, tarot, and Viking symbols—all taken from distinct visual languages and each representing the same element.

Each canvas has a unique dominant color specifically selected to mesh with the element. Lanfranco enhances connections between color, sound, season, and time of day. A musical note is written in the lower left corner of the canvas to express the pitch that corresponds to the color. In addition, the season and time of day form relationships with the color spectrum. The center of the canvas *Dawn Air* features an octahedron that represents air; the selected color for air is blue, which also correlates with the note of G. Imagine looking at a winter landscape at dawn as the light from the sky casts a blue glow on the snow. Winter and dawn begin the year of seasons and the day. It is a moment when life is at the brink of waking and the plants are waiting for the spring in order to grow.

Like an orbiting moon, the pattern of circular components found on these canvases implies cycles or movement or a journey of life cycles and growth. A circle is a common shape found in nature at different scales—from solar systems to the smallest particle. It is associated with concepts such as community or social circles, unity, and zero or void. The last canvas in the sequence, *Night Void*, begins with the shape of a circle or sphere at the center of the painting. It is void of color and sound. Therefore it is primarily painted in tones of white with a dynamic black background and the sound is silence. A huge cereus flower floats at the center of the canvas. Cereus is a plant known for its white flowers that only bloom at night. There are some species that only bloom one night out of the year. It is fitting that this flower

dominates the canvas like a moon lighting the night sky. During a studio visit with the artist, she described a void as unknown, scary, and peaceful.

Whether due to personal hurdles or global struggles, Lanfranco recognizes the need for a sanctuary to renew oneself. At the center of her tranquil installation is a space for healing. An organic-shaped sculpture is placed in the middle of the gallery. Lanfranco invites viewers to write three wishes and three fears on a piece of paper, depositing it into a hole in the sculpture. She has found that people are weighed down by these two concepts. By metaphorically releasing fears and wishes into the sculpture, it leaves room for contemplation. One can circle through the gallery and meditate on the detailed imagery—centering oneself in the space.