

Space In Between

Present

The Squaring of the Circle

Becky Bolton & Louise Chappell

10/12/11 – 14/01/12

Our microworlds and microidentities do not come all stuck together in one solid, centralized, unitary self, but rather arise in a succession of shifting patterns. In Buddhist terminology, this is the doctrine... that the self is empty of self-nature, void of any graspable sustainability.

Francisco Varela

Becky Bolton and Louise Chappell explore the sensual abundance of things and the attempts to limit and restrain complexity through systems and structures. Drawing on motifs developed through a collaborative method of automatic drawing, as first advanced by the surrealists, their installations are a celebration of the visual profusion of life.

For *The Squaring of the Circle* they present 12 new mandala drawings and a floor painting. From the Sanskrit meaning 'disc', mandalas are traditionally circular depictions of the universe in Hindu and Buddhist symbolism. Often symmetrical and ordered, traditional mandalas use figurative and architectural motifs, such as gateways and gods, to evoke a sense of wholeness toward which one strives.

Bolton and Chappell's mandalas are framing devices through which we view the chaos of cosmological, cellular and geometric motifs that fluctuate beneath. They at first appear autonomous – each a unique and independent whole – but are in fact bound by the common foundation of these intricate, shifting patterns.

A critical elaboration of C.G. Jung's belief that the mandala represents unity, particularly of the healthy ego, *The Squaring of the Circle* explores the possibility of such a unity in light of the artists' inherent duality. In turn, each of their mandalas is a kind of dynamic singularity, or fractured whole, challenging Jung's utopian ego that strives to evade all forms of ambivalence.

Antithetical to the heavy-handed organising and ordering of the known and imagined world, Bolton and Chappell look beyond the macrocosm to the detail that lies beneath – the ambiguous, ambivalent and irresolute flux. They mine the intricate vicissitudes of the chaotic unconscious, seen through the tightly constructed aperture of the ego, giving us insight into the gloomy sensuality that underpins everything.

The drawings are nonetheless controlled and elegant – and not simply the outpourings of a rampant id. They are decorative in the most radically baroque sense, finding complexity and intricacy wherever possible. Yet they remain symmetrical, attractive and meticulous.

In common with traditional mandalas, which are often made from rice or sand, Bolton and Chappell's floor painting is similarly ephemeral. It is in every way temporary, to be removed after serving its short-lived purpose. This kind of impermanence is fundamental to eastern practices – fundamental, what is more, to a way of thinking that holds the central insight that individual selfhood is an illusion.

Andrew Cattanach
December 2011