

FABRIK

CONTEMPORARY ART & DESIGN



Von Lintel Gallery Kysa Johnson: As Above, So Below (June 24—August 19, 2017)

The infinite expanse of the universe is a sublime concept. That the universe is also infinitely small is an equally wondrous and mind-boggling conundrum. Merging these two concepts might seem a vast undertaking, but it only scratches the surface of what Los Angeles-based artist Kysa Johnson explores in her recent exhibition at Von Lintel Gallery. At first glance, her paintings evoke the Abstract Expressionist tradition of mark-making. But Johnson's distinctive marks are not about expressive gestures, tracking the artist's reach or the movement of paint across the canvas. Instead, the Glasgow-trained artist finds inspiration in what might be considered the antithesis of such emotional devices: scientific theory. The paintings' elaborate and overlapping paths, drawn with

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a rainbow palette, combine patterns of subatomic decay and astronomical charts, effectively substituting conduits of atomic activity for constellation patterns found in the nebular landscape.



KYSA JOHNSON, "AS ABOVE, SO BELOW" INSTALLATION VIEW AT VON LINTEL GALLERY.

But all is not sky-bound. Johnson counters the lyricism of her stellar nocturnes with a mysterious installation in the second gallery. The back wall, covered with a grand-scale drawing portraying the night sky, framed with two Corinthian-style columns, transforms the gallery space into the cella of an ancient Roman temple. Or, perhaps, Johnson equates the mysteries of the universe to the secrecies of a Masonic Temple. Appropriately drawn in chalk, the columns recall the twin pillars of King Solomon's temple, adorned with capitals and spheres inscribed with maps of celestial and terrestrial globes—following the masonic tradition. A pyramidal offering of faux gold bars heightens this association. Although the majority of the bars are black and covered with

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Johnson's distinctive script, a few are symbolically transformed, as if alchemized from lead to gold.

Recent research, however, suggests the true origin of gold takes place not through Masonic alchemic processes, but rather, in the words of The Washington Post's Joel Achenbach, "violent explosions in the far reaches of outer space." Here, the title of Johnson's recent gallery show finds new meaning, as the violence of the precious element's celestial origins, As Above, so frequently finds equivalent ferocity in its consumption and accumulation, So Below.