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Around the Galleries
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By David Pagel

TAKING FORM FROM DOTS AND DASHES

Each of Robin Mitchell's "Code Paintings" consists of thousands of tiny circles, ovals, dots, lines and odd little shapes, all made with the tip of a paintbrush. These casually applied marks float in front of horizontal bands of color that bleed into one another on page-size sheets of paper.

Mitchell's mundane marks sometimes form loosely symmetrical configurations that hint at faces, flowers and vines, as well as mandalas, rippling ponds and glowing orbs. At other times they seem to be the visual equivalent of static – crackling disruptions that refuse to settle into coherent patterns of easily recognized meaning.

This simple setup gives Mitchell considerable room to maneuver. The same goes for viewers. Her 12 gouaches at the Craig Krull Gallery are a pleasure to see.

None looks like another. Although jam packed with the same tiny marks, dashes and dabs, in a palette that is organic, light-drenched and splendid, each is distinct, with its own flowing rhythm. They keep your eyes moving – slipping, sliding, skipping from one micro-incident to another.

The downside of obsessive, even compulsive behavior is not to be found in Mitchell's patient paintings. She transforms repetitive, potentially mindless manual activity into mindful devotion, making works both intimate and expansive, relaxing and lively. Think of Mitchell's paintings as pointillism for the digital age. The abstract fields are abuzz with ordinarily invisible energy, where viewers glimpse – or at least imagine – the dancing molecules and pulsating waves of light that make up the cosmos.

Craig Krull Gallery, 2525 Michigan Ave., Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, CA