

Ivan Stojakovic, *Fantasy of the Real*

How do we represent the reach which we do not—cannot—fully know? It is a family paradox: the entities, episodes and eventualities that we understand to be true, yet which hover at a distance, perpetually out of reach. For many (for me), scientific discovery is one such illogicality, a tangle of interwoven systems whose obscurity deepens with every proven fact.

Ivan Stojakovic's art mines these contradictions by using scientific "enlightenments" as the groundwork for his complex and multi-faceted paintings. Beginning with biological diagrams, he interweaves other systems such as fractal patterns, mapping systems, circuitry, and logos to create abstract landscapes. Rich in palette and often built up to nearly sculptural proportions, the work also presents a bold and intuitive sense of color and a deep appreciation for the physical properties of oil paint and alkyds.

In *Neural Blossom*, a diptych, Stojakovic projected a cell onto two bare canvases and outlined what becomes the work's compositional framework: viral webs of red which spider out across the picture plane. Into this snare he intersects blossoming radials (the surreptitious source: a gift bag covered in targets), while behind it hovers a gauzy futuristic skyline. In the left panel, blues dominate an optimistic sky, the urban scene an oasis. In the right, saccharine pinks fog in the black skyscrapers, a toxic and oppressive doom. Likewise, in *Cell Trip*, the receding urban landscape is troubled, overwhelmed by the ornately patterned vortex whose pulsing energy defines and controls the scene.

In these paintings, as in his abstract compositions where landscapes are often felt rather than overtly made (as with *Transplant I*), Stojakovic uses the formal language of science and technology as a point of departure. His work explores the overwhelming, exciting, and unfathomable changes that discovery brings about, with a global skepticism informed, perhaps, by a youth spent in Serbia and adulthood in New York. They demonstrate Stojakovic's astute ability to capture the complexity of the real world—known and perceived—and transform it into a series of powerfully metaphoric paintings, mediations he describes as "fantasies of the real."

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