

## Careful cultivation

### *Geometry and melody coalesce in Louise Despont's work*



New York-based artist Louise Despont's first Indian solo, *Long Distance Gardening* comprises four large-format and six small-format works in graphite, coloured pencils and gold leaf on antique ledgers. Her work is informed by artists and philosophers of an esoteric bent, such as Swiss healer Emma Kunz, Swedish artist Hilma af Klint and Australian philosopher Rudolf Steiner.

These influences are seen in the large "Inner Chamber", a 50-inch wide schematic of symmetry and wholeness. Incredibly detailed, the work makes use of motifs such as the sun, the cycle of the moon, the infinity sign, wrapped in perfect draftsmanship.

Despont also considers India as another very significant influence on her work. She first came here in 2009 on a Fulbright scholarship for visual arts: the country, says Despont in an interview with Anna Ballestern about the ongoing Mumbai show, changed how she viewed colour, scale, detail and the significance of ritual and spirituality. She found inspiration in everything from sari borders to layers of paint on city walls to vegetable vendors. The two large works, "Left Palm" and "Right Palm", are an explosion of colour: from the pink-and-green sari-like pattern in the centre to the paisleylike swans and flowing vines.

Many of Despont's drawings also reference Persian rugs, which, through geometry and abstract patterning, sought to create representations of heaven. Similarly, her drawings give shape and form to the intangible through a process of abstraction. Furthering this thought, she says, "I tend to think drawings have similar structure to a song (in what) I consider a melody, a harmony and a refrain." The refrain, as seen in another large drawing, "Cast Rays", is geometry and repetition. This dedication to geometry continues to stand out, as we move from the larger to the smaller drawings.

Despont's ledgers signify a more physical, commercial world. But her pastel shades and geometric patterns imbue them with a pretty nostalgia quite removed from their antiquity.

*Long Distance Gardening* is ongoing at Galerie Isa.