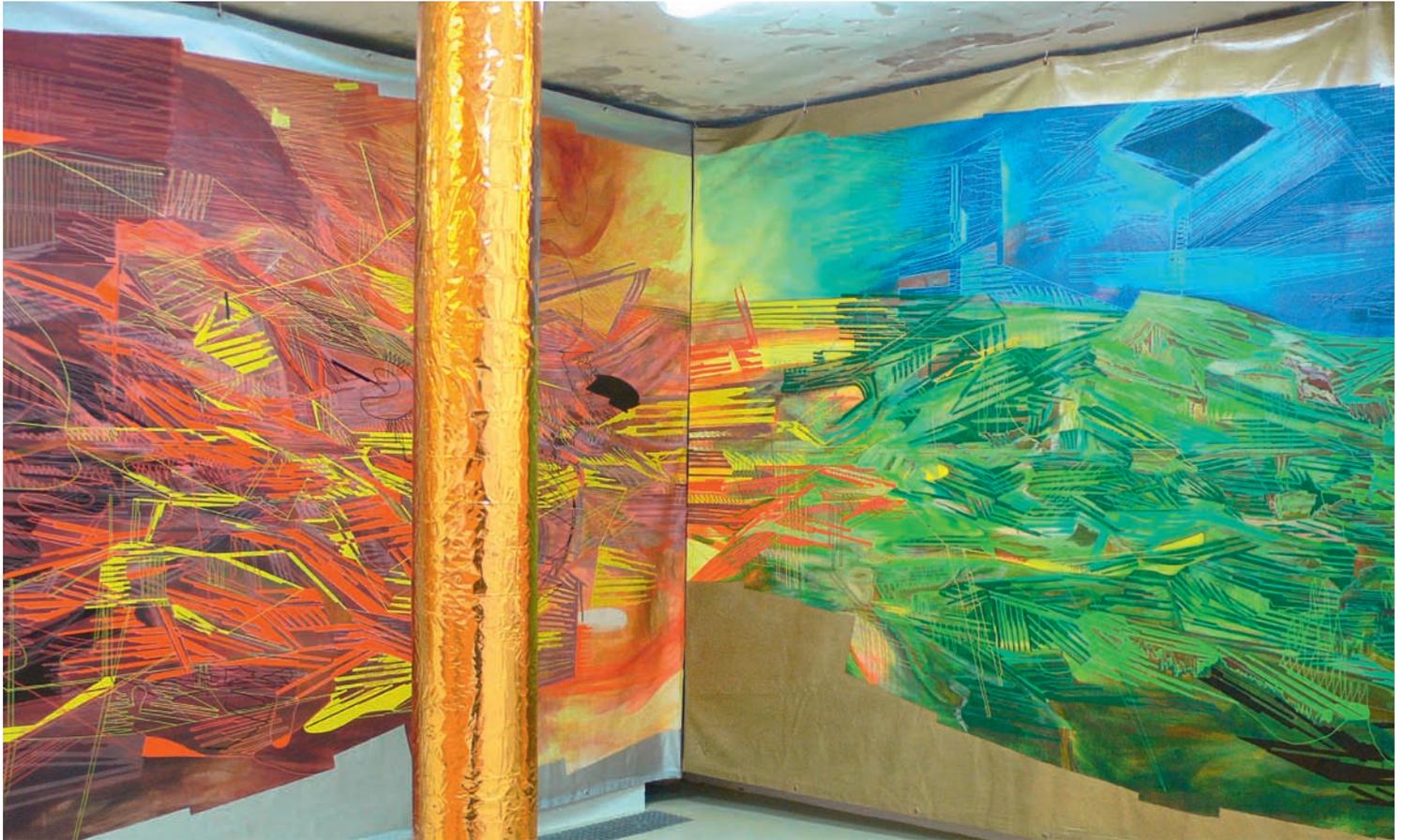


# VARGAS-SUAREZ UNIVERSAL: NEXT GREEN SPHERE

G-MODULE, PARIS

10 NOVEMBER - 23 FEBRUARY



Next Green Sphere: Time & Temperature Spectrum (detail), 2007, oil and enamel on canvas, 300 x 900 cm. Courtesy g-module, Paris

*Imagining and Imaging Mars* would be an appropriate subtitle for Vargas-Suarez Universal's newest 'space station' installation, an esoteric collection of multimedia works in which the topology of the geologically dead red planet is aesthetically reanimated in paint, ballpoint pen, radiant barrier aluminium foil, stereoscopic photography and downloaded NASA podcast.

The main work is *Next Green Sphere: Time & Temperature Spectrum* (all works 2007), a giant two-walled painting spectrally depicting, from left to right, the dystopic rust of the Martian present through to the utopic green of its human-colonised future. On the wall opposite, NASA anaglyph imagery of Martian deltas and dunes are recombined with the artist's serial encodings in pen and ink – repeating lines and patterns that look like circuitry-board diagrams crossed with EKG readouts. Similar lines circuitously cover a fully opened accordion book in *Automata* (English).

*Automata* aptly describe the art and the artistic persona: both are machines performing a function according to a predetermined set of coded instructions. Only Rafael Vargas-Suarez, the artist behind the machines, knows the code, but it is easy to figure out the function: proliferate. Since graduating in astronomy and art history from the University of Texas at Austin in 1997, the Brooklyn-based artist has produced a dizzying profusion of very beautiful, very hermetic line-generated drawings. In earlier works, the pseudoscientific lines covered room-size installations representing colliding architectural schema. Elsewhere, the microcircuitry-like contours have been inscribed onto fashion models, New York subway service notices

and photographs of European architectural monuments.

In *Next Green Sphere*, the patterns delineate NASA-generated images of the fourth planet from the sun. The foiled windows and robotic voiceovers give the installation a nerdy science-project feel, compounded by the 3-D glasses on hand for viewing the anaglyphs. The painting and drawing, however, is seductive and strong. Vargas-Suarez Universal's generative strategies, his stylised interpretations of topologies, math problems and circulatory systems, keep the lines from degenerating into mere doodle. Technically abstract, technically representative – in both senses of the word – the geometries frustrate and satisfy, a dissonant sensation akin to looking at the iconography of a faith you don't share.

Born in Mexico City, raised in a Houston suburb near the Johnson Space Center, Vargas-Suarez seeks to be more than a Sol LeWitt for the space age: 'I am concerned with understanding our fate on Earth, while creating artworks reflecting the complexities of human space exploration,' he writes. 'I am also intrigued by the directions our own technological capacity may take us and I seek to be informed by the natural beauty in the universe. Making paintings and drawings depicting these ideas and subjects are hopefully the least of my contributions to society.'

We know the lines mean something, but we are not sure what, which shifts the experience from cognitive to aesthetic and reduces, or raises, the purpose-driven, replicating proliferation of esoteric signs into art. *Christopher Mooney*