

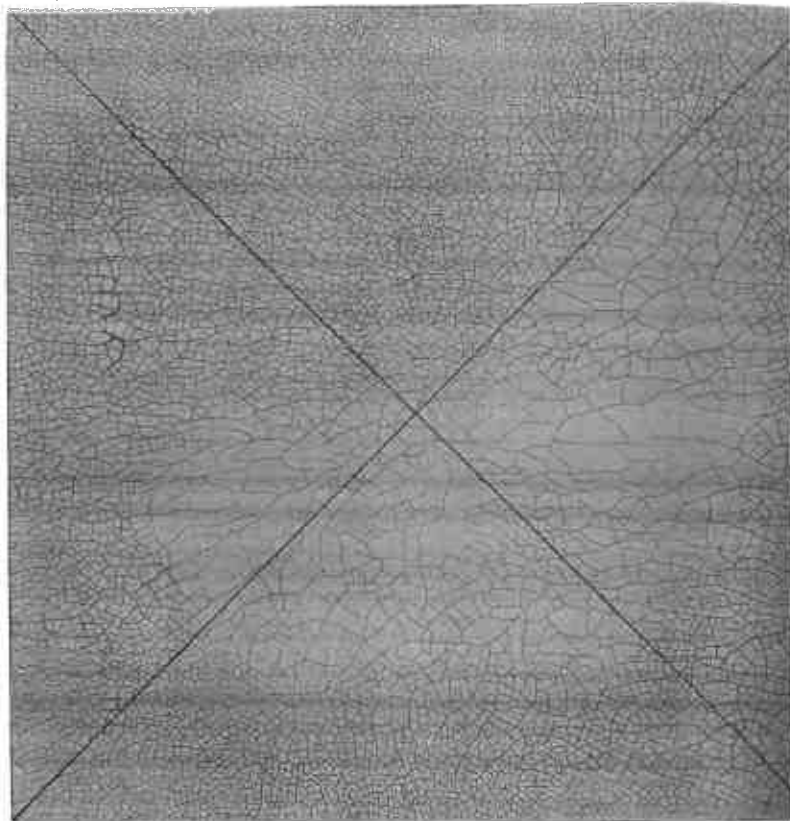
GLORIA GRAHAM

Since the early 1990s Gloria Graham has created a large body of increasingly complex paintings of geometric patterns, all based on the underlying physical structures of our environment. Her interest in the geometric construction and systems found in nature is motivated by a fundamental fascination with the patterns revealed by atomic microscopes. In her work, she seeks to foreground the extent to which these invisible building blocks can be made visible. In doing so, she illuminates the extent to which all of the objects and organisms in our universe are interconnected.

An example of Graham's early work is *AXIS* (1991), which she asserts is firmly rooted in the physical environment. *AXIS* comprises three separate canvases, each of which Graham marked with a thin *x* in graphite across the surface. According to the artist, her use of the term *axis* is meant to refer to the center of the world, which forms the basis of all movement and of spatial geometry. Graham further explains that "to *x* space out is to form it." Yet the initially simple appearance of *AXIS* is deceptive. The ground of each of the three canvases has been covered with a layer of kaolin clay and hide glue. This fragile surface is extremely susceptible to change, and these changes are in fact welcomed by the artist: thin cracks have spread across the squares and tonal variations in the pale yellow of the kaolin are clearly visible. Graham's choice of kaolin clay as a medium also stands in stark contrast to the characteristically industrial materials of canonical Minimalism. In addition, kaolin connects the work to ancient Chinese ceramics and to methods of canvas preparation popular in fourteenth-century Italy, as well as to the Tibetan paintings known as *thangkas*. Interestingly, Graham has said she learned of the connection between kaolin and *thangkas* only after she began working with kaolin.

Graham's subsequent works depart from the simplified forms of *AXIS* and present compositions of greater, though still understated, geometric complexity. These again find their origin in the smallest units of our natural world—the atomic symbols for minerals; to emphasize this, Graham printed an atomic symbol down the side of each painting. More recently, Graham has begun creating even more intricate works based on molecular structures. These compositions have become so large that they have outgrown the canvas to become elegant wall drawings.

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Gloria Graham (b. 1940)

Gloria Graham was born in Beaumont, Texas; she currently lives and works in New Mexico. She did undergraduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, and received her BFA from Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Graham completed graduate work at the University of Wisconsin and the University of New Mexico. In 1964 she apprenticed in Paris with the sculptor Jacques Mannezier. After traveling to Japan (on an Asian Cultural Council grant) in 1987 and Nepal in 1993, Graham began to study molecular structures and incorporate them into her drawings. This led to a SITE Santa Fe award in 1995, which included an exhibition that year, *SITE Santa Fe Award Recipients*, and to her pursuit of related projects between 2006 and 2010.

Although Graham's work has been exhibited primarily in New Mexico, Los Angeles, and New York, it has also appeared in many international group exhibitions. Her work is in the collections of the Lannan Foundation, Santa Fe; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; the Denver Art Museum; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe; and the Musée Cantonale d'Art, Lugano, Switzerland.