

*Galaxy #14 1998*

**ROBERT McCHESNEY**  
**ORDER OUT OF CHAOS**  
**THE GALAXY SERIES 1998-1999**

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO  
PHEBE CONLEY GALLERY  
SEPTEMBER 13 - OCTOBER 28, 1999

## **ROBERT MCCHESNEY - THE GALAXY SERIES 1998-1999**

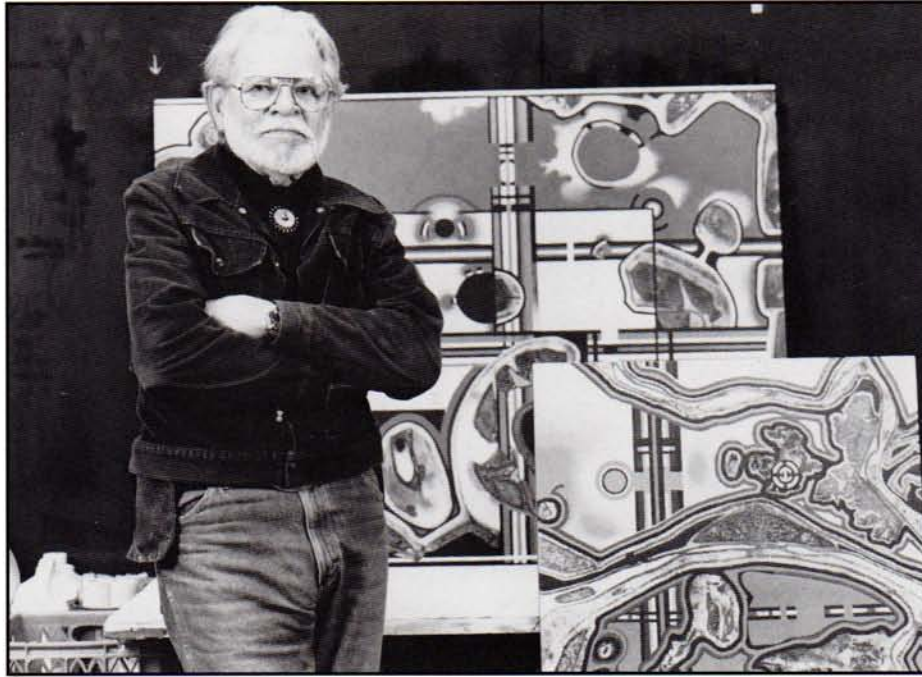
“Everything in nature has a lot of beauty, including human beings, and I try to produce beauty in my paintings. I’m not one of the artists of the vulgar group who produce ugliness and attempt to destroy the art world, instead I attempt to produce beautiful and comprehensible paintings,” said Robert McChesney in a recent interview.

When shipping out in the Merchant Marines in World War Two, McChesney began painting semi-abstract watercolors. Some critics called them Surrealist because of the distortion of the figurative elements. At this time he began making non-figurative work also, and has stayed with abstract painting since then.

He says, “I feel that I can portray, in abstract painting, more of the nature of things than I could in realism. I began doing really large abstractions the year I spent in Mexico in the 1950’s. I was very influenced by my good friend Edward Corbett whose work I had seen in Taos on the way to old Mexico. He was doing extremely interesting painting which was exactly what I had been looking for at this time. In Mexico I did some paintings that were influenced by his art.” McChesney completed two series in the Mexico year - - one oil, one watercolor - - both of which were exhibited at Gump’s Gallery in San Francisco.

“All of one’s experiences go into one’s art. You can’t help but be influenced by everything around you - - everything you see and everything that you do,” the artist said.

“My painting is abstract, not non-objective. My painting is always objective. When I begin a painting, it is complete chaos. I produce a completely chaotic scene on the panel. That is the under painting. Very strong elements are in it and the elements work or they don’t work and it is my job to remove or add to the whole. The chaos is produced on a horizontal surface with wet paint that flows in a loose manner. I began this technique in the *Arena* Series with oil or enamel, using squeeze bottles. Then I threw sand into it and then I began to organize the whole thing. It is a move from non-objectivity to objectivity. It is always bringing order from chaos. Sometimes I can work for a couple of weeks on a painting and sometimes I have to work a month on a painting - - organizing, destroying, re-organizing, building, they go on and on. Sometimes I get a good start out of the chaos but in other instances, it doesn’t flow very well and I have to work my ass off getting what I want. Sometimes those are even better paintings than the ones that were produced easily.”



Self-portrait 1996

McChesney usually works in series and the groups of paintings have titles - - some of them are *Arena*, *Point of View*, *Slip Sheet*, *La Noche*, *Canyon Country* and now *Galaxy*. "The business of titling is simply for cataloging. There is a title, then a number. When I finish a series, I say, 'Let's do something different, maybe not a lot different but somewhat different so I change the title of the paintings.'"

The *Galaxy* paintings have many circles and the artist was asked if they are the reason for the title.

"I started with circles in my early abstract paintings and they have been with me ever since. Sleeping out in the desert without the smog and city lights, one sees some tremendous things and they make a very strong impression on me. The circle is universal. It is everywhere. The stars - - they are circles, globes, and it seems that throughout the universe, outside of the gases, the solid substances are really globes. But anyway I love to use the circle."

McChesney's idea of space, as represented in the *Galaxy* Series, is very, very different from the science fiction conception of space and very interesting when contrasted to that. The science fiction conception, as shown in the movies, the Disney kind of stuff, has a limited, superficial look. It misses the point of what the universe is all about. The *Galaxy* Series takes a different spin. In it the universe is all about incredible activity. It is not big, empty, open space but force and energy and action.

Essay written by Mary Fuller from taped interview. Spring, 1999.

# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Curated by Jothan McGaughey

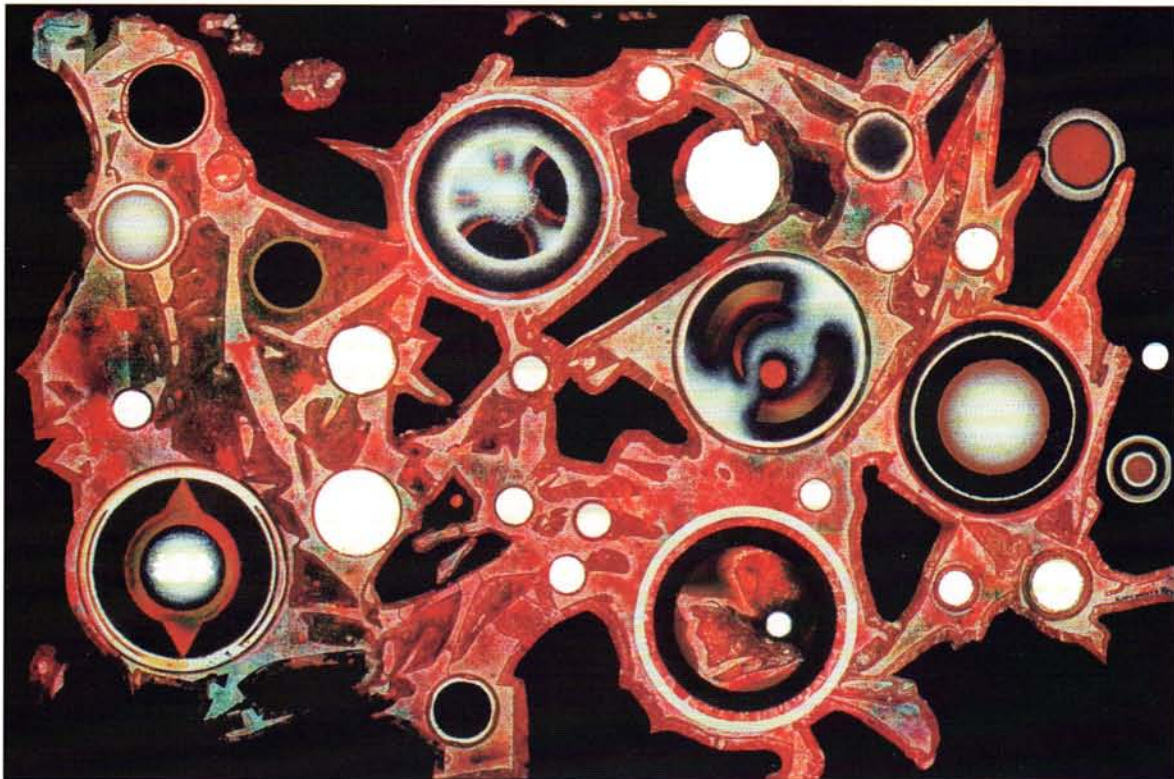
All Works loaned by the Artist

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Point of View #1- 1995	Galaxy #2 - 1997	Galaxy #15 -1998
Point of View #2- 1995	Galaxy #4 - 1998	Galaxy #16 -1999
Point of View #4- 1996	Galaxy #5 - 1998	Galaxy #17 -1999
Point of View #9- 1996	Galaxy #6 - 1998	Galaxy #18 -1999
Point of View #10- 1996	Galaxy #7 - 1998	Galaxy #19 -1999
Point of View #15- 1997	Galaxy #8 - 1998	Galaxy #20 -1999
Point of View #16- 1997	Galaxy #9 - 1998	Arena #39 -1960
Point of View #17- 1997	Galaxy #10 - 1998	Arena #46 -1960
Point of View #18- 1997	Galaxy #11 - 1998	Arena #53 -1961
Point of View #19- 1997	Galaxy #13 -1998	

*Point of View & Galaxy Series: Acrylic on Board: Shown in Phebe Conley Gallery*

*Arena Series: Enamel, Oil and Sand on Canvas: Shown in President's Gallery*



*Galaxy #6 1998*