

ARTFORUM

Louise Despont

NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY
21 Orchard Street
September 12–October 24

Created during a nine-month Fulbright fellowship in India, the eleven stunningly beautiful drawings in “House of Instruments,” Louise Despont’s second exhibition at Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, present highly complex patterns and symmetrical forms rendered largely in graphite on antique ledger paper and yellowed Indian parchment. Influenced by the vibrant sights and sounds of South Asia, Despont intimates a kind of spiritual transcendence from these modest materials, and further develops her interest in conceptual dualisms, visual pairs, and suggestive abstraction. The two panels of *Garden Interior*, 2009, and the double-page spread of *Hospital Gates*, 2010, demonstrate the artist’s skillful use of architectural stencils and compasses, but the energetic, acrobatic compositions—with spiky chattering triangles, mischievous pulsating circles, and vibrantly hatched diamonds—belie the methodical process of their construction. The titles of *King and Queen, Day*, 2010, and *King and Queen, Night*, 2010, anticipate figuration, but the drawings offer few anthropomorphic clues among their sharp angles, strict curves, and flourishes of watercolor.



Louise Despont, *Moon Face and His Carrier Birds*, 2010, graphite and watercolor on antique ledger book pages, 68 1/2 x 49

In the most successful works, such as *Matrimandir*, 2010, with its large orb and smaller circles rippling throughout fourteen adjoining sheets, Despont loosens up her systematic renderings. The impressive fifteen-paneled *Moon Face and His Carrier Birds*, 2010, features luminous fields of evenly rubbed, almost fuzzy graphite hovering above the undulating, stylized lines that form the body of Moon Face, the piece’s central character. In the similarly sized *Blue Moon, Pondicherry*, 2010, decorative patterning, foliage, and urns surround two elegant figures with spread folding fans for heads whose bodies glow softly, filled in with green and red colored pencil; this work feels both personal and archetypal. While Despont’s immersion in Indian art and culture certainly informs the exhibition, she leaves the drawings enough space to be open-ended, allowing the mystical, trancelike, and psychedelic imagery to imbue the work with a genuine, wondrous presence.

— Christopher Howard