

kolaj

Fragments & Ideas

Meticulous Craftsmanship
& Obsessive Attention

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High Fashion Faces

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Textures & Small Snippets

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& Steel Wool

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Maggie Groat
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Chris Foster
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& Hagen Klennert

ISSUE THREE

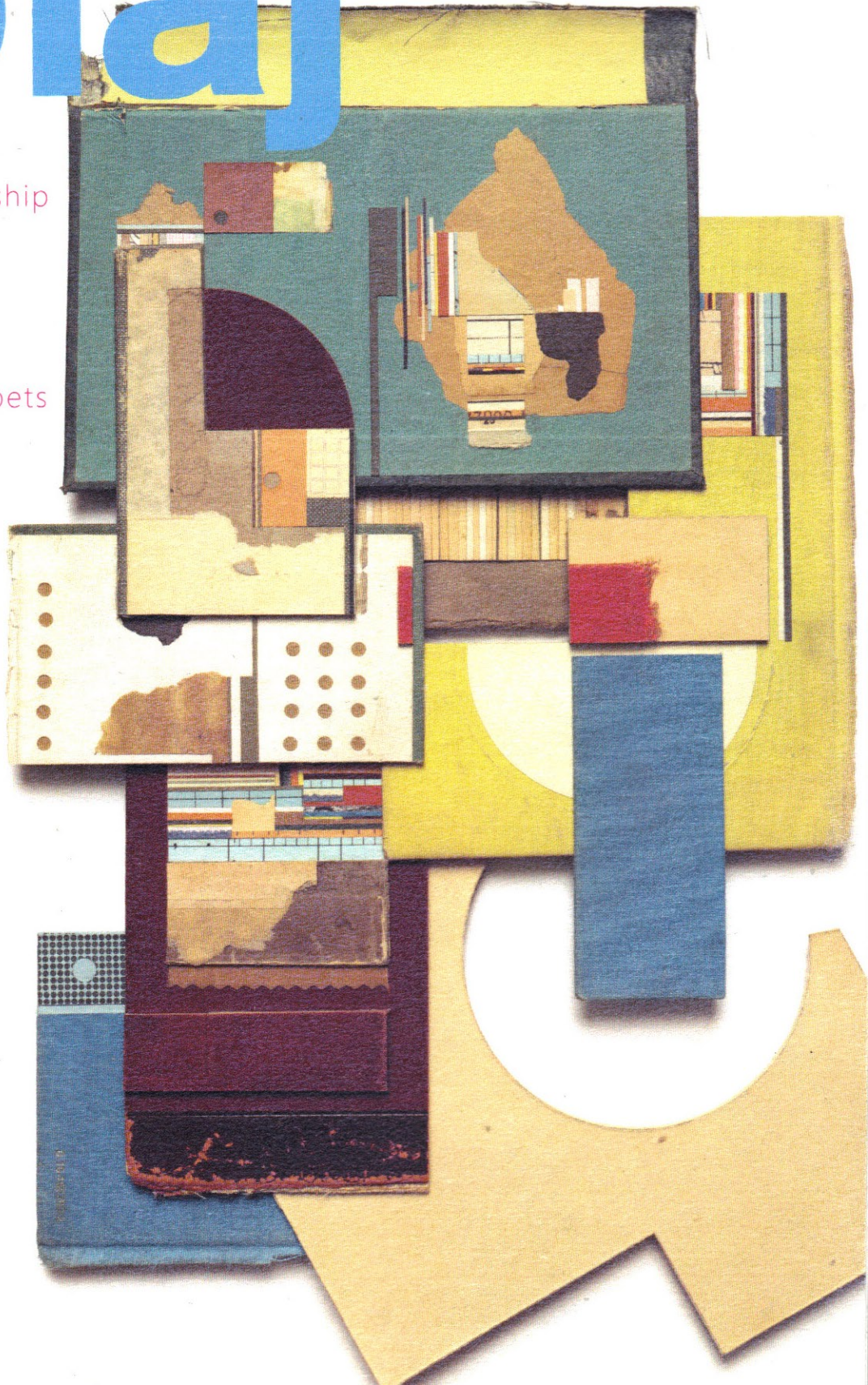
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art collage.

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MACRO MICRO

A Conversation with David King
by Cory W. Peeke

(above)
The Evening's Secret
by David King
9 1/2"x8 1/2"
collage on paper
2006

(next page)
Amphora #2
by David King
30"x22"
collage on paper
2012

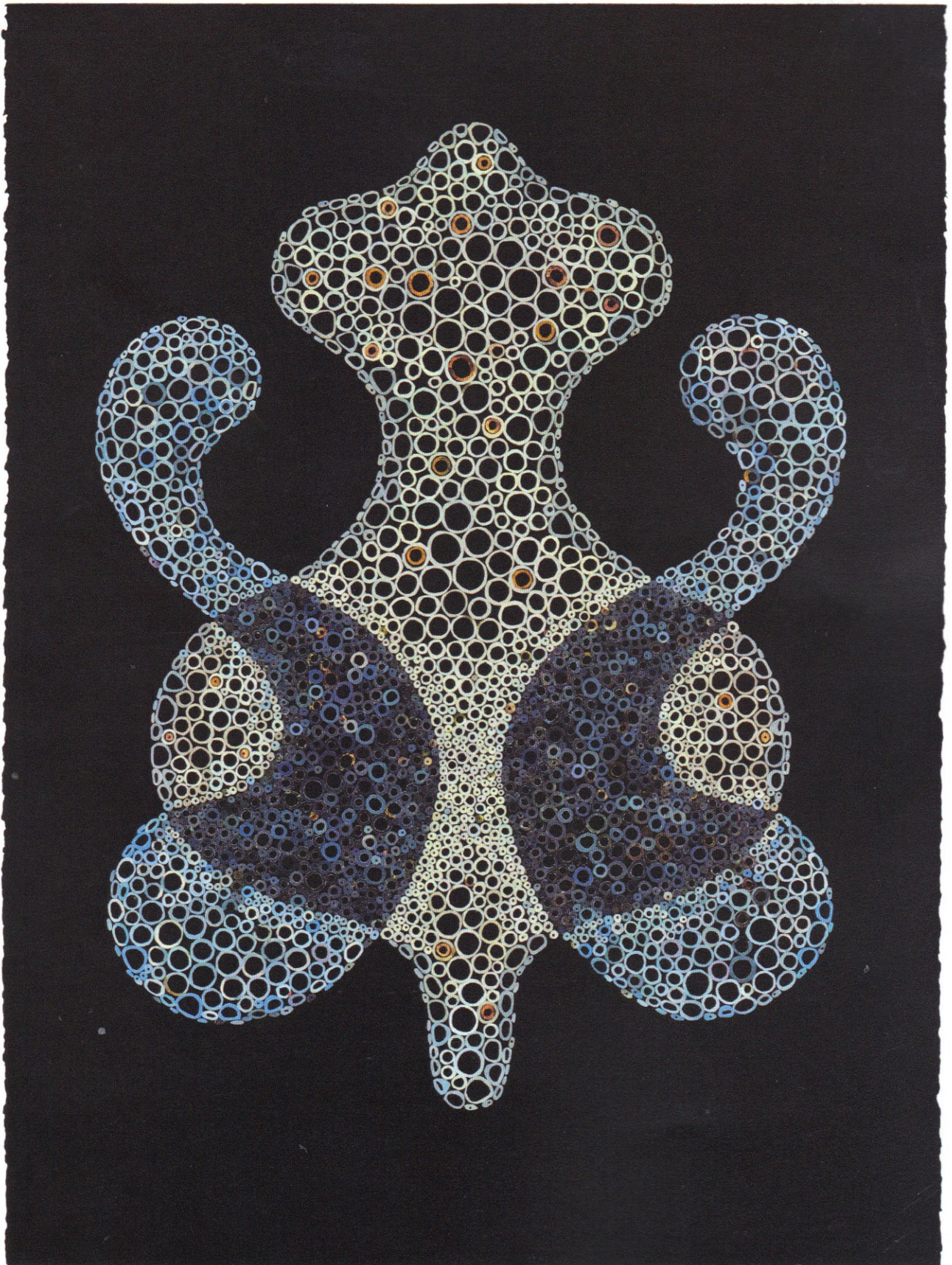
I first stumbled upon David King's collage work over a year ago when I was in the process of curating a group exhibit for the Nightingale Gallery at Eastern Oregon University. I was initially struck by the meticulous craftsmanship and obsessive attention to detail David employs in constructing his analog collages. The more time I spent with his work the more I appreciated the complexity and contemplative nature inherent in David's seemingly straightforward compositions and found myself seduced by the California artist's work.

David is the recipient of a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and his works have been exhibited throughout the US and Europe in such prestigious venues as the Soap Factory in Minneapolis, and San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. He recently took time to answer some questions about his studio practice and what motivates his creative process.

Cory Peeke: I know that you actually began concentrating on collage as a medium after you were diagnosed HIV positive in 1986. You've stated in the past that you used collage as a means of self-reflection and to process the complexity of your health situation at the time. It is now 26 years since your diagnosis, how has your work evolved in those years and is your HIV status and relationship to it still a motivating factor for making collage?

David King: In the first years of me being HIV positive, collage making was instrumental to me in getting through that experience and sharing my thoughts and feelings about it with others. Over the many years though, my motivation has widened significantly from just needing to understand and share the part of me that was HIV positive, to also including my sexuality, my spirituality, and lately, just the awe that I feel when contemplating this gorgeously complex world we live in.

In my early collage making, all of my pieces were constructed around cut-out figures, often participating in some narrative which illustrated a point I was trying to make. Over the years though, my work has shifted to the abstract, which cleared away any specific narrative and left room for a viewer's personal interpretation of the image, which I felt was important when trying to express more complex ideas about spirituality, for example.





(above)
Inside Stillness #2
by David King
collage and acrylic mounted on
aluminum panel
2010

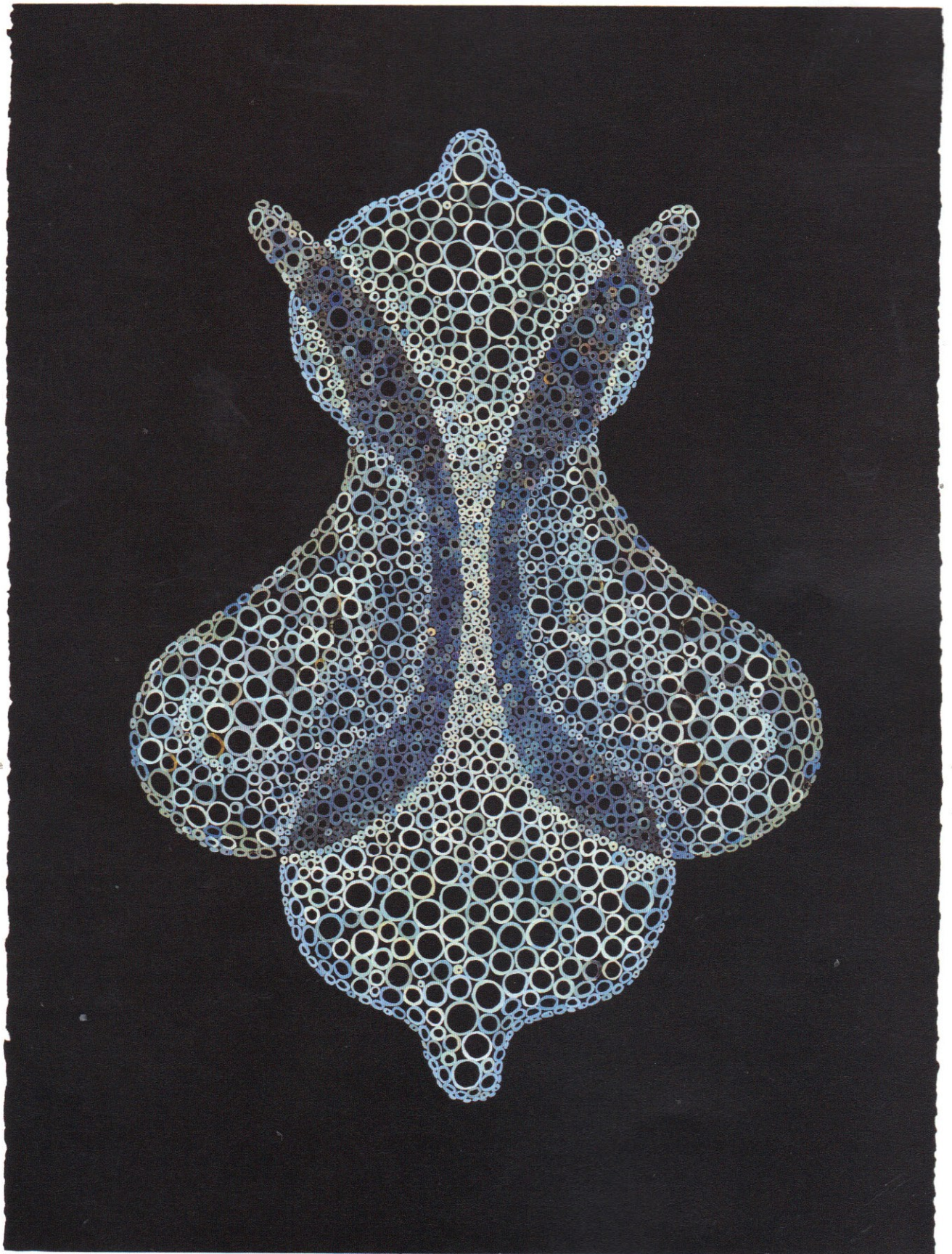
(next page)
Amphora #1
by David King
30"x22"
collage on paper
2012

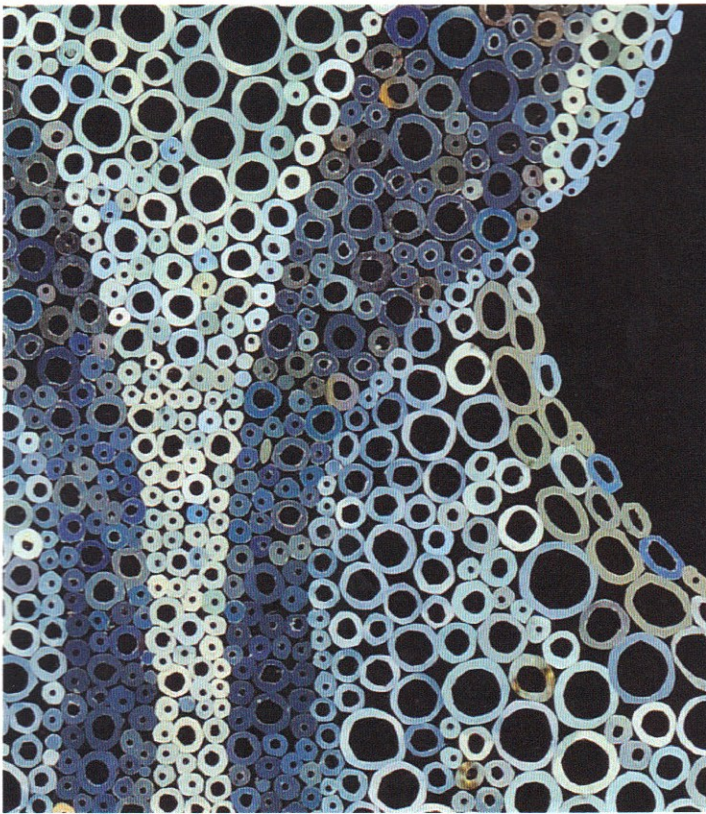
CP: Could you talk more about the idea of spirituality and how it manifests itself in your work? The macro/micro thing you have going on in your more recent work seems to speak to the idea of interconnection or being connected to a larger reality. From a distance the collages present an abstract organic design but when examined in detail the viewer realizes that each design is constructed of hundreds of small, meticulously cut circles. Is the work meant to be meditative for the viewer? Is the process of constructing them meditative for you?

DK: As a kid, in a science class, I looked through a microscope at a slide of suburban swamp water and was deeply surprised and awed at the new, previously hidden world I saw there. It was the first time my mind opened to the idea that there was more to "reality" than just what we could see. As an adult, through meditation and hallucinogens, I've experienced some of the metaphysical realms that we are not normally conscious of - dimensions of being that I now know are absolutely real. My collages explore the overlap of those two experiences - which basically are the foundation of my sense of spirituality - and often use a macro/micro lens to help illustrate what I've come to understand for myself. The work is very meditative for me to create - the process of cutting out all the individual elements is deeply concentrating - and yes, the goal of many of my pieces is to make something that can work as a sort of mandala, that can be meditated upon, over and over, always seeing something new - in the piece and in the self of the viewer.

CP: How do you go about selecting the materials you use? From what kind of materials/images do you cut your circular forms? Is the source material for the circles somehow linked to the spiritual intent of the piece or does it have more to do with aesthetics?

DK: When I'm searching for collage materials, I like to find many examples of one type of image that I can use as building blocks to create the forms I have in mind. For a while I was buying stacks of jewelry auction catalogs from Christie's and Sotheby's and using the images of the variously coloured jewels in my collages. In the last year, I've shifted my process to creating the abstract forms I have in mind out of tiny rings of colour. These rings are hand-cut with an X-ACTO blade from art history book reproductions and from nature books. I use these two sources because I like the colours, but also because of the references they imply.





(above)
Amphora #1 (detail)
by David King
30"x22"
collage on paper
2012

(next page)
Talisman #9
by David King
22"x15"
collage and acrylic on paper
2011

One recent series, "Amphora," was created with rings cut from dozens of images of the variously-coloured skies over the Arizona desert. The forms are meant to be faintly reminiscent of objects we've encountered in the past - like an ancient ritual object we've seen in a museum or in a history book. The colour of the skies is equally important though. I grew up back east where the landscape is defined by town after town in deeply wooded forests - a type of landscape that might feel cozy and comforting to some, but to me felt tight and restrictive. When I moved out west and visited the deserts of Arizona, for example, I got a real taste of how open and lifting the landscape can be. When I'm in a vast space like that I feel like my spirit expands to fill the entirety of it.

CP: I know you spent part of 2012 doing a residency at Jentel and another with the Ucross Foundation, both of which are in Wyoming. How has your time in Wyoming and your residency experiences in general impacted your most recent work? Do you have residencies lined up for 2013 or are you back in the Bay Area to stay for awhile?

DK: Spending two months in Wyoming at the two residencies was an amazing experience. Having no distractions or responsibilities, save getting to the studio, was immensely helpful in me getting to a new level with my work. The concentrated time allowed me the space and time to get more detailed and reach into my practice a little deeper - for a change I didn't feel rushed or distracted. And now, even months later, this level of detail and attention have stayed with me and is evident in the pieces I'm making. One of the other big impacts the rural residencies had on me is that they helped me see how much more I thrive in a natural setting, and it finally encouraged me to move out of San Francisco. After 21 years of enjoying and thriving in that city, I've moved about two hours north into the redwoods, where I'm having my own sort of retreat/residency and am getting lots of concentrated time to work in my studio. So while I will be applying to other residencies in 2013, for the time being, I'm living a residency right now.

For more information on David's time in Wyoming and images of his past and current work please check out his website: davidkingcollage.com

