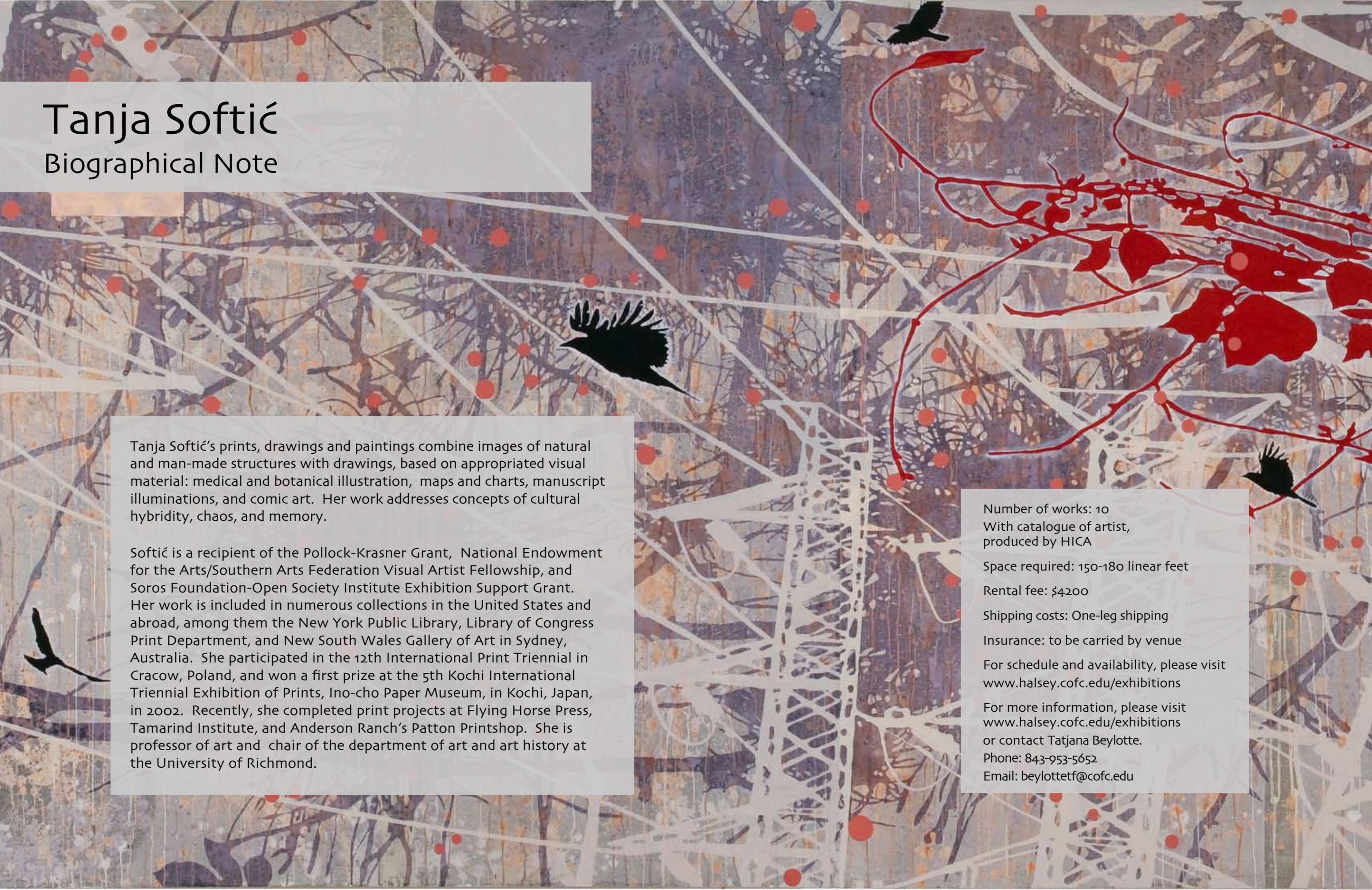




Tanja Softić:  
Migrant Universe



# Tanja Softić

## Biographical Note

Tanja Softić's prints, drawings and paintings combine images of natural and man-made structures with drawings, based on appropriated visual material: medical and botanical illustration, maps and charts, manuscript illuminations, and comic art. Her work addresses concepts of cultural hybridity, chaos, and memory.

Softić is a recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Grant, National Endowment for the Arts/Southern Arts Federation Visual Artist Fellowship, and Soros Foundation-Open Society Institute Exhibition Support Grant. Her work is included in numerous collections in the United States and abroad, among them the New York Public Library, Library of Congress Print Department, and New South Wales Gallery of Art in Sydney, Australia. She participated in the 12th International Print Triennial in Cracow, Poland, and won a first prize at the 5th Kochi International Triennial Exhibition of Prints, Ino-cho Paper Museum, in Kochi, Japan, in 2002. Recently, she completed print projects at Flying Horse Press, Tamarind Institute, and Anderson Ranch's Patton Printshop. She is professor of art and chair of the department of art and art history at the University of Richmond.

Number of works: 10  
With catalogue of artist,  
produced by HICA

Space required: 150-180 linear feet

Rental fee: \$4200

Shipping costs: One-leg shipping

Insurance: to be carried by venue

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For more information, please visit  
[www.halsey.cofc.edu/exhibitions](http://www.halsey.cofc.edu/exhibitions)  
or contact Tatjana Beylotte.

Phone: 843-953-5652

Email: [beylottetf@cofc.edu](mailto:beylottetf@cofc.edu)

The background is a complex, layered artwork. At the top, a black silhouette of a bird is in flight. A spider web is drawn across the upper portion. In the lower right, a metallic bowl is depicted. The central area is dominated by a large, abstract shape in shades of orange and red, resembling a map or a landscape. The entire composition is set against a light brown, wood-grain-like background with white, vein-like patterns.

Migrant Universe  
Tanja Softić



Planets spinning madly around her,  
a spider weaves  
her web of light.  
To be knocked down  
in due time  
by forces too large to be malicious,  
or too small to destroy anything else.

Fruit hangs heavy on the branches.  
Heap it up and eat it, mangia,  
let it stain your best blouse.

It will not last, you know:

It will fall on the ground  
in the middle of the night  
with a dull thud  
that could be mistaken  
for a startled kick of a deer.

Waste nothing,  
that's my point:  
someone somewhere is starving.

Night draws away  
daybreak rushes forth  
each jewel reflects all others  
and thousands of things are passing by,  
light  
fast  
swollen with impermanence.

## Artist Statement: About the Migrant Universe Project

*Seeing "the entire world as a foreign land" makes possible the originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is contrapuntal.... For an exile, habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of those things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally.*  
— Edward Said, *On Exile*

The *Migrant Universe* Series is a visual poem about identity and the worldview of an immigrant: exile, longing, translation, and memory. An immigrant to the United States from Bosnia, once part of Yugoslavia, I am fascinated by questions of cultural identity or cultural belonging on an intellectual level, but I experience and feel what Edward Said called "the contrapuntal reality [of an exile]" very acutely: I have transitioned through three citizenships in addition to one period of being a citizen of no country. In both my new and old countries, outdated notions of national and ethnic identity and belonging continue to shape the politics and the society.

The visual vocabulary of the *Migrant Universe* drawings suggests a displaced existence: fragmented memories, adaptation, revival, and transformation. Because I do not live and work within the comfort or boundaries of the culture in which I first learned to observe, interpret, and engage the world, I have the arguable privilege of having lived more than one life. My memory is my virtual self and, paradoxically, my most authentic self. Yet, memory is a process that involves erosions and accretions that occur with any reconstructive, interpretative, or artistic act. One reconnects with what has been broken, fragmented, or overlaid. Remembering becomes an act of reconstruction, where one works with what is there and tries to visualize what has been lost. Because each act of memorization necessarily involves interpretation, there can be no objective recollection.

Nor is there full erasure; like matter, memory seems to persist by transforming. The images in *Migrant Universe* suggest what Said called "an awareness of simultaneous dimensions." For example, maps and star charts represent conventional interpretations of scale and distance, their fidelity assured only within accepted systems of perceiving and organizing space. I am interested in what they may become, layered upon each other in visual conversations with other elements in the drawing. In *Migrant Universe*, the drawings function as a rearrangeable continuum of maps, landscapes, and portraits of memory and identity.

# Image Checklist

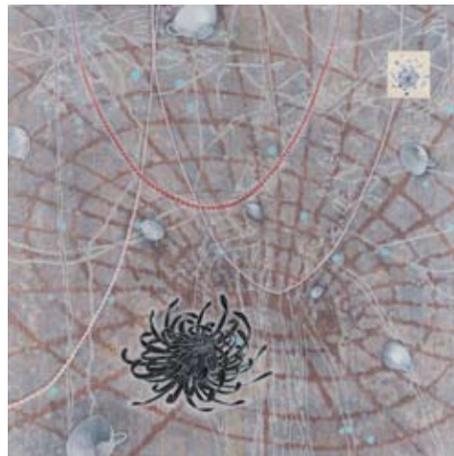
1. The Heart of the Matter  
acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 60"  
2011



2. The Evangelist  
acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 60"  
2008



3. Angel of Absence  
acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 60"  
2009



4. Angel of Becoming  
acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 60"  
2009



5. Night in the Garden  
acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 120"  
2007



6. Landscape and Departure  
acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 120"  
2008



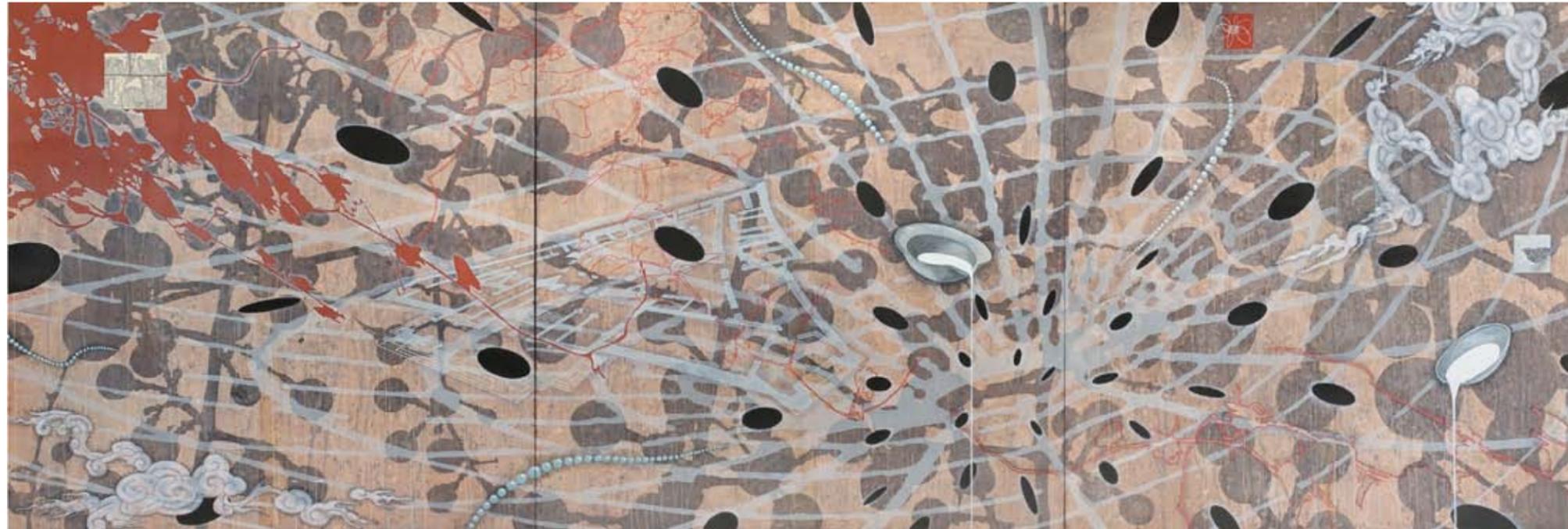
7. Revolution

acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 120"  
2008



8. The Map of

What Happened  
acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 120"  
2008



9. Time and Place

acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 180"  
2010



10. A Nocturne for  
My Father

acrylic, pigment, charcoal  
and chalk on handmade  
paper mounted on board,  
60" x 180"  
2010