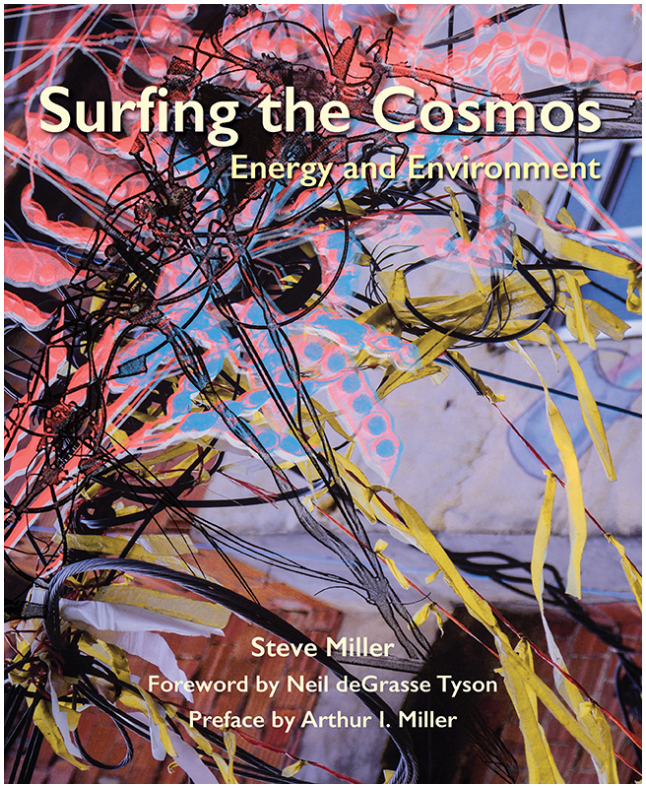
Surfing the Cosmos: Steve Miller's New Book Is the Culmination of His Obsession

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By Oliver Peterson

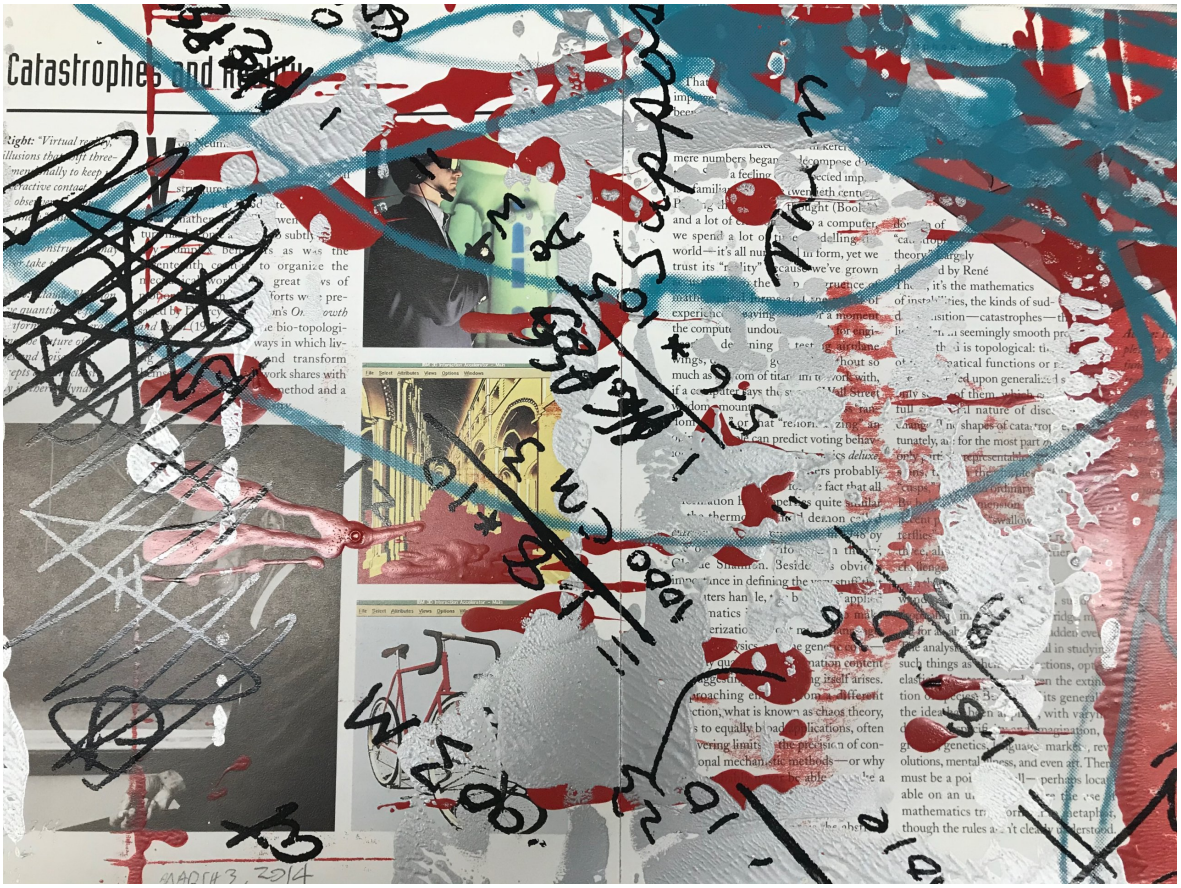




"Surfing the Cosmos" and artist Steve Miller in his home/studio

By his own admission, Sagaponack artist Steve Miller has something of a "fetish for books." A visit to the converted potato barn where he lives and works reveals long shelves and lofty walls filled with tomes by a who's who of artists — from contemporary and modern masters to Renaissance luminaries. He often gets two copies of books, and a great number are signed — and that's not counting his own publications, of which there are many.

The prolific painter, who's well known for his exploration of science and technology within his large canvases and works on paper, has spent long hours crafting art books in small editions, appropriating volumes by great scientific thinkers and filling each page with his silkscreened and hand-painted imagery, sometimes keeping them whole, and at others breaking them down into stacks of pages to be presented as folios within book-sized boxes.



Painted book pages by Steve MillerOliver Peterson

It’s from this bibliophilic obsession that his latest publication from G Editions, Surfing the Cosmos: Energy and Environment, was born. While it’s a hardcover book with a traditional paper jacket and some text, including a forward by Neil deGrasse Tyson, in Miller eyes it’s another work of art, albeit with a much larger edition and distribution. It’s something to behold and experience.

And “readers” would do well to remember this when picking up a copy and diving in, page by page.



Steve Miller shares some of his painted books and foliosOliver Peterson

Steve Miller on Surfing the Cosmos

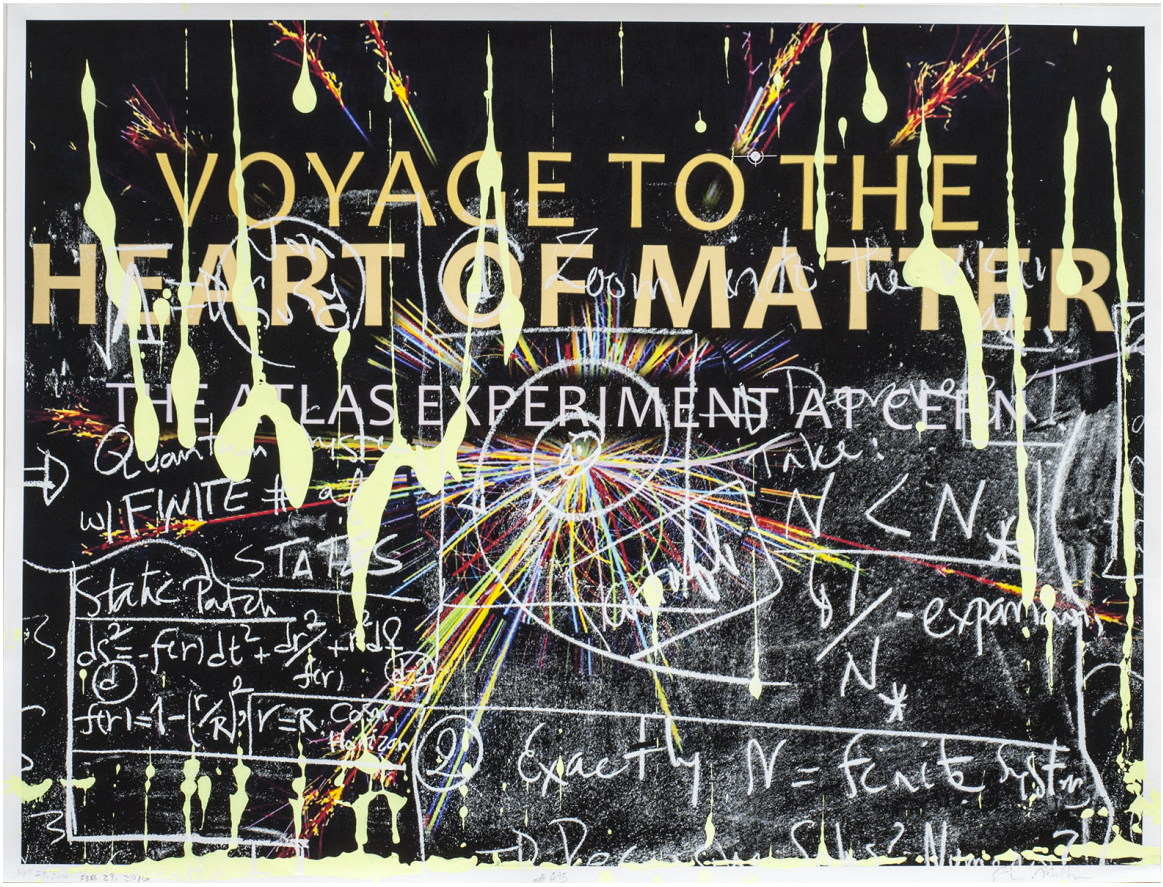
“I’m really into what a book is as an experience. So, this book is the experience, like a movie, like jump cuts and juxtapositions and fades, image and source,” Miller says describing his intention with Surfing the Cosmos.

The publication follows two earlier books with G Editions, starting with Radiographic: X-Ray Photo Inventions which at its core features X-ray images of plants and animals from the Brazilian rainforest; and Surf/Skate which focuses heavily on various skateboards, surfboards, pieces of clothing and other items emblazoned with Miller’s artwork, much of it first shown in Radiographic.

As Miller describes it, this trilogy of books begins with the X-rays in Radiographic and follows with his efforts to put that imagery out into the world in Surf/Skate. “And then this one is sort of the larger conversation,” he says of his newest effort.

Surfing the Cosmos will be available at a special event at The Church in Sag Harbor (48 Madison Street) presenting Miller in conversation with the venue’s chief curator Sara Cochran, followed by a Q&A and book signing on Thursday, November 10 at 6 p.m.

The book contains nearly 200 pages filled with Miller’s art and photography, exploring energy and its unexpected beauty, represented through the tangled, twisting wires and power lines in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, and the high-tech infrastructure at CERN, the world’s biggest particle physics laboratory and home of the Large Hadron Collider, in Geneva, Switzerland.



“Voyage to the Heart of the Matter” by Steve Miller featuring images sourced at CERN

His work goes from the drug-infested streets of Rio to CERN’s massive machinery and human ingenuity that found the Higgs boson, or “God particle,” and it explores visual and thematic connections between them.

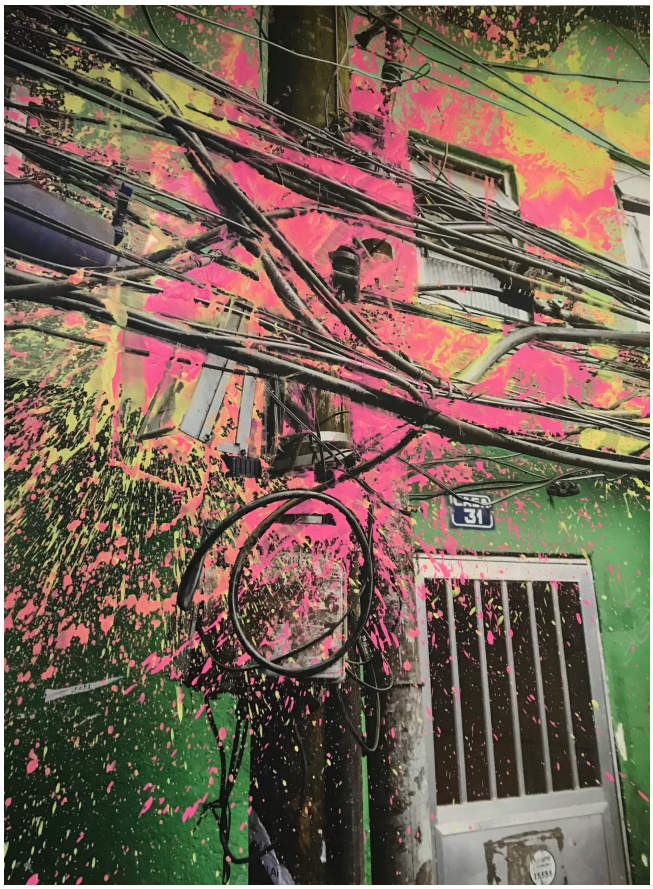
“It’s time to marvel at the intersection of our ever-increasing demand for power and the ever-growing impact of that need on our environment,” deGrasse Tyson explains in the foreword to Surfing the Cosmos. “It’s time to elevate electricity to art. And it’s time to remind ourselves, that science at its highest levels may be indistinguishable from art,” he continues, adding that after viewing Miller’s book, “I will never look at electrical wires the same way again.”

This is the magic of what Miller does, and how a book like Surfing the Cosmos can deliver an artistic experience that’s different from a painting, a film or any other art form. Some images in the book feature Miller’s paintings, but others exist solely in its pages — at least until the day he decides to use them for something else.

The collected contents come from two vastly different places, yet similarities abound.

For example, both CERN and the Brazilian favelas are protected by powerful gatekeepers, making them inaccessible to outsiders.

“In the favela, you’ve got to get clearance from the drug dealers and you’ve got to pay them off to get in,” Miller says, pointing out that CERN required him to get more formal security clearance before visiting to do a talk there on how scientific and technological advancements lead to changes in consciousness.



Art by Steve Miller featuring favela wiresOliver Peterson

Once he was free to access CERN and its facilities, Miller photographed mind-boggling machinery, scientists' whiteboards and chalkboards full of notes and equations, and unique posters throughout the buildings with haiku-like words, creating found poetry, such as:

Vector Boson Production Hard & Soft QCD Flavour Monte Carlos Theory & PDFs

The words and handwritten notes find their way into Miller's book and paintings, and layer beautifully with his gestural marks and rich colors.

Along with his talk and book signing at The Church on Thursday, Miller will be displaying four works of art that also appear in or complement Surfing the Cosmos, including the cover painting, a 2019 inkjet and silkscreen on canvas called "Far Enough Away."

Another piece includes a book, with original paintings on every page, displayed in a plexiglass stand set beneath a large print of X-rayed sharks. Miller explains that the book stand can show off a different two-page spread from the book any time its owner chooses.

It is an attempt at resolving his struggle to get collectors to appreciate the painted book as an art object, which he says many have trouble understanding.



Steve Miller painted book displayed with X-ray photograph, like the one he will show at The ChurchOliver Peterson

Perhaps, Miller suggests, it could be a first step in a longer leap toward seeing his painted books as the wondrous artworks they've always been. And in doing so, they also might then see Surfing the Cosmos and other artists' publications as they are intended to be seen.

If all goes well, they may never again see books in quite the same way.

Visit thechurchsagharbor.org or call The Church at 631-919-5342 for tickets to see Steve Miller and get him to sign a copy of Surfing the Cosmos. Or buy the book online at geditionsllc.com.

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