2015

Getting to Infinity

Jessica Angel

Gianluca Bianchino

Julia Oldham

Travis LeRoy Southworth

Chad Stayrook

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This catalogue accompanies the exhibition “Getting to Infinity,” on view at The Walsh Gallery January 20 - March 13, 2015.

All measurements are in inches, height by width.

All images contained in this catalogue are courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted.

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Getting to Infinity

Tuesday, January 20th through Friday, March 13th, 2015

Jessica Angel
Gianluca Bianchino
Julia Oldham
Travis LeRoy Southworth
Chad Stayrook
Katie Treidl
Eric Valosin

Curated by Jeanne Brasile
What is it about the subject of infinity that captures the human imagination? Perhaps it is the promise embodied in colloquial notions like forever or eternity. As humans, we have an affinity for order that is derived from the condition of constancy. Despite its eternal condition, infinity does not mean fixed. It simply means without a beginning or an end. Infinity is fraught with chaos, change and disorder. Furthermore, infinity itself is not a closed concept. It can encompass many conditions simultaneously or sequentially. So if infinity, in its perpetual state is not constant, why does it occupy our collective conscious to such a degree?

One explanation may be the proliferation of technologies that we use in the course of everyday. The Hubble Telescope, launched in 1990, has sent us images of the far reaches of the universe. Over hundreds of thousands of resulting images found their way into our lives via television, social media and websites. As a result, we have come to adjust our view of the universe and our place within it. Numerous television series like “Through the Wormhole,” “Into the Universe with Stephen Hawking,” and “Cosmos” regularly bring scientific innovations into our lives and collective conscious. We are attracted to the subject of infinity because it provides the opportunity to see back 13 to 14 billion years ago to the beginning of the universe. Conversely, infinity enables us to journey into the infinitesimal to detect sub-atomic particles or create nanobots for medical purposes.

“Getting to Infinity” endeavors to illustrate the many ways infinity can be invoked, manifested and understood using art as the vehicle for transmission. While art is the conveyance of these artistic explorations, the artists infuse the subject within scientific, mathematical and philosophical frameworks that address the subject from a variety of perspectives. The allure of infinity is due to its ability to illuminate concepts, answer previously unanswered questions and catalyze a shift in perception. The artists in this exhibition do this in a variety of ways, invoking infinity as a constant in a subject fraught with inconstancy.

“Limitless Alignment,” Jessica Angel’s site-specific installation, (dis)orients viewers in a celestial sphere with planet earth at its center. The celestial sphere is aligned with Earth’s coordinates so that the equator of the sphere aligns with that on earth, as do the poles and axes. Astronomers use the celestial sphere to plot the distance and position of stars and other bodies within our universe. While Angel is highly interested in astronomical subjects, the celestial sphere also functions at the viewing level to connect visitors with a reality outside their earth-bound perspective to give them the feeling of floating in space.

Similarly, Gianluca Bianchino’s “Field Theory (Singularity),” references astronomical subjects. His depiction of a black hole is comprised of a projection onto a sculptural ground on the gallery walls. The projection and accumulation of materials ringing the composition emulates the event horizon, the boundary around the black hole from which nothing escapes. In the center is the singularity,
a place of extreme gravity at which the matter entering the black hole is crushed inexorably inward, stretching space downward toward infinity. Like Angel, his work is informed by imagery from sources such as the Hubble Telescope.

Julia Oldham frequently collaborates with physicists to create her work. She often describes complex scientific concepts in the attainable format of videos that function like fairy tales or folklore. In her video, “In the Beginning There was Nothing,” Oldham mixes music, drawing and animation to demonstrate the theory of the universe’s creation in the context of animist mythmaking. This tradition of using stories to explain the unexplainable dates to the earliest civilizations on Earth and continues into the present in many cultures and religions. In this instance, Oldham uses the elk as both metaphor and protagonist in her seductive and lushly illustrated tale about The Big Bang.

Travis LeRoy Southworth’s “Continuous Work Drawings (Double Dip)" speaks to the infinitesimal. The drawings, made by tracking the movement of Southworth’s stylus over his tablet while working by day as a photo retoucher, are recorded as simple vectors. When printed, the resulting line drawings resemble particle collisions induced and recorded at the Large Hadron Collider in Cern, Switzerland, which Southworth visited in 2013 for an extended period of study. Each drawing depicts the short duration of time it took to complete the task of editing, while concurrently capturing a specific area of space (both the tablet and source photo.) The practical applications of the Large Hadron Collider will enable physicists to test previously unprovable theories, and explore more complex ideas in particle physics.

Chad Stayrook’s work is often based on his role as an explorer, scientist and researcher in addition to being an artist. These myriad functions bring to mind the corresponding nature of artists and scientists, both of which require intense periods of study, reflection, exploration and experimentation. Stayrook’s “Ejection Seat #3” and “Ejection Seat #4” are installed facing one another, separated by a wall. On each side of the wall, opposite the ejector seats, a video projection emulates movement through space with stars and celestial bodies zipping by at warp speed. Installed so that each side mirrors the other, the work suggests the possibility of multiverses or parallel universes which are thought to be endless in permutation by many in the scientific community.

Katie Treidl’s series “Thirds and Halves” uses the time honored traditions of painting and drawing to explore divisions of space. She was inspired by the idea of Zeno’s Paradox, the Greek philosopher who tried to calculate the conundrum of infinity as it relates to distance over time. Using the premise of a race between a tortoise and the warrior Achilles, Zeno could not resolve mathematically that at a given point, the warrior would overtake the tortoise provided the terrapin had a sizeable head start. In each of the six drawings, Treidl divides space over and over again by either a half or a third, never quite eradicating all the space between the lines that
comprise her compositions, as if replicating Zeno's flawed mathematical equations. However flawed Zeno's attempt to calculate the rate at which Achilles might overtake the tortoise, his beliefs mesh with the pioneering work of Max Planck, a quantum physicist who suggested the idea of infinite divisibility.

"Dissolution (Walsh)" is Eric Valosin's exploration of post-humanist theories exploring the nature of the self and immortality. Using open source software, a camera and a projector, Valosin captures visitors on a ten second delay as they walk past his installation. The imagery is recursive, dissolving into an amalgamated image which, over time, blurs the individual into an unrecognizable collective. The sense of individual is further disaffirmed by the fact the images reside beyond the duration of their visit -- in the form of pixels -- a further negation of the self while positing that immortality, or infinity, can be achieved via digital technologies that extend our lives beyond the physical realm.

Seeing all these permutations of infinity as evinced in this exhibition, it appears that perhaps potential or promise is at the heart of our fascination with the subject. For in all the artwork on display, there lies a commonality in an unknown yet to be discovered. After all, there is no consensus, even among scientists, what infinity is exactly, and how it manifests within the natural laws of the universe. Many of the ideas posited by scientists on the subject of infinity have yet to be proven and are still theories. Infinity offers us the opportunity to reflect upon ourselves and our relationship within the world, the universe and perhaps...beyond.

- Jeanne Brasile, Curator
As Above, So Below
adhesive vinyl on walls, ceiling and floors and life size constructed foam-polyhedrons
10' x 27' x 18'10"
2014
Infinitely Impossible
video
2012
Travis LeRoy Southworth
The Continuous Work Drawings (Double Dip)
75 inkjet prints
each 9.5" x 12", 2012
Ejection Seat #3 + #4 (Shooting for the Stars)
cardboard, hardware, bungee cords, video
8' x 23' x 2'
2015
Dissolution (Walsh)
interactive video projection, latex paint and oil on masonite, original software
48” x 64”
2015
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getting to infinity