

Los Angeles Times

Review: In Julia Haft-Candell's 'infinite' art, the possibilities are, well ...



Julia Haft-Candell's "Infinity: Chain," 2017, black clay and underglaze.
(Jeff McLane)

By LEAH OLLMAN
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6 PM

At the gallery Parrasch Heijnen, Julia Haft-Candell presents a humble, deeply affecting effort to navigate “the absurd excess of the universe,” as poet Jack Gilbert called it — the “endless, endless of going on.”

A show titled “the infinite” has two bodies of work by the Los Angeles artist, one an offshoot and something of a foil to the other. Five ceramic pieces, each titled “Weight,” sit on a single broad pedestal. Then on one of the gallery’s walls, 24 “Infinity” works, also in clay, rest on wedge-shaped shelves, neatly aligned in three long rows. The installation is striking and helps draw out themes of likeness and difference, continuity and opposition.

The “Weight” pieces barely rise above raw matter. Each is a craggy tumult, a modestly scaled mineral event and a chronicle of Haft-Candell’s grip and squeeze. “Weight (Pink, White, Black)” plays on our perceptions of mass and density. Its dark half reads as burnt and anchor-heavy, while its pale side looks light as chalk. All of the pieces are insistently gravity-bound, physical facts arrayed on the horizontal plane of the mortal here and now.



Julia Haft-Candell's "Weight (Pink, White, Black)," 2017, ceramic.
(Jeff McLane)



Installation view of Julia Haft-Candell's show "the infinite" at Parrasch Heijnen Gallery.
(Jeff McLane)

The "Infinity" sculptures possess their own tangible beauty. They face us as a wall of sketched-out ideas, variants on the looping mathematical symbol, itself an abstraction. The figure eight appears not only in its familiar, sideways orientation but also upright, with extra loops or with twisted, loose ends. Haft-Candell assigns a single motif to each sculpture — wave, arch, chain,

eye, weave, knot, braid — and repeats it across the surface, carving away the clay around it in the manner of a woodcut. The images read bone-white against black, the contrast stark and gratifying.

Haft-Candell's earlier work, stream-of-consciousness configurations incorporating fabric, paper, ink, wood, rebar, cement and paper along with clay, encouraged the eye to move restlessly among optical snares. These new sculptures retain a similar sense of informality and irregularity, but they have a new coherence.

Haft-Candell even supplies us with a glossary of terms and symbols, an illustrated guide to the archetypes she employs. All of the symbols derive from the essential forms of dash and torus, or line and ring. Though the dash connotes the masculine and torus the feminine, the binary dissolves as the forms combine and mutate.

What Haft-Candell returns to again and again in her definitions is an overriding relationship of interdependency and fluidity that pertains within the infinite. Tapping into a broader cultural current celebrating intersectionality, Haft-Candell endows her sculptures with the power to affirm a social proposition, an ideal of coexistence.



LOS ANGELES

Julia Haft-CandellPARRASCH HEIJNEN GALLERY

1326 South Boyle Avenue

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A glossary that accompanies this exhibition opens with lines from Ursula K. Le Guin’s introduction to her 1969 novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*: “I am an artist too, and therefore a liar. Distrust everything I say. I am telling the truth.” Julia Haft-Candell’s thirty sculptures similarly operate as a collection of playful hypocrisies, suggesting that the gray area between binaries is more productive terrain than any stable point.

From the “Infinity” series (all works 2017), twenty-four of the symbols, in black clay, rough and burnt-looking, appear in a tight grid of plinths on one gallery wall. The artist observes a strict palette of black and white, and the presentation is similarly meticulous and clinical, offsetting pretzel-like loops, tripled chains, and complicated knots. Each sculpture bears a distinct, tactile pattern, including waves, combs, and arches, which Haft-Candell poetically elaborates on in her glossary. As a counterpoint, the ceramics series “Weights” is arranged on a large platform on the opposite side of the room. Done in pinks, reds, grays, and browns, the “weights” are mossy and sludgy, like renderings of bits of another planet. She details the mythological significance of each shape in her pamphlet, and ascribes historically gendered readings to them. Defining the infinity symbol as masculine and feminine, or a visualization of androgyny, she notes: “Its definition is not fixed, but constantly changing and multiple, embodied in one concept.” Contradictions such as order and disorder, eternity and the here and now, are cleverly coated over the artist’s intention. Here, Le Guin’s *Darkness*, which describes a world of ambisexual inhabitants, underscores sculptures that toy with their identities through layers of meaning.

— Alexandra Pechman

Los Angeles Times

Review: At Parrasch Heijnen Gallery, sculpture and painting go hand in hand



“Interlocking Arch,” 2019, by Julia Haft-Candell. Ceramic, 52.5 inches by 38 inches by 19 inches
(Julia Haft-Candell and Parrasch Heijnen Gallery)

By DAVID PAGEL
APRIL 16, 2019

Two artists’ work exhibited in side-by-side spaces at Parrasch Heijnen Gallery inspires us to see and know more than we’d see and know if we were viewing each artist’s creations separately. The show “Julia Haft-Candell/Suzan Frecon” is magical and gratifying, its back-to-basics title belying the sophistication of everything in it.

Frecon (born 1941) is a New York painter who works on paper, making abstract compositions that are intimate and sensual, tough and understated, taut and expansive. Haft-Candell (born 1982) is a Los Angeles sculptor who works with clay, making figurative forms that are innocent and physical, playful and primitive, gritty and transcendent.

Although Frecon’s six small drawings are installed in the first gallery and Haft-Candell’s nine hefty sculptures in the second, it doesn’t matter where you begin. You end up going forth and back between the two rooms, following your own path, at your own pace.



“Composition in 4-5 Colors With Lapis and Malachite,” 2015, by Suzan Frecon. Watercolor on Japanese handmade paper, 14-1/2 inches by 11-1/8 inches
(Suzan Frecon and Parrasch Heijnen Gallery)



“Burnt-rust Orange Over Red Composition,” 2014, by Suzan Frecon. Watercolor on paper, 15.75 inches by 13.5 inches
(Adam Reich / Suzan Frecon and Parrasch Heijnen Gallery)

Haft-Candell’s sculptures make Frecon’s works on paper look weighty, their patiently painted shapes taking on greater sculptural solidity than their intimate dimensions suggest. And Frecon’s

palette — rusty reds, midnight blues and deep forest greens — draws out the gentle shifts in Haft-Candell's glazes, revealing their surfaces to be covered with an infinite range of colors, from milky white to deep-space black and beach-sand tan to frothy blue.

Similarly, the scraggy textures and furrowed surfaces of Haft-Candell's ceramics attune you to the little wrinkles that have puckered the once-wet surfaces of Frecon's paintings on paper. In turn, those organic accidents alert you to the sheen of each sheet of paper she has used. One is crisp and clean, like freshly starched sheets. Another resembles a hand towel torn from a public dispenser. And a couple are so thick they call to mind tree bark, wood shavings, even veneer. Each type of paper interacts differently with the paints Frecon has layered atop it, creating more depth and presence than immediately meets the eye.



"Swim," 2019, by Julia Haft-Candell. Ceramic, 51 inches by 32.5 inches by 15 inches
(Julia Haft-Candell and Parrasch Heijnen Gallery)



“Folded Slab: Rose, Slate,” 2019, by Julia Haft-Candell. Ceramic, 18.5 inches by 25.5 inches by 17 inches
(Ed Mumford / Julia Haft-Candell and Parrasch Heijnen Gallery)

Similar subtleties animate Haft-Candell’s sculptures. Many recall common bodily experiences, like kneading dough when it’s too wet and gets stuck between your fingers. Or slipping your hand into a well-worn catcher’s mitt and smacking it with your fist. Or using your hand to cast a shadow whose silhouette resembles an animal. Or simply interlinking your fingers with those of someone you love.

That gesture takes larger-than-lifesize form in Haft-Candell’s “Interlocking Arch.” But it also describes how the two artists’ bodies of work function as one, cooperating and collaborating while leaving each free to be itself.