

In the galleries: Artechouse's 'Infinite Space' has waves of natural influences

By Mark Jenkins

August 9

The centerpieces of “Infinite Space,” media artist Refik Anadol’s retrospective at Artechouse, include a virtual sea of data, aptly titled “Bosphorus.” This and two other video projections ebb and flow in the venue’s main room, whose walls serve as two-story screens. Yet the installations that just might sweep viewers away are smaller ones in the side rooms of the digital-art venue.

In its two years of operation, Artechouse has often exhibited high-tech simulations of natural phenomena. Computer-generated cherry blossoms and autumn leaves have cascaded on the towering screens. Anadol, a Turkey-bred Los Angeles artist, incorporates ocean currents and real-time meteorological reports into his visual collages, but he works mostly in black and white and doesn’t imitate organic forms. Nature information is interlaced with images from the International Space Station and photographs and documents from a Turkish historical archive.

All of the data is from public sources and thus available on any device with Internet access. The 150 million bits of commonly shared knowledge used in this show are, in a sense, found objects. The goal, Anadol says, is “to make the invisible visible with algorithms.”

Although “Bosphorous” and its companion pieces are vast enough to immerse the observer, two other attractions really deliver on the show’s title, which is a reference to William Blake. (“If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is — infinite,” the poet wrote.) To the left, the hallway that leads to Artechouse’s media lab has been transformed into a “Data Tunnel”; on the right is an “Infinity Room.” Both combine algorithmically generated light and sound with a more venerable technology: mirrors. The floors, ceilings and walls are all reflective.

Intentionally disorienting, Anadol’s simulations of endlessness undermine the participant’s depth perception by projecting ever-changing white lines on the mirrored surfaces. The light drawings may march in rigid mathematical patterns or switch to fluid undulations. They can appear close or distant, beckoning or imprisoning. Adopting a fetal position is optional, but crouching inside the “Infinity Room” suggests gestating in a cyborg’s womb.

Anadol is not the first post-painting artist to toy with perspective, updating a technique originally meant to enhance realism so that it instead produces psychedelic visions. He follows Yayoi Kusama and James Turrell, who employed mirrors and lights to collapse the viewer’s sense of place. To their innovations, Anadol adds real-

world data that appears to shimmer and surge. Anyone who gets swept under is drowning, not in fantasy, but in actuality.

***Infinite Space** Through Sept. 2 at Artechouse, 1238 Maryland Ave. SW.*

Summer shows

Slow periods lead to busy walls at local galleries, where summer group exhibitions showcase dozens of artists. There's no particular method to these surveys, although most of this year's feature examples of an intriguing series.

Hemphill Fine Arts' "Summer Show 2019" includes two eye-popping prints by Linling Lu in which her trademark targets, composed of rings of pure color in varying widths, are supplemented by lineups of dots. There's one small circle with each of the hues employed in the main piece, an act of deconstruction that also yields a handsome design.

Also at Hemphill are fine abstractions by such contemporary local painters as Ryan Crotty, Steve Cushner, Robin Rose and Julie Wolfe, interspersed with the work of color-field precursors including Thomas Downing, Paul Reed and Alma Woodsey Thomas. Teetering on the edge of abstraction is an evocative William Christenberry encaustic that can be read as pure form or as a distilled landscape.

Susan Calloway Fine Arts' "Summer Interlude" features Matthew Langley's "A Painting a Day" series of stripe pictures, essentially sketches for larger works such as the assured, precisely rendered "Port of Call." The other artists are David Bell and Karen Silve, who make exuberant abstractions, and Leslie Nolan, whose brushwork is equally free but figurative.

Four of Sarah Dolan's pictures of 100 things important to her infant daughter are among the many modestly sized offerings in Adah Rose Gallery's "Charmed, I'm Sure." The smallish venue has papered its walls with artworks, some of which will rotate. There's much patterned abstraction, including Lisa Rosenstein's circular torn-paper collage and Joe Shetler's blue-pencil grid of squares and diamonds. Less orderly are a thickly impastoed Wayson Jones miniature and a vivid Hyegyeong Choi picture that juxtaposes realist and abstract modes.

The selection also includes a few works whose technique, and sometimes subject matter, are traditional. Jay Birch painstakingly depicts a woodpecker and Sarah Jameson remakes a detail from the Sistine Chapel, while Timothy Verneulyn renders a modern "Sisyphus" whose milieu is suburban and whose curse is ecological. The artist's Renaissance-style method, which entails multiple layers of translucent glazes, heightens the satirical incongruity.

Addison/Ripley Fine Art's "Summer Selections" offers prints by 25 artists, most of whom show regularly at the gallery. These include traditional lithographs and woodblocks as well as computer-generated imagery and photos such as one of Frank Hallam Day's close-ups of a ship's hull, its metallic tones a symphony of rust.

As at Adah Rose, orderly abstract designs are common. Tom Green writes aqua glyphs on two shades of brown, Mira Hecht arrays circles and figure-eights, Carol Brown Goldberg interlocks repeated patterns and Dan Treado splits vine-like forms across a two-part composition. Sometimes foreground and background merge: Dan Rizzie outlines a chair on a wood-grained field, and David Shapiro's delicate forms nearly fuse with handmade paper. In these elegant prints, the motif is the message.

Summer Show 2019 Through Aug. 23 at Hemphill Fine Arts, 1515 14th St. NW. **Summer Interlude** Through Aug. 27 at Susan Calloway Fine Arts, 1643 Wisconsin Ave. NW. **Charmed, I'm Sure** Through Aug. 31 at Adah Rose Gallery, 3766 Howard Ave., Kensington. **Summer Selections** Through Aug. 23 at Addison/Ripley Fine Art, 1670 Wisconsin Ave. NW.

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