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Julia Haft Candell Confounds The Infinite At Parrasch Heijnen Gallery

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After seeing its fabulous Peter Alexander sculpture retrospective last Summer, Parrasch Heijnen Gallery is on my “must visit” gallery list. The current solo exhibition *Julia Haft-Candell: The Infinite* is an example of the virtuosity that this gallery maintains.

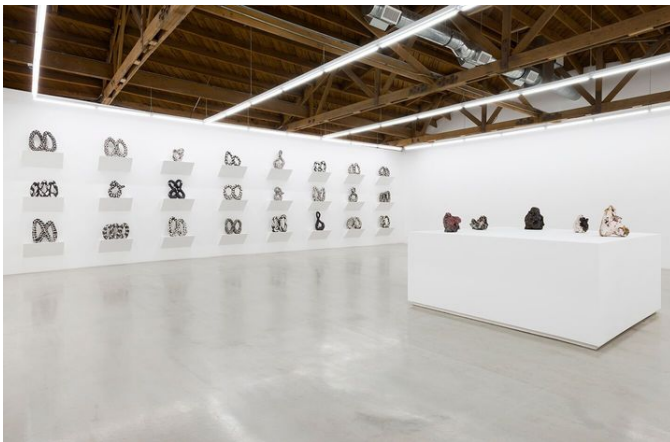
An exhibition comprised of new ceramic work, the show is divided into three neat sections beginning with a stunning take on the infinite. Alone in the first gallery and dramatically viewed from an elevated platform at the gallery’s entrance, one descends to approach *Wall Infinity: Weave* where spectacle meets reverence. What starts off as a reductive symbol slowly transforms into something more complex, stretching indeed toward the infinite. An assemblage of small porcelain plates forms the sign for infinity, but underglazed onto the symbol is a meandering weave pattern that neither begins nor finishes on the object. Infinity indeed.

Much of what the artist is attempting in this show is to create forms that assert ambiguity (*a paradox in itself, really*). The infinity symbol contains lines that come and go, it is assembled (*impressively*) as a series of separate small plates, roughly matching at each edge to continue the form. Avoiding that holy grail quest for perfection that slays so many reductive artists, Haft-Candell gives everything she makes a textured, handled touch.



Installation shot of Julia Haft-Candell's *Wall Infinity: Weave*, 2017 (porcelain and underglaze) on the right at Parrasch Heijnen Gallery.

In the second room, a larger space at Parrasch Heijnen, the artist presents two quite different bodies of work. On the North wall are twenty-four shelves containing a rather loopy array of black & white ceramic constructions. Each harkens to one of a few simple, primal shapes, imperfectly repeated here. An accompanying newsprint zine assembled by the artist goes through the litany of these forms and the details behind each of their glyph-like patterning. Each of these sculptures are masterpieces of the unresolved, functionless vessels with symbology and form merged on surface and in essence. One has to summon the poetic to deal with the absurd, and the rhythms of these undulating pieces inspire more than prose. Contrasting to the evidence of their all-too-human formation is the clean presentation from Parrasch Heijnen, installing individual precise trapezoidal shelves to accommodate the artist's visionary impulses.



Part three of the exhibit features a large platform holding five sculptures each titled *Weight*. These mounds of clay sitting as primary forces have vague splashes of chroma in the otherwise black & white show. And yet the color simply neutralizes the earthen tones of the clay, a subtle delivery of the message of nuance which resonates throughout this show. An association of these works with Peter Voulkos is inevitable, while her twenty four works against the wall seem formal heirs to Ken Price. It is no accident then that Haft-Candell is showing with Parrasch Heijnen whose website lists the late Price and Voulkos as their gallery artists. Both of these giants have had well-received shows at the Los Angeles space despite it having been open less than two years.



Considering the presence of these two masters of the clay medium, Haft-Candell holds her own. In one modest exhibition she has a few major accomplishments: First, she establishes a wild pictographic language (*applied with underglazing on black clay*); she works to consistently make the enigmatic tangible in all her finished pieces, which finally makes even the reductive dichotomy of black & white into something more cryptic. Julia Haft-Candell is among the leading ceramic artists of her generation - this exhibit is the right art in the right place at the right time.



Julia Haft-Candell • *Becoming Infinity: Faces*, 2017, black clay and underglaze, 15" x 16" x 7"

The show runs thru September 2.