

The background features a dark, textured surface. A complex geometric pattern is overlaid, consisting of a grid of thin, light-colored lines. A prominent feature is a large, curved, wireframe sphere that appears to be partially cut off by the right edge of the frame. The sphere's lines are dense and create a mesh-like structure. A horizontal line of slightly thicker lines runs across the middle of the image, intersecting the sphere. A vertical line runs down the left side, also intersecting the sphere. The overall aesthetic is technical and architectural.

INFINITUDE

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Gallery 360, October 21, 2021 - January 22, 2022

Larry Achiampong / Mónica Alcázar-Duarte / Josh Begley
Chitra Ganesh / Sofia Karim / Katie Paterson

Infinitude presents works by six visual artists, each of whose vision is turned toward the future. How is the future being shaped? By, and for, whom?

The exhibition takes its title from nineteenth-century New England author Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose influential notion of the “infinite of private man” championed the limitless potential of the self-reliant individual, freed from societal constraint. “Infinitude” also conjures both the vast scale of the galaxy, and the seemingly boundless reaches of technology and personal ambition driving the contemporary space race.

Fueled by the unfettered individualism of the super-rich, the surly bonds of earth no longer constrain the ambitions of private capital, nor conform to legal jurisdictions across its terrestrial and cosmic terrain. As plans for planetary colonization proceed at pace, in tandem with military and corporate enterprise, *Infinitude* pauses to look at how art is responding to these expanded frontiers. Selected works critique the colonial imperative underpinning this new frontierism. They also offer alternative renderings of the future – of destinies which may yet manifest differently.

As part of her ongoing project *Ascension*, **Mónica Alcázar-Duarte** works with film, installation, and augmented reality to examine how the potential terraforming of Mars is modeled on the tiny south-Atlantic volcanic island. Ascension Island was the location from which NASA tracked the Apollo moon landings, and is today still controlled by space agency interests. In the nineteenth century, it was the site of a vast ecological experiment inspired by Charles Darwin and effected by Joseph Hooker (director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, England) to introduce foreign species of flora and fauna to make the island habitable, with unseen consequences that continue to imperil native species and ecosystems. In the three-channel video *Ikamo Tlalli – Earthless* (2021), narrated in her family’s indigenous Mexican Nahuatl language, Alcázar-Duarte considers whether progress and contentment must necessarily be pitted against one another.

Josh Begley, in *Amnesia Express* (2021), uses archival sampling of a range of media materials to reframe the soaring astro-adventures of contemporary techno-kings like Jeff Bezos, set alongside the ecological, socio-economic, and political turmoil playing out across our earth-bound terrain. The work incorporates scenes from the film *Black Wax* (1982), in which singer-songwriter Gil Scott-Heron performs his spoken word poem *Whitey on the Moon* (1970) in Washington DC’s Wax Museum nightclub, surrounded by prominent waxwork historical figures, US flags, and, overhead, an astronaut. Scott-Heron’s searing lyrics reveal how little has changed in the starkness of US inequality since the 1969 moon landing: “I can’t pay no doctor bill. (but Whitey’s on the moon) / Ten years from now I’ll be payin’ still. (while Whitey’s on the moon)..”

Below: ‘Mars on the Beach,’ film still from Mónica Alcázar-Duarte’s *Ikamo Tlalli – Earthless*, 2021, three-channel video installation. Image courtesy of the artist.





Top: Chitra Ganesh, *Prophecy*, 2019, screenprint. Image courtesy of the artist.

Bottom left: Chitra Ganesh, *The Fortuneteller*, from the series *Architects of the Future*, 2014, screenprint. Image courtesy of the artist.

Bottom right: Chitra Ganesh, *Away From the Watcher*, from the series *Architects of the Future*, 2014, screenprint. Image courtesy of the artist.



Top: Josh Begley, film still from *Amnesia Express*, 2021, two-channel video. Image courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Larry Achiampong, film still from *Relic 3*, from the multi-disciplinary project *Relic Traveller: Phase 2*, 2019, 4k video. Courtesy of Larry Achiampong, Copperfield, London and LUX, London.

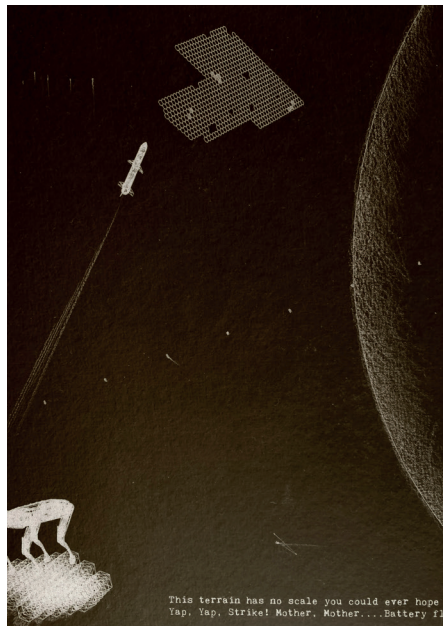
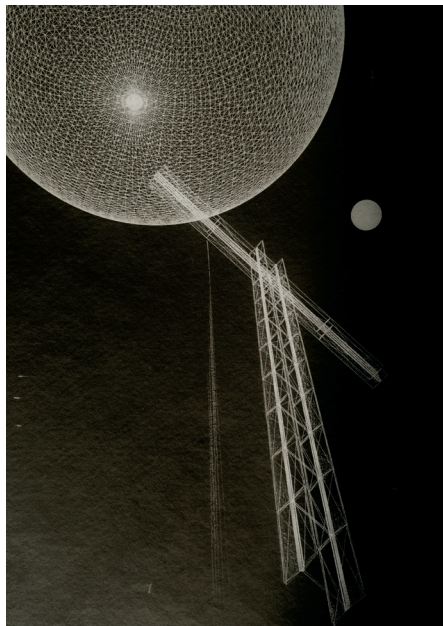


Works by **Chitra Ganesh** and **Larry Achiampong** share an aesthetic of futurity inspired by myth, history, speculative fiction, and graphic novels. Ganesh offers a feminist queering of the science fiction genre, in dialogue with non-linear Indian epic traditions and appropriated Hindu and Buddhist iconography. Instead of being built on expansion, resource extraction, and subjugation, in *Prophecy* (2019) we encounter a future envisioned by a powerful female figure in which both the natural and built environment appear mutually constitutive and fluid. Themes of sight and insight – the ability to see beyond one’s immediate material reality, and thus be freed to imagine otherwise – are reinforced by the appearance of the lotus flower, a symbol of enlightenment.

Achiampong invests the future with a necessary attendance to the colonial past. In his multi-disciplinary project *Relic Traveller*, haunted with histories of migration, British colonialism, and the contemporary rise of ethnonationalism represented by the Brexit referendum of 2016, Achiampong imagines a future in which the global West is in a state of decline, while the African Union (which, also in 2016, established a passport program that anticipates the potential opening of borders across the continent) takes the lead in shaping Earth’s future. The Union’s vision for responsible governance is shaped by the findings of the Relic Travellers’ Alliance, a team sent to space to recover the testimonies of the historically oppressed.

Left: Sofia Karim, *Lita’s House – Gallows* (ফাঁসির মঞ্চ) / IV, 2020, photographic drawing. Image courtesy of the artist.

Right: Sofia Karim, *Pegasus spyware, Digital Dog I*, 2020, photographic drawing. Image courtesy of the artist.



The milky way
compressed
into a diamond

Above: Katie Paterson, *Ideas (The milky way compressed into a diamond)*, 2019. Micro waterjet cut sterling silver. © Katie Paterson 2021. Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York.

Sofia Karim insists, similarly, on listening to the voices of the silenced and marginalized. In *Lita’s House*, Karim’s meticulous cosmologies present a form of reaching, seeking, and reclaiming freedom for those oppressed by authoritarian regimes in India and Bangladesh. Karim advocates for activists, artists, students, journalists, singers, poets and intellectuals who have been jailed or disappeared for pursuing freedom of expression. Using the tools of her disciplinary training in architecture, Karim pushes this language towards an architecture of disappearance, understanding space as a site for struggle or resistance; a way to explore human loss.

Finally, **Katie Paterson’s** word-images, rendered in waterjet-cut sterling silver, give shimmering form to thought experiments across time and space: “A map of galaxies still to come” / “Precious jewels returned to their place on earth” / “The universe rewound and played back in real time.” Both playful and provocative, these works invite viewers to conjure their own ontology: to consider what it might take to undo earthly damages wrought, and to manifest a future, otherwise.

Curated by Max Houghton and David Birkin of Visible Justice (University of the Arts London) in collaboration with Northeastern University consulting curator Amy Halliday and Distinguished Professor of Law Patricia Williams.



Above: Augmented reality image from *The New Colonists* by Mónica Alcázar-Duarte. Download the AR app using the QR code below and hover over the image to see more. Image courtesy of the artist.

Front Cover: Sofia Karim, *Lita's House - Gallows* (ফাঁসির মঞ্চ) / I (detail), 2020, photographic drawing. Image courtesy of the artist.

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