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

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

**Leah Ollman**

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.

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.