Finding Aid for The Journey from Zero to Infinity works of art 0300

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USC Libraries Special Collections
Doheny Memorial Library 206
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2012
Title: The Journey from Zero to Infinity works of art
Collection number: 0300
Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Storage Unit: 1-10
Physical Description: 3.0 Linear feet
Date: 2009
Abstract: In the fall of 2009, USC's Doheny Memorial Library held an exhibition of twenty framed works of art created by Victor Raphael and Clayton Spada, the artists being inspired by rare works from USC Libraries' Special Collections. When the exhibition was over, ten of the pieces were retained by the USC Fisher Museum of Art; the remaining ten became part of USC Libraries' Special Collections.
creator: Raphael, Victor, 1950-
creator: Spada, Clayton
Source of Acquisition
Collection was purchased from the artists.
Other Works in the Exhibition
The following works of art were part of the exhibition The Journey from Zero to Infinity but are part of the USC Fisher Museum of Art rather than Doheny's Special Collections:
Bubble Chamber
By Design
Elliptic Plane
Genesis
Meditations
Odyssey
Pioneer Greeting
Solar Currents
Space-Time
Spiral Nebula
Scope and Contents
The collection consists of ten works of art by Victor Raphael and Clayton Spada, displayed in the "From Zero to Infinity: The Story of Everything", USC Libraries, September 3-December 13, 2009. The remaining ten works of art from the exhibition were sent to the USC Fisher Museum of Art at the conclusion of the show.
Conditions Governing Use
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Conditions Governing Access
Advance notice required for access.
Historical Note
In 2009, USC's Doheny Memorial Library held an exhibition which examined the idea of telling "the story of everything." The twenty artworks on display were the result of hundreds of hours of philosophical dialogue and artistic collaboration between Victor Raphael and Clayton Spada. Their primary focus was understanding how individuals make sense of their roles within the vast structure of the cosmos. Following intellectual wanderers who have traced similar threads in a limitless web of knowledge, they investigated fields as diverse as astronomy, religion, mythology and alchemy for visual inspiration.
They began by establishing a philosophical framework for their creative process, determining which areas of thought warranted further exploration. This body of ideas guided them as they started gathering a reservoir of visual imagery for their digital compositions, incorporating elements from woodcuts, engravings, etchings, and lithographs. They discovered many of the visual elements in the "From Zero to Infinity" series in rare works from the USC Libraries' Special Collections.
As they created their artworks, Raphael and Spada sent many digital files back and forth between their studios. Raphael initiated the process by using a Polaroid camera to create an abstract image and applying metal leaf onto its surface. After

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scanning the altered Polaroid, he then sent the file to Spada, who used Adobe Photoshop to modify it and layer other visual elements on top of it. He then sent the image back to Raphael for further tinkering. The artists spent up to years on some of their pieces before they were satisfied, and the printing process could begin. Through it all, Raphael and Spada shared a common conceptual framework that guided their dynamic artistic collaborations.

Their composition "Problema X" offers a window into their creative process. Beginning with an image that resembles a side view of a spherical, dust-clouded galaxy, they added visual elements from a sixteenth-century Spanish astronomical treatise by Juan Perez de Moya and a work on probability by the seventeenth-century Swiss mathematician Jakob Bernoulli. In the center they included a striking image from a German test about Hindu cosmology, showing giant creatures supporting the entirety of existence on their backs. The combination of elements explores the underlying structure of the universe while asking questions about how much we can really know about it. Although we want to find regularity and order in what we observe, how reliable can our perceptions be?

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
- Raphael, Victor, 1950- -- Exhibitions
- Spada, Clayton -- Exhibitions
- USC Fisher Museum of Art. -- Archives
- Cosmology in art--Exhibitions--Archival resources
- Cosmos--Pictorial works
- Digital prints
- Works of art

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**Above Reason**

**Scope and Contents**

Science is a system of knowledge concerning the physical world and its phenomena. It is based on empirical observations of the natural world and the conclusions drawn from those observations. Despite this rigorous process of question and analysis, the majority of the world’s populations seek answers to questions that are beyond reason or rationality. Since science cannot provide answers to inquiries of a purely philosophical nature, this quest for existential truth assumes sometimes sublime and sometimes ridiculous proportions.

**Aerial Navigation**

**Scope and Contents**

In 1783, two brother’s names Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Etienne Montogolfier inaugurated the era of human flight with a 3,000-foot high balloon ride near Paris. The following year, a fellow Frenchman name Jean-Pierre Blanchard invented the dirigible, a steerable balloon that was a forerunner to blimps and Zeppelins. The twentieth century saw a boom in aviation, from the 1903 historic flight by the Wright brothers to the 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing. The lattice of the sliver-bearing mineral stephanite, seen here in light blue, is reminiscent of navigational maps.

**Beneath the Surface**

**Scope and Contents**

Devotees of astrology assert that our lives are governed by the positions of the planets and starts in relation to Earth. They also believe the precise locations and time of our birth provides the key determination for many of our actions. While scientists reject such claims, there is evidence that suggests our biology and psychology are connected to the broader environment in ways that might seems inscrutable or illogical to our rational senses.
Diaspora
Scope and Contents
Ever since our forebears leaned to walk upright in Eastern Africa nearly four million years ago, voluntary or involuntary migrations have been a part of our life. A population that has been separated from its ancestral homeland is considered to have undergone a diaspora. Often these people carry their language and cultural traditions with them to their new location. The earliest historical mention of a diaspora is found in Deuteronomy 28:25, in reference to the Jewish colonies settled outside the holy land following the Babylonian exile.

Emanations
Scope and Contents
The universe is filled with a very faint flow of radio waves that astronomers believe are the fingerprints from the Big Bang. For some time after the cataclysmic event, all of the space was filled with light. Over eons, these photons, while still observable, have grown steadily fainter, leading scientists to dub them “relic radiation.” Japanese tradition holds that anyone who bathes in the energy of the multi-limbed deity Quanwon will vibrate with harmony with the universe and experience a less complicated life.

Final Causes
Scope and Contents
The earlier illustrations by humans on cave walls were likely made from directly observable phenomena. The Egyptians made a conceptual leap with their ability to artistically represent abstract ideas, such as their pantheon of gods. Before the scientific revolution began around 1500, priests, astrologers, alchemists, and philosophers all claimed to have the answers to the working of the universe. One might argue that in illustrations of real or imagine experiences one can find a broader understanding of the natural world and the final causes of all things.

Origins
Scope and Contents
The question of how the universe came into being is addressed in nearly every world religion. Some Taoists believe a creator god broke forth from the Cosmic Egg, spilling forth light and darkness, expressed graphically as the yin-yang symbol. Numerous other creation narratives posit an omnipotent being as an architect of all existence. Many physicists such as Albert Einstein, Richard Feynman, and Stephen Hawking have worked on establishing a grand theory of everything that would unify the files of electromagnetism, space-time, the nuclear forces, and gravity.

Problema X
Scope and Contents
Much advanced scientific work in the past few decades has been focused on macrocosmic questions about the underlying structure of the universe, such as how it all came into being and what our ultimate fate might be. While the three-dimensional world we can observe seems governed by established physical laws, such equations break down in the face of infinitesimally small objects like quarks or infinitely powerful ones like black holes.

The Journey
Scope and Contents
In this work, a running human figure from an aboriginal petro glyph is situated within an illustration depicting planetary phases relative to the Sun. The figure is on a journey through life, pulled along as if attached to a puppeteer’s strings. In the background can be seen characters from the language of the Micmac, a large Native American tribe that lived in Canada and the Northeast United States. A European missionary invented the pictographic script, which is structured similarly to Egyptian hieroglyphics.
Tree of Life

Scope and Contents

The Tree of Life is a mystical concept alluding to the interconnectedness of all life on our planet. This tree, in the form of ten interconnected nodes, is an important part of the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah. A representation of a tree is used in genealogy to distinguish familial relationships and in biology to group animals into related units. The scientists who first employed this arboreal motif may have been on to something. When greatly magnified, the twisted helix structure of DNA, which carries our genetic identity, appears to have the solidity of a tree trunk.