

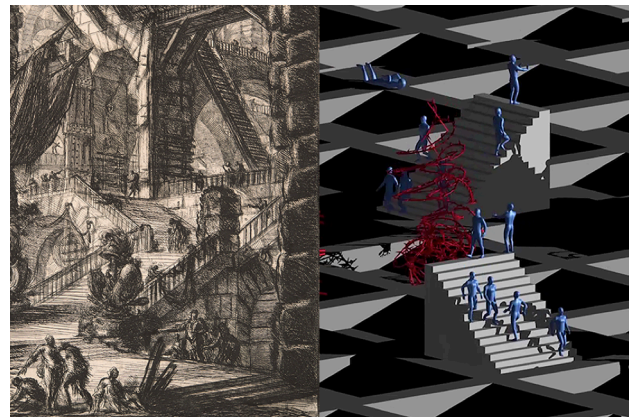
Unbearable Infinite

Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Gregory Bennett

November 3 – December 22 2018

Opening Reception
Saturday, November 3, 2018
6 - 9 pm

AA|LA is pleased to present *Unbearable Infinite*, an exhibition examining the conceptual overlap of printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) and New Zealand-based video artist Gregory Bennett. The exhibition features five works from Piranesi's series *Carceri d'Invenzione (Imaginary Prisons)* alongside three of Bennett's video artworks. Though separated by over three centuries, together, the imagined realities of Piranesi and Bennett bridge anxieties of past and present.



Unbearable Infinite presents parallel renderings of imagined and monumental prison structures. Ideologically, these spaces evoke a sense of confinement, yet Piranesi and Bennett both locate the infinite within a landscape of limitation. Their paradoxical exploration of the infinite draws upon Kant's definition of the sublime. Viewers are invited to survey the incomprehensibility of limitless space.

In Piranesi's work, staircases appear to extend upwards from the cavernous prisons without end. Bennett's videos begin and end in a void; details build as the videos progress; plants quadruple in size; mannequins intertwine to form massive mechanic organisms. The spatial-temporal looping of the videos traps the viewer in a reality without bounds.

Prisoners held captive inside overwhelming architecture portray the hellishness of modern-day urban life. The figures in Piranesi's prints are unidentifiable, completely obscured by dark shadows permeating the architectural structures. Similarly, Bennett's three videos present the viewer with bleak playgrounds situated within vast landscapes of darkness. These environments are inhabited by

homogenous figures, allowing viewers to envision themselves engaging in these ever-repeating, quotidian tasks.

The artists' chosen mediums echo the impression of the infinite within the works, as both print and video are easily accessible and reproducible without constraints. The infinite and the unbearable converge with the realization that humans have shared the same anxieties across centuries. Despite the exhibition's underlying terror, *Unbearable Infinite* seeks to illuminate the possibilities that can be found within these vast realities. Together, the works of Piranesi and Bennett can bring us to a state of catharsis, with the realization that within the infinite there is room to simply exist.

Curated by Ari Lipkis

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) was one of the giants of engraving. During his own lifetime, Piranesi was best known for the *Vedute*, a series of 137 prints depicting views of ancient and modern Rome. His designs were highly collectible and are the epitome of neoclassical taste, helping to spread the style across Europe. Today he remains best known for the *Carceri d'Invenzione* (*Imaginary Prisons*) a series of 16 prints begun in 1745 and printed during his lifetime in two editions. Piranesi's lasting impact continues to be felt by artists and designers today.

Gregory Bennett is an artist who works with 3D animation, motion capture, projection mapping, interactive media and virtual reality. He has exhibited both nationally and internationally. He has a Masters degree from the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, New Zealand and has been teaching at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in the School of Art and Design since 2011, where he established the first courses in motion capture. He is currently Head of Department for Digital Design and Visual Arts at the AUT School of Art and Design, and also Director of AUT Motion Capture Lab.

