

**JOSIAH MCELHENY'S *ISLAND UNIVERSE* OPENS TODAY AT THE MOODY CENTER FOR THE ARTS
AT RICE UNIVERSITY**



Josiah McElheny, *Island Universe*, 2008. Photo by Todd-White Art Photography, London

HOUSTON, TX [February 2, 2018] —The Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University opens its spring exhibition program today, featuring *Island Universe* by MacArthur-award-winning artist Josiah McElheny (b. 1966). Rarely seen, this monumental installation of five hanging sculptures is a visual exploration of theoretical physicist Andrei Linde's multiverse scenario of eternal inflation—an extension of the Big Bang theory. The artist worked with cosmologist David Weinberg (Ohio State University) for five years to conceive a conceptually rigorous installation that is both visually stunning and carefully constructed according to measurements that map the history of time. Each sculpture represents a potential universe whose dense origin expands outwards, ending in quasars and clusters of glass galaxies.

Made of chromed metal, transparent handblown glass, and lights, the structures are modeled on an iconic midcentury design object: the chandeliers of the Metropolitan Opera in New York made by J. & L. Lobmeyr in Vienna in 1965. That year, the first physical evidence for the Big Bang theory—cosmic microwave background

(CMB) radiation—became public, launching popular interest in space science. Importantly for the artist, it was also a moment when historic theories of modernism began to shift away from a linear narrative of progress to a multi-valent exploration of inherited knowledge, frequently termed post-modernism. Questioning our relationship to history is central to McElheny's practice.

McElheny's 23-minute film of the same title will be shown concurrently with the exhibition in the Moody's Beth Herlin '13 Studio Gallery. Created on location at the Metropolitan Opera in New York using Super 8 16 mm, the film features an original soundtrack by Australian musician Paul Schütze. Each of its five sections explores the types of theoretical universes included in the installation. The aural and visual rhythms of each universe develop and shift in accordance with scientific theories about parallel universes while contributing to a mesmerizing visual tableau.

"*Island Universe* operates at the intersection of art, science, and the humanities. It questions our understanding of the natural world, our place within it, and our ability to shape the universe going forward. The critical and far-reaching intellectual questions underpinning McElheny's practice reflect the Moody's overall mission to generate interdisciplinary dialogue through the arts, and promises to foster engaging conversations in the months ahead," says Alison Weaver, the Suzanne Deal Booth Executive Director of the Moody.

Island Universe is organized in coordination with Rice University's School of Humanities. On March 20, 21, and 22 at 6:00 pm, McElheny will deliver the prestigious three-night Campbell Lecture Series. Part lecture and part performance, the third night will include legendary jazz musician Joe McPhee (b. 1939) and will be followed by a reception. *Island Universe* is on view in the Brown Foundation Gallery through June 2, 2018. Both the exhibition and the lectures are free and open to the public.

About the Artist

Josiah McElheny is a New York-based sculptor, performance artist, writer, and filmmaker best known for his use of glass with other materials. Through sculpture, writing, performance, and film, Josiah McElheny investigates the history of twentieth-century modernism in hopes of expanding on the dominant historical narratives of art, aesthetics, design, and architecture, and the criticality of our relationship to them. Recognized for his conceptually rigorous approach, and a physical mastery of materials, such as glass, McElheny explores vastly-ranging topics from astronomical cosmology and the infinite, to under-recognized artists or oeuvres. His practice mines the past to lay the groundwork for a path forward, giving a glimpse into not only what could have been, but visions for what might be.

McElheny has exhibited widely including two major survey exhibitions, *Towards a Light Club* at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2013), and *Some Pictures of the Infinite* at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston, Massachusetts (2012), as well as exhibitions at The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2009), Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2008), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2007), Madison Square Park, New York (2017), and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007). He has written for such publications as *Artforum*, *Cabinet*, and *Bomb Magazine*. In addition to monographs on his works and exhibitions, McElheny has created and edited numerous book projects of new scholarship and research, including: *The Light Club* published by the University of Chicago Press (2010); *Interiors*, a reader co-edited by Johanna Burton and Lynne Cooke, published by CCS Bard and Sternberg Press (2012), and *Glass! Love!! Perpetual Motion!!!: A Paul Scheerbart Reader* co-edited with Christine Burgin and published by the University of Chicago Press and Christine Burgin (2014). In 2006 he was the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. He was the 2013 Teiger Mentor in the Arts at Cornell University, a senior critic in sculpture at the Yale School of Art and continues as a mentor at Columbia University School of the Arts. He is currently the 2017-2018 Keith L. and Katherine S. Sachs Visiting Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design.

About the Moody Center for the Arts

Inaugurated in February 2017, the Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University is a state-of-the-art, noncollecting institution dedicated to transdisciplinary collaboration among the arts, sciences and humanities. The 50,000-square-foot facility, designed by acclaimed Los Angeles-based architect Michael Maltzan, serves as an experimental platform for creating and presenting works in all disciplines, a flexible teaching space to encourage new modes of making and a forum for creative partnerships with visiting national and international artists. The Moody is free and open to the public year-round.

Website: moody.rice.edu
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Address: Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University
6100 Main Street, MS-480, Houston, TX 77005
(University Entrance 8, at University Boulevard and Stockton Street)

Hours & Admission:

The exhibition spaces are open to the public and free of charge Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 5pm, and closed Sundays, Mondays, and holidays. Events and programs are open to the public through an advance reservation system. For schedule, tickets and prices, visit moody.rice.edu.

Directions & Parking:

The Moody Center for the Arts is located on the campus of Rice University, and is best reached by using Campus Entrance 8 at the intersection of University Boulevard and Stockton Street. As you enter campus, the building is on the right, just past the Media Center. There is a dedicated parking lot adjacent to the building. Payment for the Moody Lot is by credit card only. For campus maps, visit www.rice.edu/maps.

About Rice University

Located on a 300-acre forested campus in Houston, Rice University is consistently ranked among the nation's top 20 universities by U.S. News & World Report. Rice has highly respected schools of Architecture, Business, Continuing Studies, Engineering, Humanities, Music, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences and is home to the Baker Institute for Public Policy. With 3,879 undergraduates and 2,861 graduate students, Rice's undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio is 6-to-1. Its residential college system builds close-knit communities and lifelong friendships, just one reason why Rice is ranked No. 1 for quality of life and for lots of race/class interaction and No. 2 for happiest students by the Princeton Review. Rice is also rated as a best value among private universities by Kiplinger's Personal Finance. Read "[What they're saying about Rice.](#)"

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