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Lia Halloran: 'Warped Side'  
*Engaging with the Language of Abstraction*  
Luis de Jesus Los Angeles  
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by Jody Zellen



*Warped Side* is an exhibition of selected images from the newly-released publication *The Warped Side of Our Universe: An Odyssey through Black Holes, Wormholes, Time Travel and Gravitational Waves*, a collaboration between the visual artist Lia Halloran and the Nobel Prize-winning astrophysicist Kip Thorne. The book is the culmination of more than ten years of friendship and working together resulting in 500 plus drawings and discussions to “mobilize science, art and poetry to explore aspects of the universe that many people are curious about: black holes, wormholes and other strange phenomena.” The images on view (mostly blue ink on drafting film) depict swirling vortexes and even imagined voyages through black holes as experienced by Halloran’s wife who is pictured in many of these evocative representations of the world beyond and the surprising forces of nature.

In her site-specific installations as well as smaller scaled works, Halloran has experimented with a wide range of media (drawings, paintings, photographic cyanotypes) to create works that explore relationships between the body and various scientific principles. These include investigations of scientific classification systems as well as our solar system. Her works are seductive and extremely impactful when seen from afar and upon closer examination, the nuances of her chosen subject matter become evident.

In this exhibition, many of the smaller works are hung on a single wall that has been painted a deep blue and extend across it in a sequence that becomes a long, flattened rhombus. As viewers move from left to right, from single, to double or triple hung images, they can piece together an implied narrative about a journey, perhaps from Earth to unknown worlds. Halloran uses different hues and opacities of the color cyan to paint concentric circles and intersecting lines that become planets, starbursts, vortexes, funnels and black holes. Some of these works on paper, including *WS115*, *WS116*, *WS117* and *WS118* (2016), depict a long-haired female figure engaging with, emerging from, or spinning around vortexes and orbs that could be the Earth or another planet.

Seen outside the context of the book, these celestial drawings are devoid of text and visually they suggest the vastness of space and the beauty of the unknown. Whether imagined or illustrated, scientific principles or telescopic observations, each drawing informs the group but also functions on its own as a unique work. *WS473* (2023), one of the few to include red, features two intersecting blue globes. At the point of their intersection, thin, curvilinear red lines flow out in all directions toward the edge of the paper, while blue lines appear to emanate from the top and bottom of the combined shape. Another piece, *WS320* (2021) also includes both red and blue spiraling lines that form an electrified circle that surrounds an awkwardly shaped blue sphere.

In larger works, the gestural lines and individual brushstrokes dance in more open spaces, appearing less confined and free flowing. In *WS602 The Wormhole* (2023), two tornado shaped vortexes are tethered together even though they move in opposite directions. In the more amorphous *WS603 Chaotic Singularity* (2023), an organic shape akin to flowing water or flames of varying opacities of blue descends from a rectangular support.

Halloran's lines fill empty white spaces and allude to masses that exist beyond our solar system. The works are graceful and allusive, and though grounded in scientific principals, they also engage with the language of abstraction.

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