

# WHITNEY

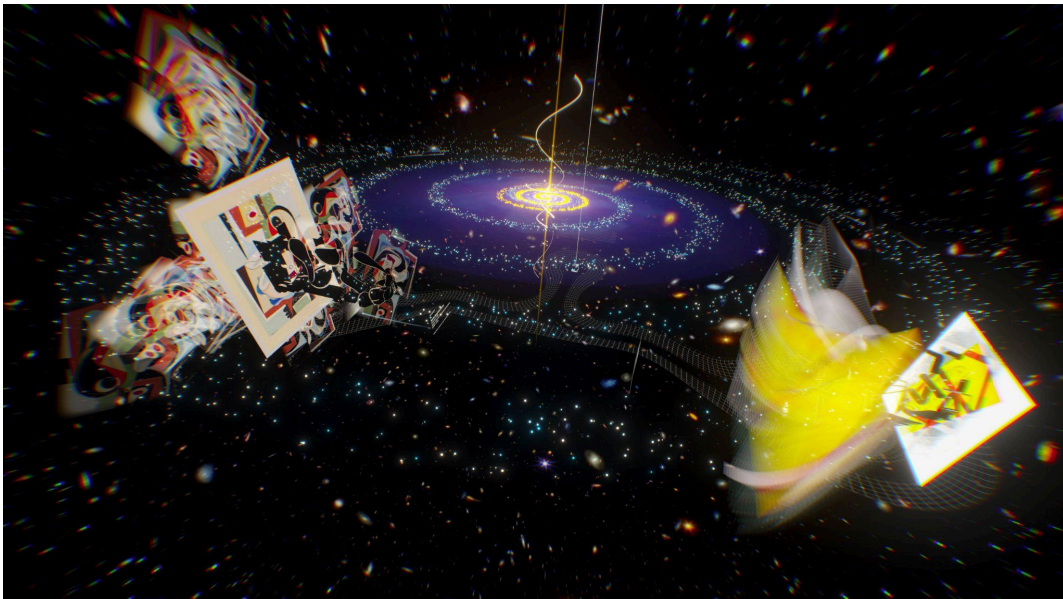
Whitney Museum  
of American Art  
Press Office

99 Gansevoort Street  
New York, NY 10014

pressoffice@whitney.org  
(212) 570-3633

## PRESS RELEASE

### WHITNEY MUSEUM LAUNCHES DIGITAL WORK BY ASHLEY ZELINSKIE FOCUSING ON INFLUENCE OF PHYSICS IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY ABSTRACT ART



*Artist Ashley Zelinskie's new work draws references from artworks in the Whitney Museum's collection, highlighting the artists' explorations of physics through space and form.*

**New York, November 13, 2024** — The Whitney Museum of American Art launches [Twin Quasar](#), a digital art project by Ashley Zelinskie commissioned for [artport](#), the Museum's online gallery space for net art and new media art commissions. *Twin Quasar* is a virtual reality artwork and environment within the [Whitney Museum Virtual Landscape](#), a virtual world produced by The IMC Lab on the MONA platform. Zelinskie's new work combines elements of science and art history, and builds on the artist's eight-year coordination with NASA's James Webb Space Telescope team and discussions with European Space Agency scientist Tim Rawle.

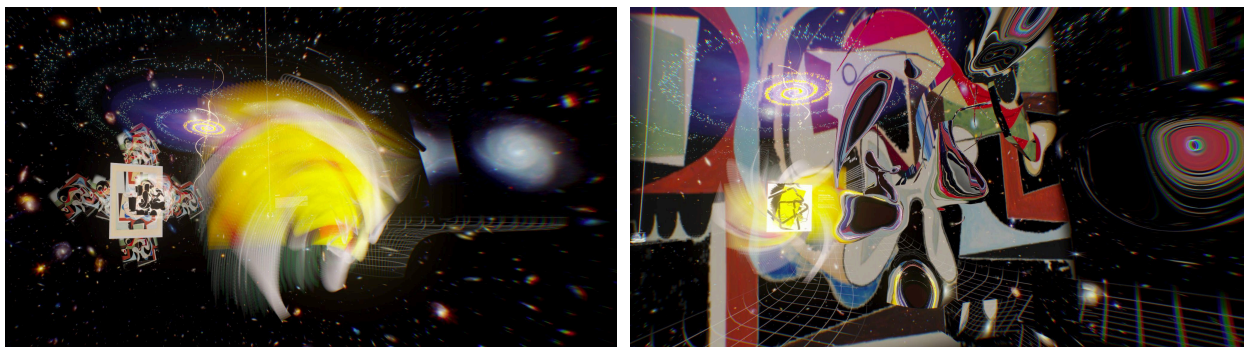
Ashley Zelinskie's *Twin Quasar* examines the influence of physics on early twentieth-century abstract art, particularly Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, which challenged the established understanding of space, time, and reality. The piece consists of three-dimensional artwork and the virtual space it inhabits, incorporating two works from the Whitney's permanent collection. Zelinskie built 3D models of László Moholy-Nagy's [Space Modulator](#) (1938–1940) and Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne's [Compotier II](#) (1938), so that viewers can explore them from all angles. The experience Zelinskie creates draws parallels between phenomena in physics and the artists' experiments with space and form, highlighting Moholy-Nagy's interest in scientific

perceptions of light and space and Browne's fascination with geometric concepts and the laws of energy governing matter. As viewers approach the digital models, the layers of the artworks are revealed in three-dimensional space. The abstract forms in these pieces morph and extend from their virtual canvases, allowing navigation between the layers and protruding shapes and bending light in space.

"Ashley's work offers viewers a very different experience of works from the collection, turning them into an immersive space of forms, planes, and visual effects," says Christiane Paul, the Whitney's Curator of Digital Art. "The ideas that the artists explored on the two-dimensional plane of the canvas become literal and palpable in the digital medium."

"While poring over the Whitney's archives, I was drawn to the shapes and colors of works by László Moholy-Nagy and Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne. The abstraction I saw in those works reminded me of the warping light I had seen in images from the James Webb Space Telescope," says artist Ashley Zelinskie. "For two years I have been fascinated by gravitational lensing, since I saw the Webb's first images at NASA Goddard. The warped galaxies of Webb's 'deep field' image piqued my imagination, and I knew I needed to make a piece about it." Zelinskie added, "Virtual reality is the only medium that can do this effect justice. These are 'invisible' sculptures: they have no color or light of their own, only digital 'gravity' that appears through the refraction of the light and colors around them."

The interactions viewers have as they engage with *Twin Quasar* replicate the magnifying and distorting effects of gravitational lensing, a cosmic event that occurs when black holes, galaxies, or dark matter bend spacetime. Gravitational lensing was first detected by scientists at an Arizona observatory where they observed the light of a quasar—an extremely luminous celestial object visible with a telescope—passing through a galaxy, making it appear as though there were two quasars. The title of Zelinskie's work is inspired by both this galactic phenomenon and the artist's incorporation of the two artworks from the Whitney's collection. The virtual space where the works exist is formed by a "deep field," an image of distant galaxies provided by the Space Telescope Science Institute.



*Twin Quasar* can be experienced in the [Whitney Museum Virtual Landscape](#), now available on MONA, the spatial computing platform for immersive worlds and interoperable 3D art. The artwork can also be experienced in the Apple Vision Pro, allowing viewers to dynamically adjust their immersion between virtual and physical realities. *Twin Quasar* is the first project to be presented in the reimagined virtual gallery, and the artist's expertise in 3D worlds provided

valuable guidance during the space's migration from Mozilla Hubs to MONA. The Whitney's 3D [virtual space was introduced in 2023 for \*Refigured: A Virtual Conversation and Tour\*](#), which was a program related to an exhibition of digital art presented at the Museum. The space's initial concept was a collaborative effort between the Museum and design partners at [Design Bridge and Partners](#).

Ashley Zelinskie's [Twin Quasar](#) is commissioned by the Whitney Museum for artport. *Twin Quasar* is produced by James Tunick, CEO of [The IMC Lab](#) and XR/AI pioneer and artist who has created award-winning virtual worlds. Support on [MONA](#) is contributed by platform founder and CEO Justin Melillo, a pioneer in advancing open, immersive virtual worlds. Artport projects are organized by Christiane Paul, Curator of Digital Art at the Whitney. More information about artport can be found at [whitney.org/artport](#).

---

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ashley Zelinskie is a Brooklyn-based conceptual artist employing media as vehicles in service of underlying concepts. Her works span a variety of media, from sculpture, canvas and print works to digital art, VR, and holograms. Each artwork is created using technologies such as 3D printing, computer-guided laser cutting, satellite plating technology, and gaming engines. Her work focuses on visualizing data in abstract forms and finding new and interesting ways to describe complex ideas. Ashley's work has been featured by The New York Times, The New Yorker, Vice, Popular Science, Space.com, and Hyperallergic. Her work forms part of the permanent collection of the US Department of State Art in Embassies Program, has been exhibited at Sotheby's New York, ArtScience Museum in Singapore and Art Center Nabi in Seoul. Ashley is a former resident of New Inc., the New Museum's Art and Technology Incubator, and the Shapeways x Museum of Art and design "Out of Hand" exhibition residency. She is currently working in coordination with NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Smithsonian and is a member of Onassis ONX XR studio in New York City.

---

## ABOUT ARTPORT

artport is the Whitney Museum's portal to Internet art and an online gallery space for net art and new media art commissions. Launched in 2001, artport provides access to original commissioned artworks, documentation of net art and new media art exhibitions at the Whitney, and new media art in the Museum's collection. Recent commissions include Maya Man's *A Realistic Day In My Life In New York City* (2024); Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst's *xhairymutantx* (2024); Nancy Baker Cahill's *CENTO* (2024); Peter Burr's *Sunshine Monument* (2023); Rick Silva's *Liquid Crystal* (2023); Auriea Harvey's *SITE1* (2023); Amelia Winger-Bearskin's *Sky/World Death/World* (2022); Mimi Onuoha's *40% of Food in the US is Wasted (How the Hell is That Progress, Man?)* (2022); and Rachel Rossin's *THE MAW OF* (2022). Access these and more projects at [whitney.org/artport](#).

---

## PRESS CONTACT

For press materials and image requests, please visit our press site at [whitney.org/press](https://whitney.org/press) or contact:

### **Meghan Ferrucci, Publicist**

Whitney Museum of American Art

(212) 671-8346

[Meghan\\_Ferrucci@whitney.org](mailto:Meghan_Ferrucci@whitney.org)

### **Whitney Press Office**

[whitney.org/press](https://whitney.org/press)

(212) 570-3633

[pressoffice@whitney.org](mailto:pressoffice@whitney.org)

---

## ABOUT THE WHITNEY

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for ninety years. The core of the Whitney’s mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

### **Whitney Museum Land Acknowledgment**

The Whitney is located in Lenapehoking, the ancestral homeland of the Lenape. The name Manhattan comes from their word Mannahatta, meaning “island of many hills.” The Museum’s current site is close to land that was a Lenape fishing and planting site called Sapponckanikan (“tobacco field”). The Whitney acknowledges the displacement of this region’s original inhabitants and the Lenape diaspora that exists today.

As a museum of American art in a city with vital and diverse communities of Indigenous people, the Whitney recognizes the historical exclusion of Indigenous artists from its collection and program. The Museum is committed to addressing these erasures and honoring the perspectives of Indigenous artists and communities as we work for a more equitable future. To read more about the Museum’s Land Acknowledgement, [visit the Museum’s website](#).

---

## VISITOR INFORMATION

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Public hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10:30 am–6 pm; Friday, 10:30 am–10 pm; and Saturday and Sunday, 10:30 am–6 pm. Closed Tuesday. Visitors eighteen years and under and Whitney members: FREE. The Museum offers FREE admission and special programming for visitors of all ages every Friday evening from 5–10 pm and on the second Sunday of every month.

**Image credit:**

Ashley Zelinskie, screenshot of *Twin Quasar*, 2024. Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art

###