

VIRGINIA

Kristin Jones/Andrew Ginzel Chuck Henry

Institute of Contemporary Art
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Boulevard and Grove Aves., Richmond
804/257-6479

Two room-sized installations, *Ephemeris*, by Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel, and *Pi*, by Chuck Henry, postulated a relationship between the principles of mathematics and physics (seen by the artists as bases of universal structure) and art. Each was a complicated multi-media environment, highly theatrical in conception.

Jones and Ginzel's *Ephemeris* (ancient Greek for journal) occupied four fifths of a blue room. It was separated from the viewing area by a pale fabric scrim that gave the installation a misty atmospheric appearance. Behind this sheer curtain, huge needlelike forms were suspended diagonally between spinning and static globes of varying sizes. A string grid, hung several inches above the sand-covered floor, increased the illusion of depth. The installation looked like a three-dimensional computer graphic of a stellar or planetary system of the type seen in contemporary science fiction movies. Dramatic spotlighting enhanced this effect, as did the myriad points of

light blinking like distant stars throughout the environment.

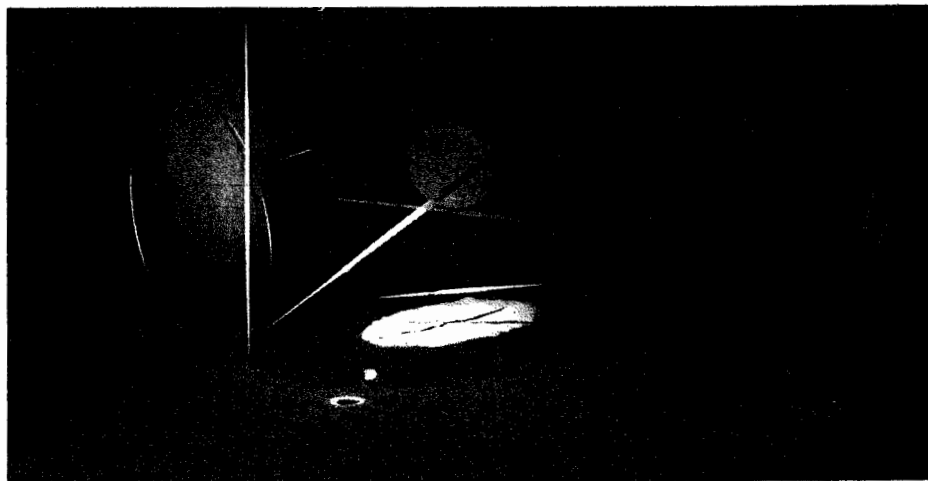
By illustrating an astronomical system, Jones and Ginzel hoped to induce a state of contemplation and awe about the mysterious ordering systems common to all matter. They calculated the types of theatrical effects and space-age imagery that would evoke this response in as wide an audience as possible. Although in this respect *Ephemeris* was a success, its hyperbolic dramatics and specific pictorialism undermined the artists' point about a universal system.

In *Pi*, Chuck Henry also used a combination of media to create a visual analog for a universal system. A fascinating blend of esoterica and kitsch, *Pi* was a holographic mosaic which, when reflected in mirrors perpendicularly adjoining it, became a symmetrical series of interlocking circles. Henry's choice of materials evoked kitsch: the holographic plates had a shifting crystalline structure reminiscent of a child's kaleidoscope and the type of iridescent color one might see in the metallic paint of a motorcycle helmet. These references seemed strangely incongruous with *Pi*'s metaphysical propositions.

The structure of interlocking circles derived from a series of drawings in which Henry interpreted an obscure mystical theory of the ancient Hebrew cabalists who divided the cosmos into ten spherical elements, each with subdivisions extending into infinity. In his drawings, Henry arranged these spheres into two pyramids of five spheres each, aligned base to base to exactly enclose a smaller set of five spheres. The diameter of one of the larger spheres divided by *Pi* equals that of the smaller space, also continuing into infinity. *Pi* was an attempt to transform this elegant confluence between mathematics and metaphysics into a subliminal revelatory experience, more archetype than object of aesthetic contemplation.

The use of novel media in both *Ephemeris* and *Pi* raises an interesting question. Was it a necessary tool for the expression of the content, or was it an end in itself? One suspects the answer is somewhere in between. In both installations, the media employed produced decorative effects which seemed only parenthetically related to the abstract systems they purported to illustrate.

Mark Scala



ANDREW GINZEL and KRISTIN JONES, "Ephemeris," installation, 1986. Photo: Ann Hutchinson and Ron Jennings.