

## ANTHROPAUSE | FINITE + INFINITE

### Artist statement

July, 2021

It's the second summer with COVID-19. The virus mutates constantly, and it is hard to measure the end. In June 2020, a global team of biologists coined a new term, "anthropause" to describe this period. This refers to a time when humanity, the subject of 'anthropocene', has ceased to act on an unprecedented scale during the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, this pause did not last very long. Clear sky was covered with fine dust again, and mankind is expanding without showing signs of stopping as AI, Bitcoin, Metaverse, and NFT related data show every day.

Ancient Greek philosophers thought the infinite is inferior to the finite, because the infinite has no completion. It is said that supporters of Pythagoras believed in two basic cosmological principles, Peras (the finite) and Apeiron (the infinite), while equating the former with goodness and the latter with badness. However, later, people began to link the infinite to divinity, in particular, with the emergence of Christianity. Since then, scientific discovery and linear knowledge accumulation have contributed to satisfying human's infinite desires, and as a result, we are pursuing infinite quantitative and material expansion. The rapidly expanding digital data has accelerated this even further, overlooking that we are finite and that all our actions return as feedback in any form. This oblivion is an illusion given by the technical age, and it is the result of disregarding the connection between humans and the environment as if humanity were the only exception.

I titled my solo exhibition 'Anthropause' because I believe we need to re-configure the notion of infinite and finite that divide mankind into superiority that has been drawn so far. <Finite> and <Infinite> are artworks exploring two values of infinite and finite in the middle of current 'anthropause'. Through two installation works, I aim to transform this unexpected pause into a 'productive pause,' by telling a story that can only be told at this particular time when humankind is having a halt.

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<Infinite> is a kinetic installation with a moving image projected on a precisely designed circular screen, which partially transmits, absorbs, and reflects light to fill in the entire space. As a result, the distorted, fragmented reflections of the images appear on the opposite sides of the dark room. It is hung from the ceiling, rotating at a constant speed and never sleeps for the entire exhibition period even while the gallery is closed.

The moving image that is projected on the rotating screen continuously changes its form based on the CO2 atmospheric concentration data. Three sequences of moving images make one loop; the first sequence takes one minute, the second sequence takes 30 seconds and the last sequence takes 15 seconds, based on the exponential growth of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration over the last 150 years. The reflections generated from the projected moving image becomes exponentially faster as it progresses indicating the rapid rise of CO2 atmospheric concentration in recent years. Accordingly, each loop seems to represent an accelerating development and the following catastrophic end. The resulting space that constantly changes its appearance alludes to the changing environment driven by human.

Nothing is infinite in a physical manner. The only thing that I can say that is infinite is the fact that every entity on the earth stays in an infinite loop of chain reaction where every action of all actors have consequences, which affect all other constructors and actors. In <Infinite>, the actors, such as screen, projection, data, reflection, shadows, space and audience are all connected and influencing each other. Through this work, I attempt to address the causal relationship between human activity and climate change, thus calling attention to the fact that we can only exist amidst the infinite loop of human-nature interaction.

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<Finite> is an immersive audio-visual installation. Large-scale projections are merged with an 11-channel spatialised audio system to maximise the viewers' sensual experiences. The work starts with the image of a green forest. Soon the

scenes of skyscrapers fill in the land of burnt forest and they also disappear with explosions. In the last scenes, what looks like a magnificent snowy mountain or iceberg appears in the dark but vanishes into countless pieces. I digitally rendered the images of all the scenes except the scene of struggling humans, so as to ironically show the finitude of the man-made environment through the digital technology that arouses the illusion of infinity. I added a sense of strong presence to the digitally rendered scene with real sounds of forest, city noises, audio recordings from the First and Second World War. Particularly, the last scene of moving is accompanied by the recording of a performance of string players (cello, viola and violin) and myself playing the piano, which is a specifically composed piece for <Finite>.

In all, the installation allows us to confront the uncomfortable fact that how humanity's perpetual desire is exploiting limited natural resources. However, this should not be a frustrating or depressing conclusion as I hope to demonstrate that everything on the earth is finite, and that is what makes us even more beautiful and meaningful. All the audio-visual elements are carefully designed to dramatise the space and intensely immerse the viewers with a hope to engender the audiences' emotional response that could generate a thought-provoking moment.

The two environments-Infinite and Finite-resonate within the larger context of the exhibition and allow us to speculate on the possibility that our current status quo, the 'anthropause,' could be a starting point for a sustainable future. I hope my exhibition would act as a catalyst that provides audiences a moment to feel and think about our current situation. that provides audiences a moment to feel and think about our current situation.