

James Webb

Portfolio

Imane Farès

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Works courtesy Imane Farès, Paris, and blank, Cape Town

James Webb is an artist, known for his site-specific interventions and installations. His practice often involves sound, found objects, and text, invoking references to literature, cinema, and the conceptualist traditions. By shifting objects, techniques, and forms beyond their original contexts and introducing them to different environments, Webb creates new spaces of tension. These methodologies bind Webb's background in religion, theatre, and advertising, offering poetic inquiries into the economies of belief and dynamics of communication in our contemporary world.

As Brandon LaBelle writes, "The works of James Webb circulate around a complex mixture of emotional and affective states; of longing and despair, of the ecstatic and of hopefulness, states of bodies and minds that move throughout his practice to raise questions of individuality and community, belonging and displacement, fragmentation and recuperation."

(*Xenagogue*, edited by Anthea Buys, published by HKS, 2015.)

Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at the Kabuso Art Centre Øystese (2025), Liljevalchs Stockholm (2024), Winnipeg Art Gallery (2019), the Art Institute of Chicago, (2018), Norrtälje Konsthall (2016, 2018, 2019), Yorkshire Sculpture Park Wakefield (2016), Hordaland Kunstsenter Bergen (2015), CentroCentro Madrid (2013), and the Johannesburg Art Gallery (2012).

His work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including, MGK Siegen (2025), Blaffer Art Museum (2024), Astrup Fearnley Museet (2024), at A4 Arts Foundation (2023), Monheim Triennale II (2023), the Saint-Paul de Vence International Biennale (2023), the Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah (2023), Mona Foma Festival (2023), two editions of the Lyon Biennale (2007, 2022), the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo con sede (2022), the 12th Curitiba International Biennial (2019), the 13th Dakar Biennale (2018), Darat al Funun (2018), the 4th Prospect New Orleans Triennial (2017), documenta 14 (2017), the 13th Sharjah Biennial (2017), the Théâtre Graslin (2016), the 12th Havana Biennial (2015), the Wanås Konst and Historiska (2015), the 55th Venice Biennale (2013), the Tate Modern (2010), the 3rd Marrakech Biennale (2009) and the Melbourne International Arts Festival (2009).

His work will be presented later this year at Abdülmecid Efendi Mansion in Istanbul and he will participate in the next edition of the 2025 KorSonoR in Geneva.

His works are part of numerous public and private collections, including the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, KADIST, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo (MAXXI), Tate Modern and MAC VAL.



Photo: Pieter Hugo

A series of personal questions...
2016 - ongoing

A series of personal questions...
2016 - ongoing

In this ongoing series, the artist poses spoken questions to selected objects and spaces as if they were able to respond. The installation takes the form of the presentation of the particular item, e.g. an antique Roman coin, and an audio speaker installed above where the audience are situated in relation to the object on display.

The audio speaker broadcasts a series of questions written specifically for, and addressed to, that chosen object. No answers are written, given, or suggested. Each question is left hanging, unanswered for approximately 10 seconds before the next question is posed.

The intervention can also be presented as a live action with the interviewer addressing the object directly.

Selected editions:

- *A Series of Personal Questions Addressed to the Folgefonna glacier*, 2025
- *A Series of Personal Questions Addressed to a Neolithic Clay Vessel*, 2024
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a Viking-age sword*, 2024
- *A series of personal questions addressed to the River Rhine*, 2023
- *A series of personal questions addressed to an 18th century mirror*, 2023
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a boat that sailed its last journey on the Red Sea*, 2023
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a Theriac urn formerly used in the Hôtel-Dieu*, 2022
- *A series of personal questions addressed to the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon*, 2022
- *A series of personal questions addressed to the city of Lyon as it stands now*, 2022
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a Hikimawashi Kappa travelling cloak*, 2022
- *A series of personal questions addressed to 5 litres of Nigerian crude oil*, 2020
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a Roman coin*, 2019
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a set of Rorschach Psychodiagnostic plates*, 2017
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a Chewa mask made in the image of Elvis Presley*, 2018-2021
- *A series of personal questions addressed to an ambrotype marked 'F. Freiberg 1859' in the Foto Muuseum of Tallinn*, 2017
- *A series of personal questions addressed to a set of medieval church bells in the Swedish History Museum*, 2016
- *A series of personal questions addressed to the Théâtre Graslin*, 2016

Selected collections:

- Kadist Foundation
- Scheryn Collection
- Smithsonian National Museum of African Art

A Series of Personal Questions Addressed to the Folgefonna glacier
2024



Photo: James Webb



Photo: James Webb

A series of personal questions addressed to a Neolithic Clay Vessel from the Upper Yellow River region

2024

172 questions

English voice: Lesoko Seabe

Duration: 00:42:10

The Bronze Age Qijia peoples (2200 - 1700 BCE), named after the archeological burial sites they are associated with in Qijiaping, settled along the Upper Yellow River region and produced, amongst many other goods, handmade ceramics marked with crisscross patterning. This vessel, formerly in the private collection of a “West country gentleman” in Bath, UK, is presented and staged with an audio speaker in relation to it.

Questions probing deep time, regional geography, the multiple lives of clay objects, Qijia burial customs, and the antiques trade of the 20th century are put to the vessel.

The artwork was commissioned by Astrup Fearnley Museet for the exhibition, Between Rivers, curated by Owen Martin in 2024.

A series of personal questions addressed to a Viking-age sword
2024



Photo: James Webb

A series of personal questions addressed to a Vikin-age sword

2024

Swedish voice: Ann Petré

English voice: Brendon Daniels

Iron Viking-age sword, speaker, audio

Bilingual duration: 01:15:18

Sword loaned from Historiska Museet.

In this ongoing series, questions are addressed to selected objects; in this instance a Viking-age sword unearthed from a cairn in Barkarby in 1931, and now part of the collection of Historiska Museet. The installation takes the form of the presentation of the 1,100-year old weapon and an audio speaker installed above where the audience are situated in relation to the object on display.

Swords carried great personal meaning for their owners and, understandably, have become the inspiration for folklore and legend. What might the sword have done, or failed to do in its lifetime? What are its feelings about violence and the use of Viking culture in contemporary images? What might it think its purpose is today? Through a cycle of 150 questions that provoke images and probe details, the intervention addresses the sword, opening up themes of power, narrative, and history.

An excerpt of the Swedish-language voice can be heard here:

<https://soundcloud.com/theotherjameswebb/viking-age-sword-svenska-excerpt?in=theotherjameswebb/sets/a-series-of-personal-questions>

An excerpt of the English-language voice can be heard here:

<https://soundcloud.com/theotherjameswebb/viking-age-sword?in=theotherjameswebb/sets/a-series-of-personal-questions>

A series of personal questions addressed to the River Rhine
2023



Monheim Triennale II. Photo: James Webb

A series of personal questions addressed to the River Rhine

2023

153 questions

English voice: Victoria Davies

German voice: Yasmin Hankel

Duration: approximately 01:20:00 (Bilingual)

The second longest river in Central Europe draws a natural border in the landscape. It is a source of life that has allowed people to settle along its waters for centuries – but at the same time, as a force of nature, it threatens these very people. The Rhine is a symbol, a political force, and a wounded creature that suffers from neglect as much as from human poisoning and industrial waste.

James Webb has placed loudspeakers along the bank that play a series of about 150 questions directed at the Rhine in Monheim am Rhein. Each question remains in the landscape for about 12 seconds before being followed by the next question. Passersby are invited to listen, look for information while overlooking the river, or possibly answer the questions themselves.

Commissioned for the Monheim Triennale, Monheim am Rhein.

Selected questions:

- *How do you feel about your original routes having been altered for the needs of others?*
- *What desires have used you as their pathway?*
- *What rights have you been afforded?*
- *What does the Sublime help us to forget?*
- *What was this land like before agriculture came?*
- *Where do you drift to?*
- *Which legends betray you?*
- *Which parts of Europe do you wish to enter?*
- *What part of you is returning to where you are going?*
- *How did it come about that a beluga whale breached your waters in 1966?*
- *How many lifetimes occur between your source and your mouth?*
- *What has just happened elsewhere that affects you here and now?*
- *Who have you separated?*
- *Who have you decided for?*
- *What exactly did humans achieve when they offered their own kind to you as a punishment?*
- *What do you do with the things sacrificed to you?*
- *What would be a worthy sacrifice to you today?*

*A series of personal questions
addressed to an 18th century
mirror, previous owner
unknown*

2023

Mirror, speaker, audio. Duration: 01:21:00

163 questions

English voice: Lesoko Seabe

Dutch voice: Guido Wevers

Unique

→ [Link to the video](#)

Exhibition view: *Goodbye to Love: Conversation of all
those whose lips are sealed*, Marres, House for Culture

In this ongoing series, started in 2016, the artist poses spoken questions to selected objects; in this instance an 18th century mirror. The installation takes the form of the presentation of the chosen object and an audio speaker installed above where the audience are situated in relation to the object on display.

A mirror is a place of composition, secret looks, confessions, and rehearsals. We see ourselves looking; our own reflection stares at us, a stranger that is always close by. Mirrors have played a great role in the creation of a social self in our civilization, and their production is connected with trade, wealth, and class. A mirror such as this one would have been a prized possession in the late 18th century and most probably placed in a significant room in a house.

What might a mirror have witnessed over the course of its life? What are its feelings about what it has had to reflect? Through a series of questions that stir memories and probe details, the artist's intervention addresses the mirror to develop a speculation on time, power, and desire.



A series of personal questions addressed to the City of Lyon as it stands now
2022



Commissioned for the 16th edition of the Biennale de Lyon, *manifesto of fragility*, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Photo: Blaise Adilon

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A series of personal questions addressed to the City of Lyon as it stands now

2022

Speaker, audio

157 questions

Voice: Sylvaine Strike

Duration: 01:31:23

Bilingual French/English

→ [Excerpt of audio \(English\)](#)

→ [Excerpt of audio \(French\)](#)

Specially created for the 16th Biennale of Lyon, this edition had the artist pose questions to the city itself. Lyon, formerly Lugdunum, rests on the confluence of the Rhône and Saône rivers, and has played a central role in the region for centuries. From Roman occupation and medieval religious conflict, to the industrial boom of the silk trade and the birthplace of cinema, the city is here approached as a complex host of histories and psychologies.

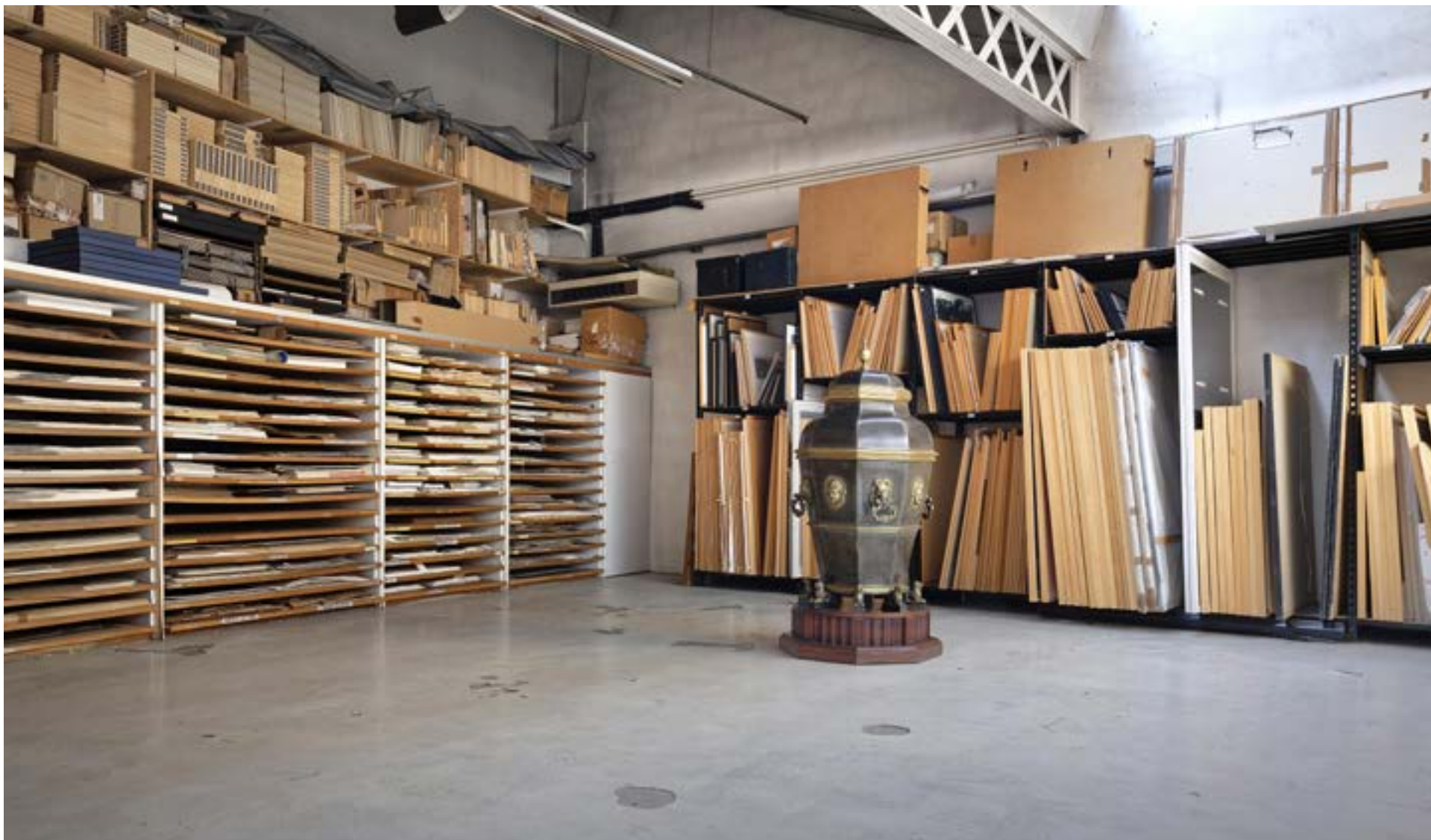
This artwork, was activated in two remarkable locations: the Jardin du palais Saint-Pierre and the Parc de la Tête d'Or.



Selected questions:

- Who cares for you so that you can look like this?
- What have the rivers coursing through you revealed about the time before you were here?
- In whose name were these walls built?
- On whom does your shadow fall?
- Where can I safely loiter here?
- Which monuments do you think are inappropriate here?
- What would you have us put in their place?
- What should be made with the symbols of trauma to lessen their potential to inflame?
- How can the in-between spaces be made more hospitable for those who shelter there?
- What order do the forces of order protect?
- What waits behind your facades; what dreams behind your curtained windows?
- How has your early life as a Roman city played out in your later choices?
- What does it mean to be civilised?
- To what does ownership entitle the owner?
- What celebrations still ring in your ears?
- What does it cost to live under your protection?
- Where in you does your embarrassment linger?
- Where are your weaknesses paraded?
- How do you propose to resolve the gap between rich and poor?
- How can we reclaim the zones still policed by anxiety?
- Where do you keep a space for uncertainty?
- What can the struggles of your much earlier citizens tell us about our current crisis?
- What do you think you would look like if the Romans had never come?
- How regularly should the grip of those who came before us be broken?

A series of personal questions addressed to a Theriac urn formerly used in the Hôtel-Dieu
2022



Commissioned for the 16th edition of the Biennale de Lyon, *manifesto of fragility*, Urdla

Photo: Blaise Adilon

A series of personal questions addressed to a Theriac urn formerly used in the Hôtel-Dieu

2022

Theriac urn, speaker, audio

93 questions

Voice: Sylvaine Strike

Duration: 00:49:27

Bilingual French/English

→ [Excerpt of audio \(English\)](#)

→ [Excerpt of audio \(French\)](#)

Here, a voice poses questions to a 17th century Theriac urn formerly used in the Hôtel-Dieu. Theriac, an ancient medicine, was made with a concoction of plants and minerals, notably mixed with snake and opium. It was used as a general remedy and vaccine throughout Europe and other parts of the world for almost 18 centuries, before being struck off the codex of French medicine in 1908. Theriac was manufactured in the Hôtel-Dieu in Lyon, and this very urn, on loan from the Musée des Hospices Civils, was the main storage vessel for the medicine prepared and dispensed in the hospital. The questions probe themes of wellness, cures, and plagues, as well as medical history and the evolution of medicines and placebos; all relating to the city of Lyon.

The artwork is staged with the Theriac urn on display and presented with the voice of the questioner.

Selected questions:

- How far had your Theriac come from Nero's time, when its potency was increased through the addition of a viper's flesh?
- In your experience, what was the perfect recipe for Theriac?
- What can you tell us about the people who were forced to take poison in order to test what you were there to cure?
- If a snake contains its own antidote, as your Apothecaries believed, what might humans contain that could cure us?
- What do you contain that might cure you?
- Looking back, what lessons from the plagues have we failed to learn?
- What do you think we should have done during our last pandemic?
- What lessons in humility would you like to share with modern medicine?
- What would you offer as an antidote to hubris?
- How do you feel now that the weight of medical science has been lifted from you?
- How has it come about that the human subject experiences their need as a wound, their desire as an insufficiency?
- What would you prescribe to treat the poison of racism?
- When, if at all, did you doubt what you had to hold?
- What did you bring to the curative process?
- Opium was one of the key ingredients in your Theriac. Opium is now considered a dangerous, addictive drug and is illegal. What do you think about this?
- What alternatives were there to the medicine you dispensed?
- If a panacea is not possible, what are the alternatives?
- Your medicine, Theriac, was in use throughout Europe and other parts of the world for almost 2 millennia. What did it feel like when it was finally struck from the Codex of French medicine in 1908?
- What part of the medicine remains inside you?
- What are contemporary sceptics not understanding about your legacy?

A series of personal questions addressed to 5 litres of Nigerian crude oil

2020

Crude oil, glass cube, speaker, audio

107 questions

Voice: Brendon Daniels

Duration: 00:25:55

Scheryn Art Collection, Cape Town

A voice poses questions to five litres of Nigerian crude oil on display in the gallery

→ [Excerpt of audio \(English\)](#)

Selected questions:

- How close can we stand to you?
- How honest can we be with each other?
- How old are you?
- What was your original form?
- What conflicts are you at the centre of?
- What do you remember of prehistoric sunlight?
- What can you tell us about the underworld?
- At what stage will we become like you?
- What were you doing when Ken Saro-Wiwa was hanged?
- Where do you stand on the 1973 oil embargo?
- What do you make of the world above the earth's crust?
- What will happen when we die?
- How can we be good ancestors?
- What have you been told about your value?
- Where did you exit the earth?
- What form do you wish to take?
- Who or what can lay claim to the land?
- How do you suggest we mourn modernity?
- What lies beneath us?
- What can you tell us about waiting?
- What has been disturbed by us bringing you to the surface?
- For how long has Eshu been here on earth?
- How much is left of you?
- How does this end?



Installation view: *What Fresh Hell is This*, blank projects, 2020

A series of personal questions addressed to a Roman Coin

2019

Silver Denarius minted in Rome in 70AD, speaker, audio

Dimensions: 1,7 cm diam. (coin), 145 x 30 x 30 cm (display case)

125 questions

Voice: Sylvaine Strike

Duration: 01:01:33

Bilingual French/English

A voice poses questions to a silver Denarius minted in Rome in 70AD

→ [Excerpt of audio \(English\)](#)

→ [Excerpt of audio \(French\)](#)

Selected questions:

- *What were you worth when you first circulated?*
- *What recollections do you have from the time before - you were marked with another's face?*
- *What part of you remains buried in the earth?*
- *Whose stories do you tell?*
- *How many times have you brought good luck?*
- *When did you last buy a day's labour?*
- *Which exchange felt right?*
- *What struggles of power have you been at the centre of?*
- *Whose secrets have you kept?*
- *How much silence have you paid for?*
- *Whose unfulfilled dreams have you felt the weight of?*
- *What is the price of blood?*



Photo: Tadzio

Prayer
2000- ongoing

Prayer

2000 - ongoing

Carpet, speakers, audio

1600 x 400 cm

Various durations

Multilingual

Editions: 1 + 1 AP per version

→ [Excerpt of selected prayer recordings](#)

Prayer is a multi-channel sound installation comprising recordings of vocal worship (e.g. praying, chanting, singing, readings, intoning, invocation, etc.) from individuals who belong to the various faith and spiritual affinities in the city where the piece is exhibited. These religions include, but are not limited to, most denominations of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Judaism, as well as new spiritual movements (e.g. Eckankar and Wicca) and traditional faiths (e.g. Mandaeanism, Shintoism, and Zoroastrianism). Several hundred recordings are made in the course of each production.

All the prayers collected in the process are included in the artwork, and the recordings are broadcast simultaneously from 12 floor-based speakers placed on a red carpet. Each speaker transmits its own separate selection of prayers on a loop. As all speakers play unsynchronised at the same time, an everchanging sound environment is created.

The audience may wander freely through the installation experiencing the polyphony of voices from all 12 speakers at once, or alternatively, kneel down to listen to individual prayers broadcast from any particular speaker.

Selected editions:

- Houston, Blaffer Museum, 2024
- lutruwita / Tasmania, 14th MONA FOMA, 2023
- Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 2018
- Stockholm, Historiska Museet, 2016
- Malmö, Wanås Konst, 2015
- Johannesburg, Johannesburg Art Gallery, 2012
- Birmingham, Fierce Festival, 2011
- Copenhagen, My World Images festival, 2010
- Nottingham, Djanogly Art Gallery, 2010
- Bergen, Kunsthall 3,14, 2010
- Huddersfield, Huddersfield Art Gallery, 2008
- Cape Town, One City Many Cultures festival, 2000

Selected collections:

- Art Institute of Chicago
- Iziko South African National Gallery
- Rennie Museum
- A4 Arts Foundation

Prayer
2000-ongoing



Installation view: A4 Arts Foundation, 2022
Photo: A4 Arts Foundation

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Prayer (Johannesburg)

2012



Photo: Anthea Pokroy

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Prayer (Chicago)

2018



Photo: Art Institute Chicago

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There's no place called home
2004- ongoing

There's no place called home

2004 - ongoing

Tree, speaker, audio

Various durations

Edition: Unique per version

There's No Place Called Home is a recurring, worldwide intervention wherein audio recordings of specific foreign birdcalls are broadcast from speakers concealed in local trees.

Bird vocalisations are often used to mark territory and attract mates, but since the artwork's incongruous audio is not something that would interfere with, or be recognised by native species, it becomes a lure and a poetic message for human audiences.

The artwork has been described as a "hack into nature" inasmuch that the audio is mixed to sound as "real" and "lifelike" as possible. This subversion of the aural landscape: using sounds that are geographically out of place, hints at a natural world that we do not fully understand. Conceptually, the piece evokes themes of alienation, exoticism, and migration, while also articulating notions of territory, identity and diversity, and power.

Selected editions:

- *There's No Place Called Home (Saint-Paul de Vence)*, International Biennale of Saint-Paul de Vence, 2023
- *There's No Place Called Home (Edinburgh)*, Talbot Rice Gallery, 2021
- *There's No Place Called Home (Riga)*, Survival Kit 9, 2017
- *There's No Place Called Home (Havana)*, 12th Bienal de la Habana, 2015
- *There's No Place Called Home (Marrakech)*, 3rd Marrakech Biennale, 2009
- *There's No Place Called Home (Kitakyushu)*, CCA Kitakyushu, 2004

Selected collections:

- MAC VAL
- Khalid Shoman Foundation
- Nirox Foundation

Songs of a Mountain chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*), native to the western United States

2023

Tree, speaker, audio

Various durations

Unique

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

Password: Poecile gambeli

Mountain chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*)

Mountain chickadees are small songbirds found in mountainous regions of the United States.

These birds mate monogamously, and their vocalisations are an important aspect in mate selection. In their repertoire, their call has been transcribed as “chick-adee-dee-dee,” while their song is a 3- or 4-note descending whistle sounding like, “fee-bee-bay” or “fee-bee-fee-bee.”

They have been known to cache seeds and insects in hundreds of locations over a period of several months, and can retrieve them with remarkable accuracy even when the locations are covered in snow.

These recordings were made in the United States over the past 17 years.



Installation view: International
Biennale of Saint-Paul de Vence, 2023
Photo: Frédéric Pasquini

Songs of a Cape Weavers (*Ploceus capensis*), native to South Africa

2023

Tree, speaker, audio

Various durations

Unique

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

Password: *Ploceus capensis*

Cape Weaver (*Ploceus capensis*)

Cape Weavers are small, yellowish and olive birds and endemic to South Africa, Lesotho, and Eswatini (Swaziland). Their vocalisations are an complicated, energetic whirl of fizzles, trills, and clicks; almost like a psychedelic Jimi Hendrix guitar solo. Cape Weavers are also known for their remarkable and intricate nests.

These recordings were made in the lush forests of Poplar Grove, a rustic sheep farm and meditation centre run by Zen monks in the Colesberg area of the Cape.



Installation view: International
Biennale of Saint-Paul de Vence, 2023
Photo: Frédéric Pasquini

Calls of a White-throated sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), native to Canada

2023

Tree, speaker, audio

Various durations

Unique

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

Password: *Zonotrichia albicollis*

White-throated sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)

White-throated sparrows are small New World song birds. They are known to breed in central Canada and New England and winter in the southern and eastern areas of the United States.

The White-throated Sparrow has a beautiful and distinctive song that is often described as sounding like «Oh Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada.» The song has been widely studied by scientists and is used as a model for understanding bird communication and language.

The bird is easily recognisable by its striking black-and-white head stripes and bright white throat, which give it a distinct appearance among other North American sparrows.

These recordings were made in the United States and Canada over the past 15 years.



Installation view: International
Biennale of Saint-Paul de Vence, 2023
Photo: Frédéric Pasquini

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There's no place called home (Solitude Park)

Calls of a pair of Grey go-away birds (*Corythaixoides concolor*), native to the southern Afrotropics, broadcast from speakers concealed in trees in Solitude Park, Basel, Switzerland, 2023



Installation view: Museum Tinguely, 2023
Photo: Claire Morin, Weisswert Basel

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There's no place called home (New Orleans)

Songs of a Japanese Robin (*Larvivora akahige*), native to East Asia, broadcast from speakers concealed in a tree in City Park, New Orleans, 2017



Installation view: 4th Prospect Triennial, 2017

Photo: Sofia Ekström

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There's no place called home (Great Wall)

Calls of a Golden-bellied Flycatcher broadcast from speakers concealed within the trees along the Great Wall of China, 2005



*I do not live in this world alone,
but in a thousand worlds*

2016 - ongoing

I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds
2016 - ongoing

Selected texts, transcribed with ink on soluble paper, dissolved in water, and decanted into glass vials

I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds is presented as a series of glass containers, each containing the liquid remains of a poetic or philosophical text written on soluble paper that has been dissolved in water. Through this process the ink stains the water, and the water converts the paper to a thin, soft pulp, allowing for the initial page of writing to become an opaque, liquid solution.

The artwork, and its medium of transformation, references medicines, potions, psycho-active drugs, and poisons. Taking the form of liquid, the ideas and images contained in the text have the agency to seep, stain, and spill. Furthermore, by being preserved in water, it gives the text the possibility of entering the body through the mouth, unlike the way a text normally enters through the eye or the ear. The dissolved words suggests the possibility to be contained by the body, with the drinker able to possess and embody it, allowing it to influence from the inside.

These transmuted texts, or 'drowned anthologies', oppose the idea of the permanence of the written record - whether on paper or in stone - and their transitory nature allows them the potential to shift and undergo subtle changes over time, so that the artwork is in a constant state of flux.

Each version of this artwork is unique in an evolving series.

Private collections in Brussels, Cape Town, London, München, Paris, Reykjavik, Zürich

*I do not live in this world alone, but in a
thousand worlds (Openings to ecstasy)*

2023

Glass vials, dissolved paper, ink, water

15 bottle installation, presented on glass shelves

Dimensions of installation: 1760mm x 2740mm x 6mm

(height from bottom of lowest shelf to height of top
bottle, and width from leftmost bottle to rightmost
bottle)

Dimensions of bottles: Various, ranging from 160mm
- 310mm

Dimensions of glass shelves: 6mm x 140mm x 140mm

Unique

Exhibition view: *Goodbye to Love: Conversation of all
those whose lips are sealed*, Marres, House for Culture

This is currently the second largest version in the
series.

Texts exploring pathways to ecstasy; from desire
and drugs, to meditation and ekstasis: to be outside
of oneself, transcribed with ink on soluble paper,
dissolved in water, and presented in found glass vials.

Imagined as an apothecary of transformation, these
15 texts point to ways in which we approach the divine
through pleasure, excess, rigorous self examination,
and transcendence. The installation is presented
in a formation that echoes the mirror-image of a
Rorschach psychodynamic inkblot test; this artwork
also being a space where the audience can project
their fantasies and personal interpretations thereon.

→ [Link to the text](#)



*I do not live in this world alone,
but in a thousand worlds (Let the
night open your ears)*

2023

Glass vials, dissolved paper, ink, water
Single bottle presented horizontally on a
plinth or surface

Dimensions: 220mm long

Unique

Exhibition view: *Goodbye to Love:*
*Conversation of all those whose lips are
sealed*, Marres, House for Culture

Yasunari Kawabata's unsent letter to
Hatsuyo Itō transcribed with ink of soluble
paper and presented in a single glass
bottle with a silver stopper.

→ [Link to the text](#)



*I do not live in this world alone, but in
a thousand worlds (6 offerings to the
10th Muse)*

2023

Glass and crystal decanters, dissolved paper,
ink, water

6 bottle installation

Dimensions of bottles: Various, ranging from
220 - 250mm

Unique

Exhibition view: *Goodbye to Love:
Conversation of all those whose lips are
sealed*, Marres, House for Culture

Six individual translations of Sappho's
Fragment 31 transcribed with ink on soluble
paper, dissolved in water, and presented in
crystal vials.

→ [Link to the texts](#)



I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds (Dreams of Franz Kafka)

2019

[30 dreams](#) excerpted from Franz Kafka's Diaries written on soluble paper, dissolved in water, and presented in 30 glass vials

Various dimensions

Unique



Installation view: Galerie Imane Farès, Paris, 2019

Photo: Tadzio

I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds (Love is Lethal)

2019

[Carol Ann Duffy's poem Valentine \(1993\)](#) written with ink on soluble paper, dissolved in water, and presented in a single glass vial

Unique



I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds (2 shadows, Leonard Cohen)

2021

[Two letter written by Leonard Cohen to Marianne Ihlen](#) the first, written before her passing, and read as a tribute at her funeral; the second, a misquoted version of the former, published in the media

Water, soluble paper, ink, two glass bottles

Various dimensions

Unique



I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds (13 Views of the Moon)

2019

13 texts referencing the moon, written on soluble paper, dissolved in water, and presented in 13 glass vials

Various dimensions

Unique



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There is a light that never goes out
2010 - ongoing

There is a light that never goes out

2010 - ongoing

Neon

Various dimensions

There is a light that never goes out is an ongoing series of neon text works in which the title of the 1986 song by The Smiths is translated into selected languages including Arabic, Farsi, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Mandarin, Mixe, Sesotho, and Tupi Guarani.

Translated and illuminated, the evocative lyric is transformed from its musical reference into a visual sign that conjures open-ended cultural and site-specific associations.

The original version of the artwork was produced in Arabic for the façade of Dar Khalid at the Darat al Funun in Amman, Jordan, in 2010.

Selected collections:

- Khalid Shoman Foundation
- MAXXI Roma

There is a light that never goes out (Arabic)

2010

89 x 394 cm

Edition of 5 + 2 AP. Ed. 1 AP



Imane Farès

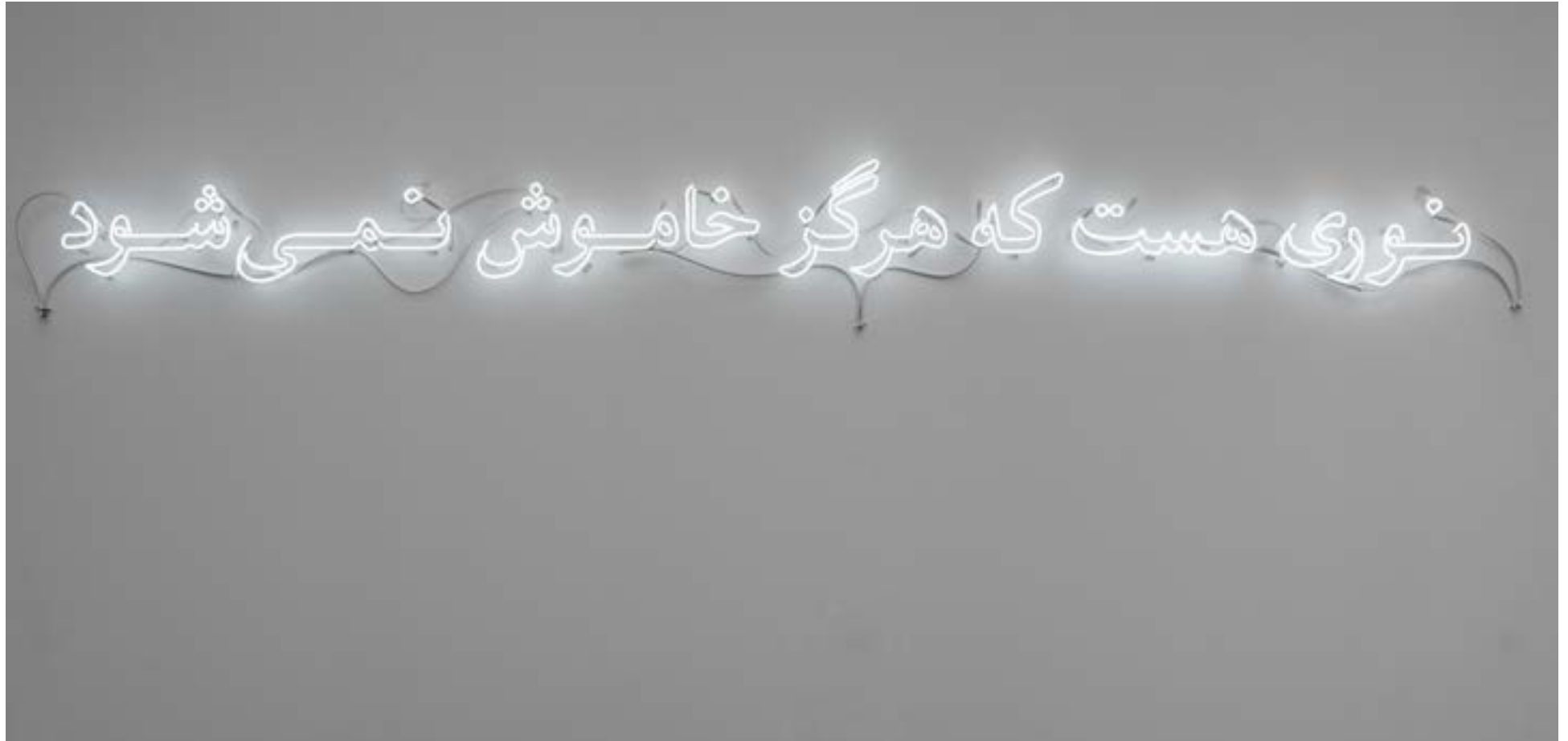
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There is a light that never goes out (Farsi)

2020

30 x 300 cm

Edition: 1 + 1 AP



There Is a Light That Never Goes Out (Sesotho)

2016

Edition: 1 + 1 AP



Installation view: Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, 2016

Photo: Michael Tymvios

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There Is a Light That Never Goes Out (Mandarin)

2014

Edition: 1 + 1 AP



Installation view: blank projects

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Site Analysis

2013 - ongoing

Towards creating site-specific projects that include a diversity of voices and experiences, the artist invites different people; specialists in their respective fields, to visit the site and discuss the place and its context. These meetings are recorded so as to be shared between the artist and a writer who then create a series of scripts from the many layers of interview-based research. The scripts are recorded as voice pieces and presented in the site as interventions that reflect on, provoke, and analyse the conditions of the site.

The artist has collaborated with arborists, astrologers, detectives, psychics, psychologists, and traditional healers in the research and production of this series.

Selected editions:

- *Empathetic Magic*, Augmented Reality, Riksförbundet Sveriges Konstföreningar, 2023
- *Sånger till Hökarägen*, Konsthall C, Stockholm, 2022
- *Nothing here does not hear you*, Monument Theatre, Makhanda, 2020
- *Supernature*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, 2018
- *La Syzygie*, Théâtre Graslin, Nantes, 2016
- *Let me lose myself*, Skogskyrkogården, Stockholm, 2013

Nothing here does not hear you

2021

Speakers, audio

00:39:12

Nothing here does not hear you is a site-specific, sound installation created from research made into the space formerly known as the 1820 Settler's Monument in Makhanda. The process began when a group of individuals were invited to take a walk through the building and its environs to talk about the situation. The guests included historians, cultural workers, political activists, and sangomas, as well as members of the building's maintenance and technical staff.

All the interviewees spoke in different ways of blockages, barriers, clots, stuck places, and obstacles. The building, and the land in particular, was spoken of as an energy that needs to be listened and attended to: the Monument has to be rethought, opened up, and become many monuments.

The recorded interviews were shared with a writer who developed a series of texts that could, when spoken, work as blessings. These ideas form a manifesto of spiritual intent: an opening of channels, a putting to rest the uneasiness, a calling for creativity and wisdom, and a token of gratitude for lessons learnt and lessons to come.



Monument Theatre, Makhanda
Photo: Gemma Garman

La Syzygie

2016

Various durations

Various locations inside and outside the building

Unique

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

The artist invited various local specialists to visit the Théâtre Graslin, an 18th century opera house, and read the space through the lens of their own disciplines.

The guests included an architect, astrologer, a theatre historian, the technical director of the Théâtre Graslin, a psychic, and a psychologist. Each specialist analysed the building in their own unique way.

The resulting information, as well as various other cartographic, literary, and photographic research was shared with a playwright who was commissioned to write a script for actors to voice.

By concealing speakers and lights within the environs of the building, the theatre was transformed into a psycho-architectural environment populated by voices, sounds, and shadows relating to the building's past, present, and future, referencing conditions and techniques of séance, exorcism, and psychoanalysis.

Audience members sat in the auditorium and experienced a phantasmagoria of events, dreams, and histories suggested by the magnificent building itself.



Théâtre Graslin, Nantes, 2016

Other works and commissions

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*The tongue is a flame | The flame is
a tongue*

2024

Taffeta, lamé, bronze grommets

276 x 172cm

Unique

Flags made in the image of a vision received by St. Hildegard von Bingen as depicted on the frontispiece of her illuminated manuscript, Scivias (1151). Visions described in Scivias were later post-diagnosed by psychiatrists such as Oliver Sacks as Aura Migraines (migraine ophthalmique).

St. Hildegard von Bingen (Bermersheim vor der Höhe, 1098 - 1179) was a German religious leader, composer, and botanist.

The flags were produced by Alma van den Berg of Spilt Milk Designs, and created for the solo exhibition, "The Moon Will Not Stay Hidden Forever," at Liljevalchs Konsthall. The exhibition runs from the 16th of May to the 18th of August 2024.



Knowing the ways: In the time of the indrawn breath

2024

Scaffolding, speakers, audio

Variable dimensions

6-channel audio

9 minutes 4 secondes

Language: Latin

Link to stereo mix of 6-channel audio:

<https://soundcloud.com/theotherjameswebb/knowning-the-ways-in-the-time-of-the-indrawn-breath>

An audio recording made inside the former-R1 nuclear reactor hall underneath Stockholm of an ensemble of singers performing five of the Virtues (Humility, Love, Fear of God, Mercy, and Hope) from Hildegard von Bingen's "Ordo Virtutum" (1151).

Mounted on scaffolding as if propping up the Liljevalchs building, the six speakers switch between recordings from sixteen microphones: documenting the ways in which the singers' voices sound the subterranean architecture of Sweden's first nuclear project.

Hildegard von Bingen (Bernersheim vor der Höhe, 1098 - 1179) was a German religious leader, composer, and botanist. "Ordo Virtutum" is a sacred music drama originally composed in Latin for the nuns of Rupertsberg Abbey where she was the Abbess.

Ensemble: Lina Kinning (Humility), Caroline Lundgren Brandberg (Love), Ebba Edberg di Paola (Fear of God), Karin Olin (Hope), Anna Lagercrantz (Mercy).

The artwork was produced for the solo exhibition, "The Moon Will Not Stay Hidden Forever," at Liljevalchs Konsthall.



As Yet Untitled

2021

Speaker, computer, audio

Infinite duration

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

→ [Additional information here](#)

Sound installation synchronised to resonate with the risings, culminations, and settings of the sun, planets, galaxies, and star clusters in relation to the location where the artwork is exhibited.

The artwork is linked to, and affected by, the cosmos. Using the horizon as a plinth, a computer scans the skies and activates sounds in accordance with the movement of the planets and distant galaxies; sine waves and bursts of radio static hum and buzz, following the pathways of planets. The tones react to live data: the rising of a celestial object will initiate a layer of audio, as will the setting of another object remove a layer of audio from the piece's sonic spectrum; an unfolding, amorphous composition emerges.



Installation view: Norval Foundation
Photo: Michael Hall

This is where I leave you

2020

Glass, wood, found objects

Various dimensions

Unique

Found objects, encased in vitrines made of fluted glass, serving as placeholders in a retelling of the story of the Nossa Senhora dos Milagros shipwreck.

The 1686 shipwreck of the Nossa Senhora dos Milagros along the Cape Agulhas coast was an important moment in the history of religion in South Africa. Amongst the many people on board were three French Catholic priests from the court of King Louis XIV sent to South East Asia to, among other things, study the astronomy of the region. Also on board were a group of Siamese Buddhist monks and an ambassador to King Narai the Great en route to Portugal as guests to Don Pedro II. This accident brought Catholicism and Buddhism into contact with the recently colonised, Lutheran Cape: a twist of fate that would have bizarre and poetic consequences.



Installation view: *This is where I leave you* (Radiant guide. Equanimity in the harsh storm), blank projects, 2020
Photo: blank projects

This is where I leave you

2020

Glass, wood, found objects

Various dimensions

Unique

The effect of the fluted glass on our view of the objects appears to fragment and divide them; the static pieces look to be vibrating, or even radiating. The glass becomes a lens as well as a veil that disconnects, obscures and mystifies: the unity of the recognised form remains out of reach. The choice of found objects relates to how the artist imagines and reimagines the scenario of the story: the objects are sites for projection and interpretation, and are here presented as being in a shimmering state.



Installation view: *This is where I leave you* (A map of the heavens, manmade, fallible.

A tower of celestial Babel), blank projects, 2020

Photo: blank projects

The Repetition Compulsion

2019 - ongoing

Audio guide

Various durations

Multilingual

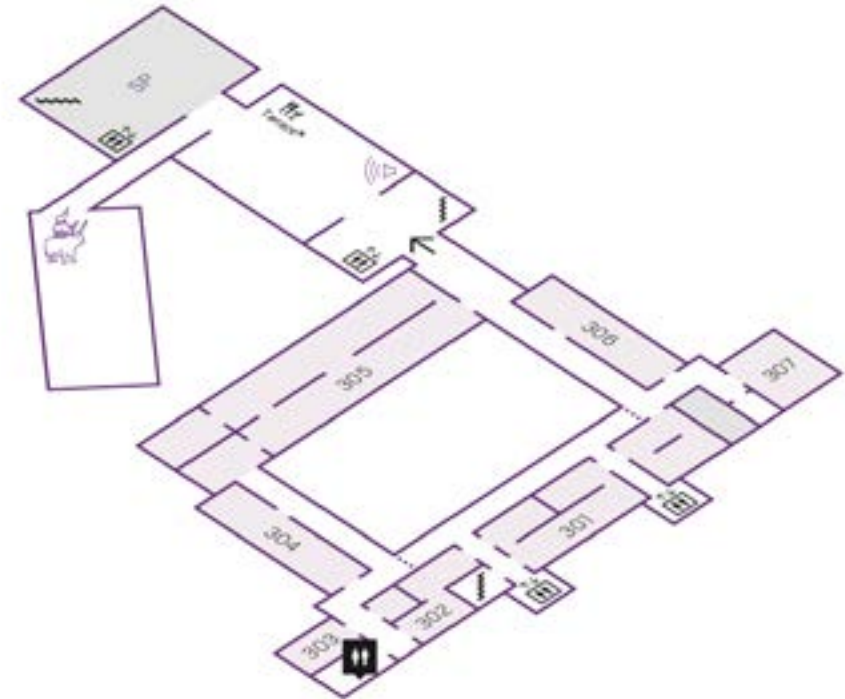
An associative audio guide created from researching and abstracting all the previous audio guides and press releases of the exhibitions that have occurred in the gallery space.

Part dreamscape, part psychological *dérive*, this artwork places the audience in an encounter with a fantastical impression of the building's own past as it affects the present moment.

Selected editions:

- *The Repetition Compulsion* (an audio guide to the third floor of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía developed from all the exhibitions that have taken place there), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2019

3



Map of 3rd floor of Reina Sofía Museum

Invisibilia

2018

Plaster statue, transducer speaker

123 x 31 x 26 cm (sculpture)

Duration: 00:59:21

Unique

→ [Video documentary](#)

A statue of the Madonna and Child vibrates to the recorded electromagnetism of the Aurora Borealis.

Found by the artist in an antique store during a residency in Cleveland, Ohio, the remarkable statue's faded and damaged condition spoke strongly to its spiritual and social message. In placing the statue facing the wall – like a Zen meditation pose – the work reveals a sense of privacy and intimacy; the protection of a mother guarding her child.

A transducer speaker is placed on the chest of the Madonna in the same bodily location as the heart depicted on Jesus's chest. Through this speaker, the sound activates the materiality of the sculpture, turning the plaster statue into a resonating chamber.

This combination of ionospheric transmissions and the weathered statue of the Madonna and Child call to mind ideas of resilience and gentleness, and humility in the face of endless mystery.



Installation view: Galerie Imane Farès, Paris, 2019
Photo: Tadzio

What fresh hell is this

2018

5-channel audio (looped)

Various durations

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

What fresh hell is this is a suite of vocal interruptions and internal monologues comprising bursts of laughter, bruxism, repetitive speaking, whispered chanting, and the incessant shouting of the phrase "You are procrastinating!"

The piece plays randomly, and interrupts and disappears unexpectedly throughout the run of the exhibition.

Three Dreams Of The Sinking World

2015-2018

Multi-channel video and sound installation

Durations: 00:06:49, 00:02:13, 00:03:54, 00:50:00

(audio)

Edition of 3 + 1 AP

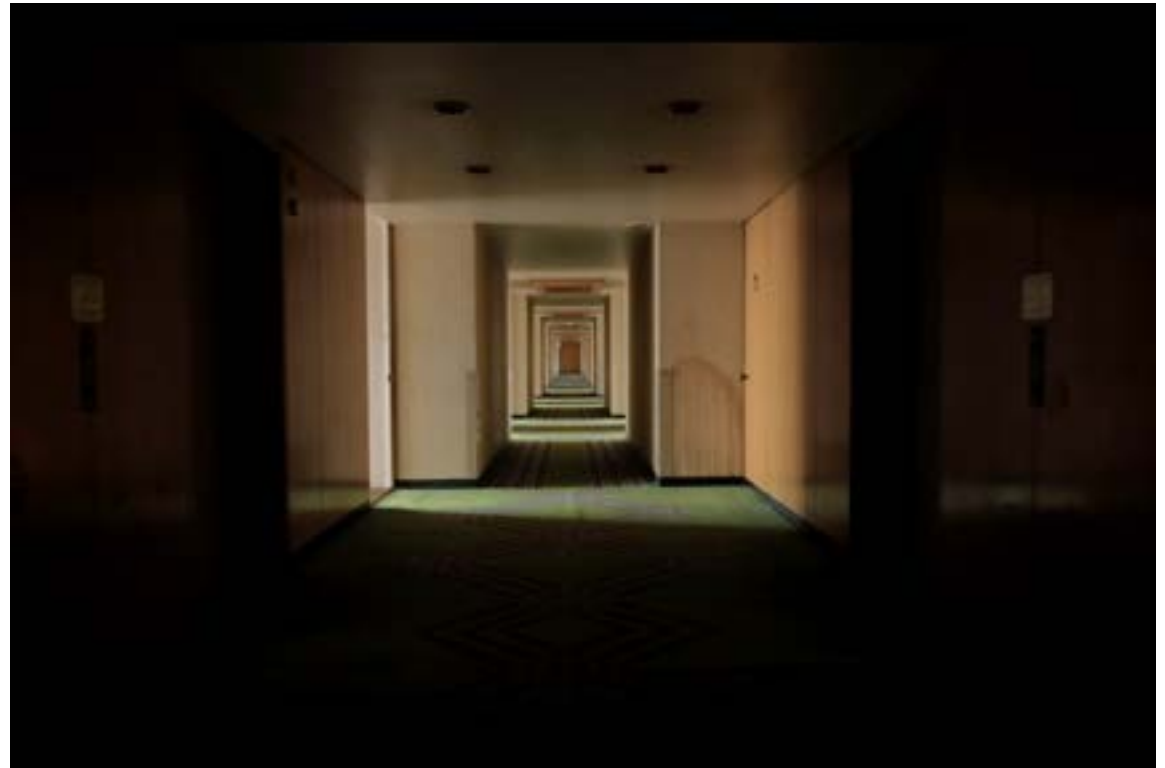
→ [Excerpt of video 1](#)

→ [Excerpt of video 2](#)

→ [Excerpt of video 3](#)

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

Three Dreams Of The Sinking World is a filmic meditation on the former Carlton Hotel in downtown Johannesburg. An icon of wealth and luxury when it was built in the 1960s, and a symbol of Johannesburg's modern global aspirations during the height of Apartheid, the hotel was never financially successful and was finally closed in the 1990s. The building remains closed, in a state of suspension, while the city around it has changed. The artwork consists of a sound installation and a five channel film installation of footage taken inside the hotel in 2015 and 2018.



Video still

All that is unknown

2016

Audio recordings of two individual hearts
beating, installed in two speakers separated
by the dimensions of a room

Various dimensions

Various durations

Editions 3 + 1

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)



Installation views: blank projects, 2016

Photo: blank projects

Threnody

2016

Audio Spotlight 24i Holosonic speaker, audio

100 cm (diam.)

Duration: 00:02:59

Edition of 3 + 1 AP

Ed. 1/3: Art Institute of Chicago

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

The isolated vocal track of “Helter Skelter” (The Beatles, 1968) was reversed and given to the vocalist Zami Mdingi to sing as such, and broadcast from speakers concealed behind a backlit, black circle in a darkened room.



Installation view: Imane Farès, Paris, 2017

Untitled (with the sound of its own making)

2016

Custom-built speaker boxes, speakers, audio

300 x 500 x 100 cm

Duration: 00:18:13

Edition of 2 + 1 AP

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

In *Untitled (with the sound of its own making)*, a solar-powered, multi-channel loudspeaker system broadcasts audio recordings of hands beating on doors.

The artist worked with various drummers who used their hands to activate doors as a sonic material, conceptually evoking images of access, escape, and agency. The audio is housed in a monolithic loudspeaker stack made up of fifteen black cubes, and is solar-powered to allow the artwork to run constantly and be independent from the municipal grid.

The title alludes to Robert Morris's seminal *Box with the Sound of its own Making* (1961), and is here reconsidered as an undefined state with the sound of its own becoming.



Installation view: blank projects, 2016
Photo: blank projects

Al Madat

2014

Karachi carpets, tripods, speakers, audio

500 x 300cm (Carpets)

Duration: 00:16:32

Edition of 3 + 1 AP

Ed. 1/3: A4 Arts Foundation, Cape Town

Ed. 2/3: Rennie Museum, Vancouver

Ed. 3/3: Private collection, Toronto

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

Al Madat comprises a recording of a Sufi dhikr undertaken by patients at the Sultan Bahu Rehab Centre in Westridge, Mitchells Plain. Dhikr (literally, “remembrance”) is a traditional Islamic recitation in which sacred names are chanted with special breathing techniques, often creating trance-like effects. This practice was brought to the Cape with the Malay slaves, and is now used by the rehabilitation centre as an augmentation to the curative process.

“Al Madat,” the specific dhikr used for this installation, translates as “help,” and is here used to implore the Prophet for assistance. This project grew out of *Prayer* when the Sultan Bahu Centre invited the artist to record the dhikrs of their rehabilitation centre in the Cape.



Installation view: blank projects, 2014
Photo: blank projects

Children of the Revolution

2013

Various dimensions

Duration: 00:02:45

Ed. 1/2: Krefeld Museum

Ed. 2/2: A4 Arts Foundation

An isiXhosa protest song inspired by T.Rex's eponymous glam rock anthem, created with choir leader Bongani Magatyana, and presented in speaker cabinets visually quoting the Intonarumori noise-generating machines of the Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo.

The audio component of this installation was created for the exhibition *Imaginary Fact* at the 2013 Biennale di Venezia.



Installation view: blank projects, Cape Town, 2014
Photo: blank projects

Untitled (9th August)

2005-2010

Cards, ink

Various dimensions

75 texts from title cards that contextualize the exhibits in the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, Japan, documenting and memorializing the events of the 9th of August 1945. These labels were copied by the artist and presented together in 'museum card' format; displaced from the objects, remains and photographs they were intended to describe. Amplified by this separation from their visual counterparts, these texts express and represent ideas of trauma and absence.



Installation view: Johannesburg Art Gallery, 2012

Photo: Anthea Pokroy

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Mushroom cloud photographed
from a U.S. bomber

Scorched stones from a shrine garden

Shadows left by the heat rays

Hand bones and glass

Steel helmet with the remains of a skull

Work uniform and combat hat

Le Marché Oriental

2009

HD Video, colour, sound

Duration: 00:03:00

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

Edition 1/5: Darat al Funun, Amman

Edition 3/5: Iziko South African National
Gallery, Cape Town

Edition 4/5: Tate Modern, London

Edition 5/5: A4 Arts Foundation, Cape
Town

Edition 2 AP: University of South Africa

→ [Excerpt of video](#)

Le Marché Oriental films a two-minute intervention inside Cape Town's disused Oriental Plaza, an Apartheid-era shopping mall designed to control the trading opportunities of disenfranchised Islamic communities with links to District Six.

On the fourth day of Ramadan, 2008, Sheikh Mogamat Moerat of the Zeenatul Islam Majid mosque next door to the plaza was invited to sing the Adhan (call to prayer) inside the empty remains of the building a few weeks prior to its demolition to make way for luxury apartments.



Installation view: blank projects, 2010
Photo: Paul Grose

Scream

2008

Signed certificate, speakers, audio

Various durations

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

An intervention at the Reina Sofia, Spain's national gallery, where members of the museum's staff were invited to scream at Pablo Picasso's Guernica.

Because the rights to the painting's image are owned by the Picasso family, the artist was not allowed to document the project visually.

The artwork is presented as a spacious installation in a white cube with the signed certificate of permission from the Reina Sofia on display and audio recordings of the screams broadcast from concealed speakers.



Installation view: Johannesburg Art Gallery, 2012
Photo: Anthea Pokroy

Scream
2008



The Black Passage

2006

Purpose-built tunnel, light, speakers, audio

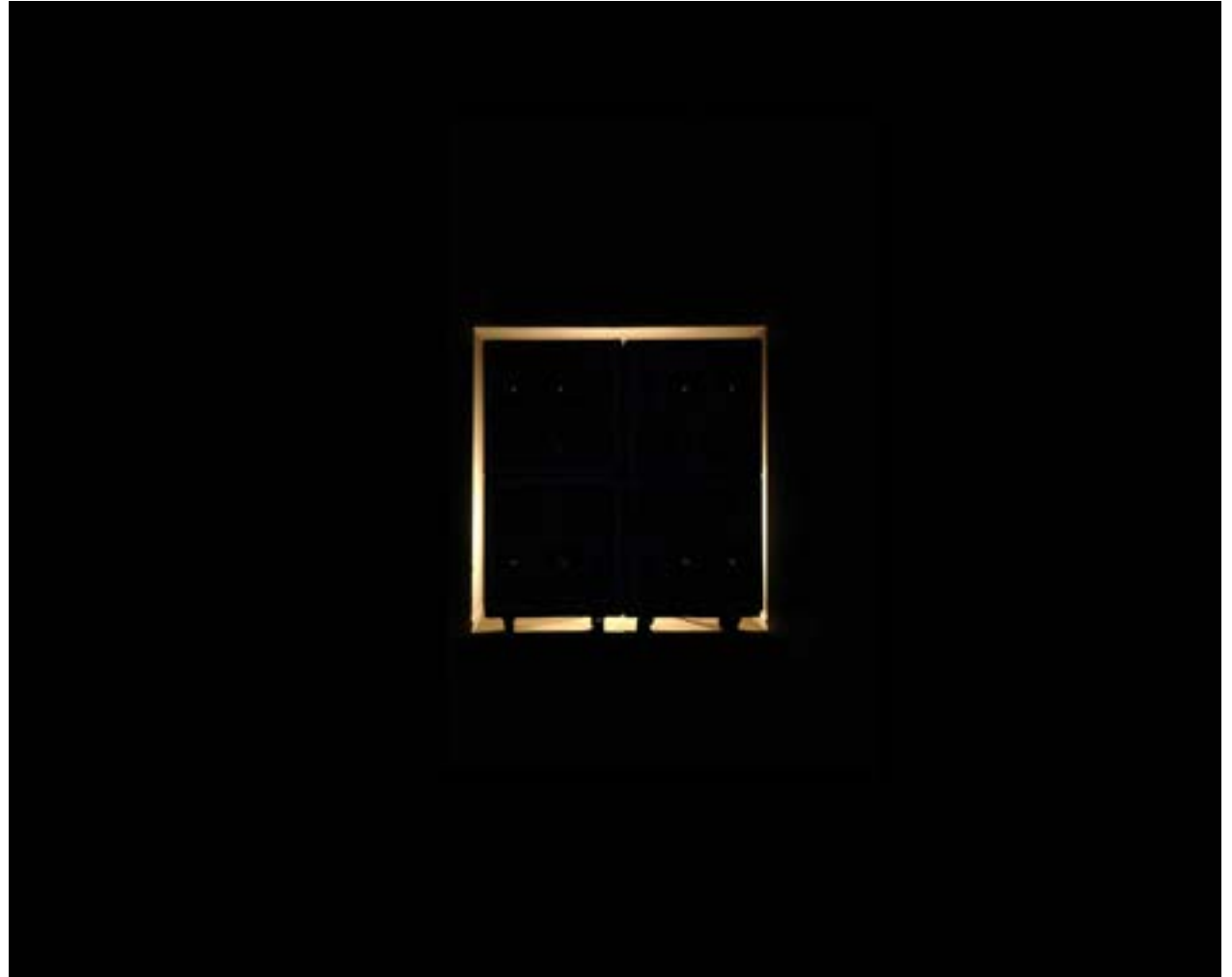
2000 x 200 x 200 cm

Duration: 00:11:11

→ [Excerpt of audio](#)

A sound recording of the empty elevator cage descending into and ascending out of the *South Deep gold mine* is broadcast from a wall of speakers installed at the end of a narrow, 20m black tunnel.

Visitors enter the long, confined space and are drawn towards the frame of golden light emitted from a location behind the speakers at the rear of the tunnel. The sound is diffused at high volume and can be experienced as both an auditory and a physical sensation.



Installation view: Biennale de Lyon, *00's, histoire d'une décennie qui n'est pas encore nommée*, 2007

Photo: Blaise Adilon

The Black Passage
2006



Behind the scenes view: mac Birmingham, 2010
Photo: Simon Hadley

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