

Galerie Imane Farès

# *Choose the Universe*

James Webb

Solo exhibition from September 5 to October 26, 2019

Press Release

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# Galerie Imane Farès

## *Choose the Universe*

For his second solo show at Galerie Imane Farès, James Webb presents a series of artworks resulting from extensive research and referring to the history of humanity, religions and thoughts. *Choose the Universe* is a call to welcome the unknown, to accept ambiguity, not to only consider obstacle as an impossibility, and to question the notion of mystery. It seems that the quest for the invisible, in the broad sense of the term, is at the heart of each of the artworks exhibited here. The history of psychoanalysis, but also various forms of spirituality (from Christianity to Animism and Buddhism) are all references used by the artist to represent what escapes our eyes and mind.

Placed in front of the wall, a Madonna with Child welcomes the visitor. Altered by time, the sculpture, entitled *Invisibilia*, seems to be coming back to life through a sonic transfusion. The recording of electromagnetic pulsations produced by the Aurora Borealis is broadcast through a transducer, which activates the plaster statue's materiality and transforms it into a resonating chamber. The fact that the object has been turned towards the wall is a diversion reminiscent of a number of artworks that marked the history of modern art for their desacralising capacity.

Further on, James Webb uses, in a humorous way, a process often repeated in his practice, which is to juxtapose two or more elements in order to activate new possibilities. In the installation *Friends of friends*, he revisits the surrealist principle based on "the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table". A plastic houseplant and a silkscreen print by Joan Miró – both discarded by their respective owners – were bought in the same thrift shop by the artist and are brought together again in the space of the gallery. The objects are, at once, linked by fate and by chance. Their "encounter" can be compared to a blind date that just was meant to be: they share a path.

The invisible and the ineffable meet in the series *I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds*. James Webb transcribes literary texts with ink on soluble paper, which he then dissolves in water and presents in glass flasks. These small bottles can be knocked down, or evaporate or even be drunk as a potion, a poison or a love philter. While poetry was central in the first pieces of this series started in 2016, here the artist explores the depths of the unconscious mind and the unknown.

- Odile Burluraux, June 2019

\* Excerpt from the exhibition text

# James Webb

## Conceptual Art / Sound installation

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Born in 1975 in Kimberley, South Africa. Lives and works in Cape Town.



James Webb is an interdisciplinary artist whose work – framed in large-scale installations in galleries and museums, or as unannounced interventions in public spaces – often makes use of ellipsis, displacement and détournement to explore the nature of belief, and the dynamics of communication in our contemporary world. Webb is known for a practice that employs audio, installation and text, referencing aspects of the conceptualist and minimalist traditions, as well as his academic studies in advertising, comparative religion and theatre.

In 2018, during a residency he had at SPACES Cleveland, his latest works were shown in a personal exhibition entitled *It's Not What It Looks Like, An audio guide to getting lost*; and the largest to date version of his ongoing project *Prayer*, reactivated around the world since 2000, was displayed at the Art Institute of Chicago.

He was recently included in group exhibitions in international institutions such as: MAXXI, Rome (Italy), Dakar Biennial, Dakar (Senegal), Palazzo Grassi, Punta de la Dogana; Venice (Italy), Tallinn Foto Museum, Tallinn (Estonia) Villa Empain/Fondation Boghossian, Brussels (Belgium), documenta 14, Kassel (Germany) and Athens (Greece), and Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah (UAE).



*Invisibilia*, 2018

Plaster statue, transducer speaker, amplifier, media player, audio  
123 x 31 x 26 cm (sculpture) ; 40 x 40 x 40 cm (plinth)

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès



*I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds (A Comet is Coming)*, 2018

3 texts written on soluble paper, dissolved in water, and presented in 3 glass vials

20 x 40 x 18 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès



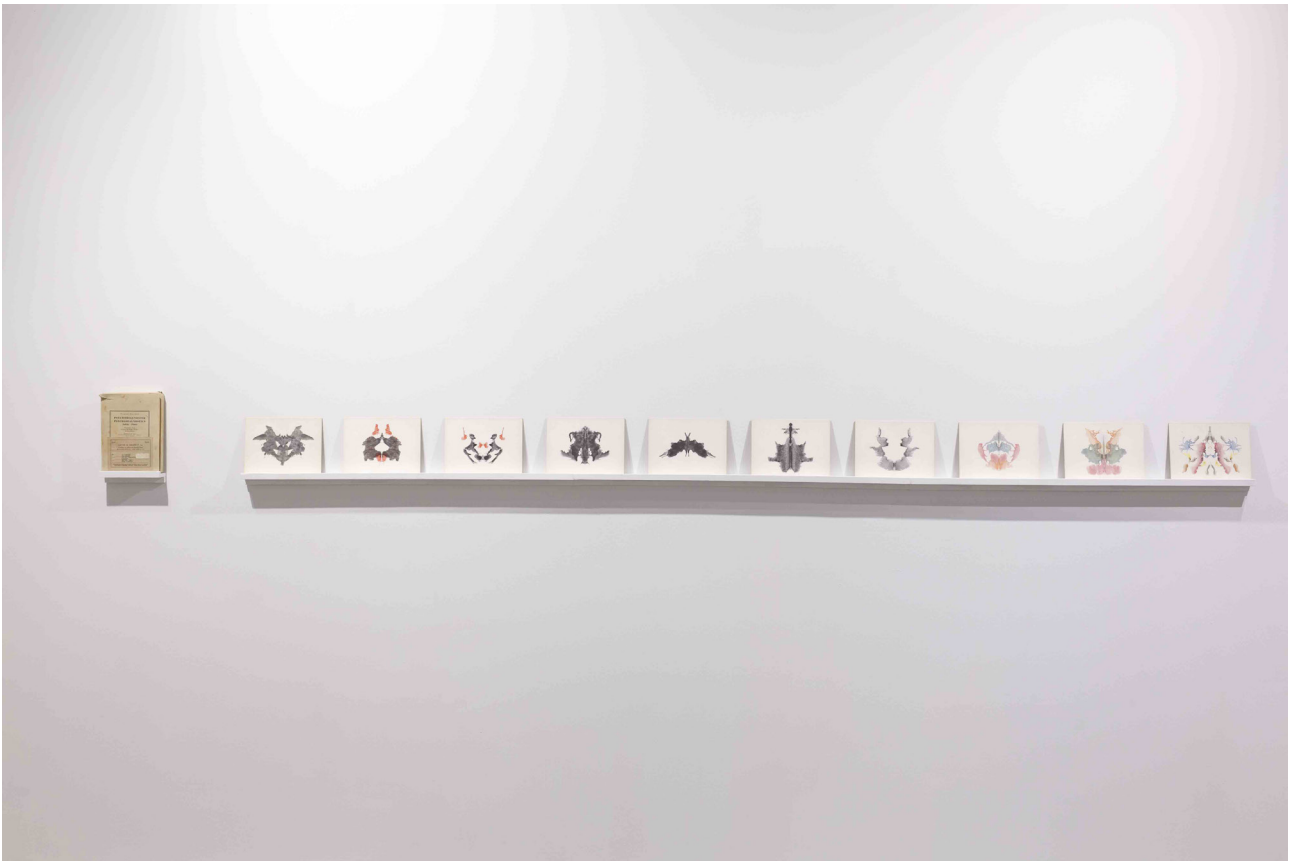


*Friends of Friends*, 2018

Framed Miró silkscreen, planter with plastic plants

195 x 107 x 93 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès



*A series of personal questions posed to a set of Rorschach Psychodiagnostic plates, 2018*

Set of Rorschach Psychodiagnostic plates, speaker, amplifier, media player, audio

21 x 358 x 5,5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès



*A series of personal questions posed to a set of Rorschach Psychodiagnostic plates (detail), 2018*

Set of Rorschach Psychodiagnostic plates, speaker, amplifier, media player, audio

21 x 358 x 5,5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès



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James Webb

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