

MAI 36 GALERIE

Jorge Méndez Blake

Dear James

Opening: Thursday, April 25, 2019, 6 to 8 p.m.
Exhibition: April 26 – June 1, 2019
Hours: Tues-Fri 11 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Mai 36 Galerie is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in Switzerland by Mexican artist Jorge Méndez Blake.

The work of Méndez Blake (*1974 in Guadalajara, Mexico) is built on investigations between art, literature and architecture; addressing literary works as spatial influences that can be translated into concrete objects. The artist employs analysis and synthesis as tools to transform the narrative and the poetic into visual compositions, attempting to make evident the material aspects that are implied in the act of writing. He refers to the great master of universal literature, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Emily Dickinson, Jules Verne, Franz Kafka and James Joyce amongst others.

A mediation about writing and specifically on James Joyce, *Dear James*, brings together different works and media, all of which comprise the Méndez Blake universe: libraries, books, poetry, and architecture. The title takes its name from one of the works in the exhibition, a fictional letter that JMB writes to James Joyce, in which the artist talks to Joyce as an old friend, discussing his writing, explaining some of the pieces in the exhibition and meditating about literature in general. James Joyce had an important presence in Zurich in the first half of the twentieth century, occupying seven different buildings between 1915 and 1919. He was first visiting Zurich before and then also during World War II, ultimately dying in the city in 1941. Joyce and his family are buried in the Fluntern cemetery, next to the zoo.

For the exhibition at Mai 36 Galerie Méndez Blake focuses his attention on two aspects of James Joyces's oeuvre which are not at the center of his known writing: his poetry and children's books. The poem *Chamber Music* was Joyce's first work, written in 1907 when he was 25, while not very well received by critics and written a full 15 years before Joyce would change the face of literature with *Ulysses*. The poem *Chamber Music* is possessed of a certain musicality, if not particularly remarkable in structure. Joyce also wrote two children books, *The Cat and the Devil* and *The Cats of Copenhagen*, which were unpublished in his lifetime and written very quickly as postcards to his beloved grandson, Stephen. Joyce's poem and the two children's books are present in the exhibition - translated as paintings, drawings, calligrams and a wall painting. Méndez Blakes approach to texts is mediated by precise strategies: he counts words and measures letters as well as looks for shapes in stanzas and pages of books. Nevertheless, this obsessive process of production are balanced by simple gestures, as writing small brackets on a page, pointing to a corner of the space or the surreal appearance of a lemon in a model.

His works has been shown widely in solo and group exhibitions, for example in 2018 National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne and Blueproject Foundation in Barcelona, in 2017 FRAC Franche-Comté in Besaçon/France, Pacific Standard Time LA/LA in Los Angeles, Marfa Contemporary in Marfa/Texas, Museo Amparo in Puebla/Mexico and MAAT Museum in Lisbon, in 2015 Franz Mayer in Mexico City, Kunsthalle in Mulhouse/France and Biblioteca Nacional MUAC in Mexico City, in 2014 Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City and Collection Jumex in Mexico City, in 2013 Istanbul Biennial in Istanbul.

(text: Jorge Méndez Blake & Andrea Hinteregger De Mayo)

The opening is on Thursday, April 25, 2019 from 6 to 8 p.m. Jorge Méndez Blake will be present.

Visual materials are available on request (office@mai36.com).

We look forward to seeing you at the gallery and thank you for your interest.

Mai 36 Galerie
Victor Gisler

March 2019