

JACK HANLEY GALLERY

Jess Johnson

Panspermia, Sing Omega

September 6 - October 6, 2019

Opening reception

Friday, September 6, 6-8pm

Jack Hanley Gallery is excited to present *Panspermia, Sing Omega*, Jess Johnson's second solo exhibition with the gallery. In an immersive installation of new drawings, a series of quilts made in collaboration with her mother Cynthia Johnson, video animations and Virtual Reality, Jess Johnson opens a portal into new realities.

Johnson's laborious and carefully hand-crafted drawings manifest a fictional world of genderless flesh-colored humanoids, bat-faced aliens, and worms that slither through monumental architectures of unknown times. Cross-cultural influences of patterns and symbols, and a formative interest in early video games, horror movies and science fiction unfold in densely composed dreamscapes that draw the viewer into hallucinogenic spheres.

Alongside the works on paper, Johnson collaborated on a series of four unique quilts with her mother, Cynthia Johnson. Watching her mother craft quilts with repetitive geometries at an early age has been influential on her own work ever since. For their collaborations, Jess Johnson's analog drawings were printed digitally on rolls of cloth and then worked into quilts and embellished with geometric borders by Cynthia.

In Johnson's video and VR collaborations with Simon Ward, her analog compositions are activated and lifted out of their two-dimensionality. In *Gentekker Archaic*, a 2-channel video animation modeled after retro puzzle-platformer video games, groups of humanoid lemmings seemingly try to overcome their virtual captivity in a labyrinth of exits, looping between two screens. In *Terminus*, Johnson and Ward present visitors with five different virtual realities to select from. In richly rendered 3D visuals and a soundscape composed by Andrew Clarke, the viewer glides through staggering universes of alien civilizations. In creating realities that appear just as real as the one we live in, Johnson shows us the power of the mind and imagination while challenging our perception and concepts of existence.

Jess Johnson (born 1979 in Tauranga, New Zealand) lives and works in New York. Her work has been exhibited throughout Australia, New Zealand and internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include Tauranga Art Museum, Tauranga, New Zealand, Christchurch Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia. Later this fall she will have a solo exhibition at Heide Museum of Contemporary Art, Melbourne.

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