

## List of Works and Floorplan

### 1. Harp for Nine Dyads, 2022

Harp: wood, nylon strings, bungee cords, leather, twine, embroidered canvas, found objects and fabric. Stool: wood and fabric

### 2. Nine Dyads, 2021

Watercolour, collage, pen, Sumi ink, pencil, tape on paper and mountboard

### 3. Offering #1, 2022

Ceramic, gravel, emulsion, thermal printed digital drawing, dried flowers

### 4. Untitled (Board Game 3), 2022

Watercolour, pencil, collage, holographic stickers, thermal printed photograph, thermal printed digital drawing on paper

### 5. Offering #2, 2022

Ceramic, gravel, emulsion, thermal printed digital drawing, dried flowers, teeth

### 6. And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of heaven, 2021

Watercolour and collage on paper

### 7. Untitled (Board game 2), 2021

Watercolour on paper

### 8. Untitled (Fragments), 2022

Watercolour, pencil, sandpaper, collage on paper

### 9. Untitled (Oracle 5), 2022

Oil, wood, cigar box, sand, key, cigarette card, paper fortunes, canvas

### 10. Self is Building, Self is Dissolving, 2022

Oil, emulsion board, carved wood, bungee cords, rope

### 11. Before/After Completion, 2020

Paper assemblage with watercolour, pencil, collage, acrylic

### 12. Untitled (Board game 4), 2022

Watercolour, pencil on paper

### 13. Bloom and Prosper, 2020

Watercolour, pencil and collage on paper

### 14. Untitled (Oracle 1), 2021

Ceramic, cigar box, oil, oil pastel, leather, natural chalk, ultramarine pigment, watercolour, pencil, paper, indian ink, metal cups, thread, piano keys, mountboard, plywood, collage, acrylic, leather belts, mugwort, wooden marbles

### 15. Untitled (Oracle 2), 2021

Ceramic, plywood, cigar box, clay marbles, oil, leather and collage

### 16. All the people that you see will be the children of the Most High, 2022

Ceramic, gravel, emulsion, thermal printed photograph, bone

### 17. Untitled (Oracle 3), 2022

Box, piano keys, found image, oil paint, metal object, clay marbles

### 18. Untitled (Infinity card), 2022

Watercolour, stickers, found image, pencil on paper

### 19. Untitled (Babylon), 2022

Watercolour, collage, indian ink, pencil, thermal prints on paper

### 20. Untitled (cleansing ritual), 2022

Watercolour, collage, indian ink, thermal printed photograph, pencil on paper

### 21. Untitled (drum ritual), 2022

Watercolour, pencil, indian ink and collage on paper

### 22. Untitled (Water ritual), 2022

Watercolour, collage, thermal printed photographs, pencil on paper

### 23. Flute Oracle, 2022

Ceramics, found objects, moss, pigment, trading card

### 24. Untitled (Garment 1), 2022

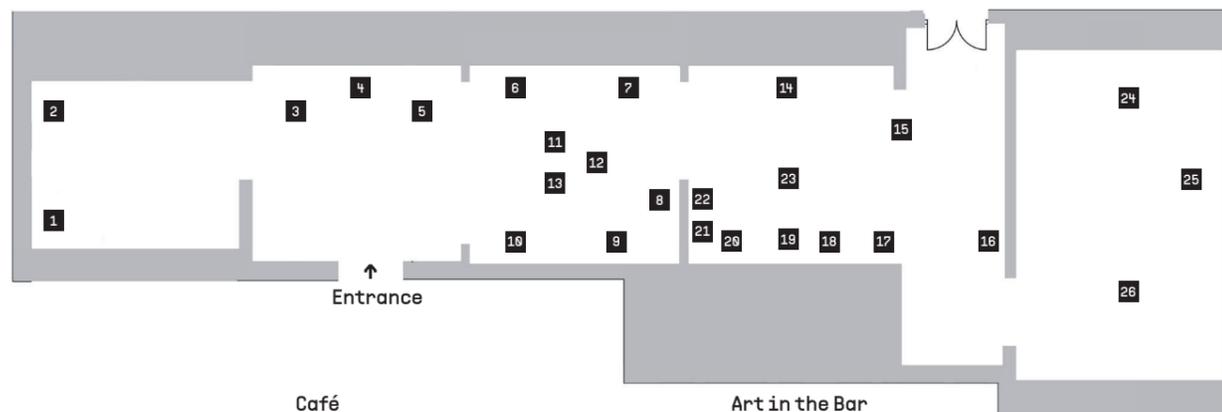
Fabric, thermal prints, bungee cards, rope, found objects

### 25. Untitled (Garment 3), 2022

Fabric, embroidery, wood, trading cards, collage, stickers, found objects, chains, holographic stickers

### 26. Untitled (Garment 2), 2022

Fabric, paper, found objects, chain, ceramic marbles, lenticular prints, willowherb, plastic



# LEO ROBINSON THE INFINITY CARD 10.12.22 – 16.04.23

'The Infinity Card' explores a speculative future, in which rituals have been rebuilt as a process of healing from the destructive legacies of colonialism. Drawing on his study and use of the divination method of I-Ching\*, Leo Robinson's rich world-building imagines a post-diasporic future in which ancient cosmology and indigenous knowledge systems have informed and evolved new rituals and practices, to guide self-knowledge and spiritual journeys of transformation.

The artworks in the exhibition take the forms of oracles, musical scores, and ritual objects. Robinson's language of symbols recurs throughout the works: the net, the flame, the blooming flower, the primate, the vessel and the cross, all invoke symbolic meanings and invite personal readings.

The exhibition opens with **Nine Dyads**, a meditative installation that includes a sonic lecture, musical score and a sacred instrument constructed from a tree branch and adorned with amulets. We hear this instrument alongside narrative instructions on how to move through a series of feelings – from attachment to letting go. Through music, symbol and allegory, you're invited to notice the patterns of your own thoughts.

In the central gallery, oracle board games move the player through symbolic realms. Ceramic vessels, game pieces and flutes allude to performance and ceremony, which are further instructed through collaged works on paper. In these works, religious and encyclopaedic images are repurposed and recontextualised to form the blueprint for new rituals, integrating musical scores and opening up new sonic worlds. The title of the exhibition is taken from Robinson's work, **The Infinity Card** which acts as both instruction and ritual object – the butterfly and heart stickers on the card a symbolic musical score dictated by chance.

The boundaries of time and culture are further flattened in the final gallery, where a series of cloaks and vestments shift the imagination to the theatre of ritual. Here ancient symbols and rusted metal sit among plastic and hardware. Within each work lies the potential for transformation from one psychological state to another, yet the path is not always clear. Robinson asks us to be intuitive and open to the power and potential of ritual-making to help understand our inner worlds and the world around us.

A text by Joseph Morgan Schofield accompanies the exhibition and connects the works in the exhibition to a collapse in time and social order.



Visit our website or scan the QR code below for information about the accompanying events programme, including films chosen by the artist screening in our cinema.

\*The I-Ching or 'Book of Changes' is a 3000-year-old book of oracles used for divination. It's a source for both Confucianist and Taoist Chinese philosophies. Following 20th century translations, it's become an influential text and practice for artists and thinkers around the world.

**Leo Robinson** (b.1994) is an artist and musician living and working in Glasgow. His artistic practice runs parallel to his explorations in spirituality and self-discovery. Recent solo exhibitions include: 'Theories for Cosmic Joy', Tiwani Contemporary, 2019. Group exhibitions include 'To The Edge of Time', KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium, 'Antechamber', Quench, Margate, UK, 'Bathing Nervous Limbs', Arusha Gallery, Edinburgh, UK, 'tender spots in hard code...', Arebyte, London, UK (all 2021) and 'Talking Back', Holden Gallery, Manchester, UK (2019).

## CHAPTER

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## Leo Robinson in conversation with Sim Panaser, Curator, Chapter, 14 November 2022

**Your use and study of the ancient Chinese divination method of I-Ching informs this body of work. Why's it an important tool for you?**

It's not something that's easy to understand, even for myself. I'm still unsure whether consulting the I-Ching is a conversation with the oracle as an entity in itself, with God, with my own subconscious... I know that ultimately these are all parts of the same whole, but it's a mystery to me that really feels worth exploring. Whatever the nature of the conversation, it's very real, and after consistent use, alongside time spent closely observing the natural world, one does really get in tune with the push and pull (Yang and Yin) of the world in quite a deep way. And a lot of the work I've made has been the result of a need to try and transfer or translate, however clumsily or esoterically, the deepening of my own understanding.

**The accompanying text by Joseph Morgan Schofield includes the brilliant line '...These works are relics of the future. Something strange has happened, and I am no longer sure which tense we are in...' For me this perfectly captures the experience of viewing your work. There's a strong sense of familiarity yet it's hard to pin down where in history and which culture(s) it belongs to. Can you tell us more about the time-space you envisaged when making the work?**

I think for those whose ancestors suffered something like the transatlantic slave trade, and the displacement and destruction that came with that, a linear sense of time and place becomes less possible. I'm sure this is why diasporic religions like Rastafari appeared in the early 20th century; a void in time allowed the reclamation of old religious narratives – the Israelites, Mount Zion, Babylon – to gain a new context within the 'here and now' of 1930s Jamaica. Santería, Candomblé, Obeah, Nation of Islam and Vodou all have elements of this process of taking what symbols or rituals are available and challenging prescribed notions of time and space to make it relevant to their own reality. And this world I'm creating here is partly an imagined form of this process but largely an actual example of the process. I'm really seeking meaning and healing and trying to figure this whole thing out, and the imaginative part is the notion of this happening collectively as opposed to on an individual level, which again is probably just a projection of a desire or need within myself. Underneath all the grand ideas of 'the universal', it's really quite personal work.

**You present oracles, musical scores, instructions and ritual objects – all familiar components of knowledge systems; however, little instruction is given on how to interpret and use these. I immediately wanted to decipher and 'read' the works, but it's not as easy as that. Can you talk more about this tension?**

I always hope that the work can permeate on a number of different levels. I think there's something just as powerful about searching for the secret, or noticing that need in yourself, as understanding the narratives or contexts on an intellectual level. It's also a matter of potential for action and the process of imagination that this can inspire. We have a real need for rituals as human beings – in today's largely secular western world it's mainly a choice between mainstream organised religion, a kind of postmodern jumble of handpicked individual practices or the orientalist act of 'going east' to find enlightenment. I hope that the work presents an alternative possibility of collective creation of myth, symbol and ritual based on the material reality of the current world. To do this through something overly prescriptive and decipherable would take away from this imaginative potential.

I also hope the work functions on a subconscious level. When we dream, unless we're in tune with that world, we may have no idea of the meaning of the dream, but that doesn't mean we're unaffected by it. It can leave us with a different perspective on a situation and our fears and desires towards it. Much religious art works in the same way. If I look at a work of traditional Buddhist art from Tibet, for example, I may be able to find scholarly interpretations of each symbol, each deity, each colour even – but the true wisdom is within the spiritual or subconscious absorption of the image.

**In your work I am reminded of traces of other visual and material culture such as mancala boards, the tarot, Yoruba Ifa divination and ritual objects of ancient Mesoamerican communities. What informed your research for this body of work?**

There were certain areas of research involved in the making of the work. For example: Moksha Patam, the original iteration of Snakes and Ladders, which was used in Hinduism as a lesson about Karma; the altars of the Afro-Cuban religion Santería; the talismanic shirts found throughout the Islamic world in the middle-ages; Sallie Nichols' Jungian interpretation of the Tarot; and the aforementioned Ifa tradition of West Africa. These are just examples of religious or spiritual practices that have stood out to me visually and culturally during the making of this body of work, but it's the human tendency towards ritual as

a whole, as well as an intuitive response to my own journey, that really form the basis of the research.

**The exhibition is rich in imagery of archetypal symbols such as the vessel and the lotus flower. Symbolic perception plays an important role in your work, what informs your symbolic language?**

The good thing with archetypes is that they pretty much create themselves. I'm sure the needy, grasping, fearful quality of the ego has been characterised as a monkey so many times before, but I never consciously noticed this until I'd noticed it within myself first. And now more and more I have this annoying monkey which has become part of my experience of life! When things exist as symbols, we're less likely to mistake them as our 'self', which can provoke guilt or shame or confusion, and less likely to ignore or suppress them. It's the same with the flame or the flower, or the fool, the trickster, the cosmic mother, the hero. We've always identified our lives with these things, they're as real as our anatomy and we can understand them in the same way.

I got real proof of this when I was on a Vipassana retreat last year. You meditate for 10 or 11 hours a day and your mind just sifts through the layers of itself until it just starts throwing these archetypal visions, sort of like waking dreams, totally removed from any kind of train of thought. At one point I was seeing all these demons, and I knew I was seeing some kind of archetypal vision that's shared throughout humanity, the source of all religious devils, pagan spirits, horror films and novels, medieval depictions of demons by Bosch or Bruegel. Michelangelo's painting 'The Torment of St. Anthony' is a perfect example. The story is that he went on a journey through the desert and was tormented by all these demons, but I think he probably just went mad and found the archetypal figure that's somewhere within all of us, and Michelangelo was tapped into this too.

**Byung-Chul Han in his book 'The Disappearance of Rituals' argues that today we live in a symbol-poor world. Would you agree?**

Yes! It's a real crisis, but it's fun to watch symbols and deities slip through the cracks of contemporary culture. We can't seem to escape the Pantheon, whether it's Pokémon or the Marvel Universe. The way the year is punctuated in the UK, with Halloween and Bonfire night – a celebration of demons, darkness and destruction; Christmas – winter solstice, new birth; Easter – resurrection, spring equinox, eggs and rabbits; even remembrance day will turn to myth as there are fewer and fewer who remember. People guard their gardens with little gnomes, we communicate

largely through hieroglyphic emojis and the old man feeding the pigeons is surely making offerings to the gods of the sky. The world is deficient in symbols and rituals, but we'll never actually escape them.

**You're a musician and references to music and dance can be seen throughout the work. There's notation, musical scores, images of Black people dancing and there's a photograph of you dancing. Music, dance and celebration are deeply embedded in ritual practices, how did you choose the sounds and imagery of your sonic world?**

The only audible music in the exhibition, within the installation called 'Nine Dyads', is inspired by American minimalist composers who would compose music as rules and systems to be followed rather than notes to be read from left to right. It was only a few years later that I realised that these rules could be applied to mental processes too, which go through their own habitual cycles of attachment and letting go.

The idea of dancing as a form of Black liberation in a socio-political sense was, looking back, definitely inspired by Ishmael Reed's 'Mumbo Jumbo', in which jazz music during the Harlem renaissance is the catalyst for a dancing virus called 'Jes Grew', which spread throughout the world while an order, monotheistic colonisers descended from the Knights Templar try to stop it. The craze is traced back to the cult of Osiris in Egypt. This manifests within the exhibition mostly through images of Black TikTok dances, where dancing to rap or afrobeats is not only an online trend but something that feels liberatory in the face of the continuing oppression that people of the African diaspora face around the world – a continuation of Jes Grew, as well as an allegorical symbol for psychological liberation. My need to place myself within a few of these images is, I suppose, intuitive and personal. Dancing feels like affirmation of 'self', whilst being selfless represents identity and also in its purest moments, being egoless.

In their text, Joseph mentions my vision of the seven trumpets of the apocalypse – particularly as seen in Michaelangelo's 'Last Judgement' in the Sistine Chapel – being replaced by jazz saxophonists. I've always been so drawn to this idea. For me, jazz music is another tool for both political and psychological liberation, and like dance has the potential for a kind of strong and wild emptiness.