

“The chances that anyone has ever shuffled a pack of cards in the same way twice in the history of the world are infinitesimally small, statistically speaking. The number of possible permutations of 52 cards is ‘52 factorial’ otherwise known as 52! or 52 shriek. This is 52 times 51 times 50 . . . all the way down to one. Here's what that looks like:

80,658,175,170,943,878,571,660,636,856,403,766,975,289,505,440,883,277,824,000,000,000,000.

To give you an idea of how many that is, here is how long it would take to go through every possible permutation of cards. If every star in our galaxy had a trillion planets, each with a trillion people living on them, and each of these people has a trillion packs of cards and somehow they manage to make unique shuffles 1,000 times per second, and they'd been doing that since the Big Bang, they'd only just now be starting to repeat shuffles.” —qi.com

“[The world of being] is an embroidery on the canvas of the void.” —Henri Bergson

Galerie Frank Elbaz is pleased to announce its second exhibition by Los Angeles artist Mungo Thomson, *Why Does the World Exist?* Thomson's work in various media (film, sound, sculpture, photography and publication) prompts us to examine the perceptual mechanics of everyday life in relation to a wider historical and cosmic scale.

*Why Does the World Exist?* features three new projects generated by chance operations.

*Compositions* is a series of digital embroideries, composed of up to one million stitches, featuring an image of a scattering of playing cards. Each *Composition* offers an extended meditation on a fleeting moment of random, unique incident – the odds of being one thing and not another.

*Composition for Marimba* is based on Thomson's premise that one can write a score for a 52-key marimba by shuffling a deck of cards. The marimba is commonly used as background music in pharmaceutical commercials, political campaign ads and movie trailers; *Composition for Marimba* proposes the marimba as an endless, oceanic aural backdrop for an exhibition. An iPhone app plays every configuration of a shuffled deck of cards as a new sequence of notes on a marimba, displaying each card onscreen. Given that the number of possible arrangements in a deck of cards is an "astronomically large number" (see above), the program will not run through all the possible combinations of musical notes during the lifespan of planet earth – assuming constancy of electrical power to the work and other contingencies.

*Pocket Universe* is a new series of monoprints produced in collaboration with High Point Center for Printmaking in Minneapolis, USA, made by running pocket change through a lithography press under a sheet of metal embossing foil. The resulting reliefs in copper and aluminum resemble

constellations or arrays of planets – Thomson also intends them to suggest castings of coins to obtain readings from The I Ching, as John Cage did to write chance-based musical compositions. The title refers to a concept in physicist Alan Guth's inflationary theory, which postulates, among other things, the possibility of creating a universe in a lab. A *pocket universe* is a universe that exists within the bounds of another existing universe.

Mungo Thomson has had solo exhibitions, projects and performances at Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA; GAMeC, Bergamo, Italy; Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, USA; and The High Line, New York, USA. He has also exhibited at Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles; Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, USA; Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, USA; Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico; Sculpture Center, Long Island City, USA, and CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, USA, among others. His work was included in the 12th Istanbul Biennial, the 2008 Whitney Biennial and PERFORMA05. His work is currently included in *Ordinary Pictures* at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA; and *Prototypology* at Gagosian Gallery, Rome, Italy. Thomson's work is held in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and FRAC Ile-de-France, Paris, France, among others. He is based in Los Angeles, USA.

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