

CHISENHALE

JOSHUA LEON AT CHISENHALE GALLERY

23 FEBRUARY–21 APRIL 2024

OPENING: THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2024



Joshua Leon, Research image (2024). Commissioned and produced by Chisenhale Gallery, London. Courtesy of the artist.

The Missing O and E is a new commission and first solo presentation by London-based artist, poet, and writer Joshua Leon. Leon's text-led processes produce artworks and exhibitions that bind memoir with historical research. Spanning sculpture and sound, the installation traces a collapsing of personal memory and historical record to offer a nuanced exploration of Jewish life.

Three letters – C H N – are visible from nearby on Grove Road. Inlaid into the side of Chisenhale's building in c. 1940, Leon's exhibition tends to this sign, to reveal an otherwise ellipsed history. Two, possibly missing, letters – an O and an E – have been stained into the gallery's windows. Like a form of annotation, the last name of the building's former owner, Morris Cohen, is restored onto the building's surface, returning a forgotten history to the site.

Interpreting instances in which one's name might be erased, transformed, or deliberately withdrawn, *The Missing O and E* recognises misnomers, codes, and ellipses as both socially imposed and

politically intentional. Leon works with glass and veneer – the latter evoking the building’s history as a former veneer factory – to materially explore appearance and disappearance; asking what is at stake when a person, community, or history is hidden or made visible? Nine wall-mounted frames, constructed using veneer salvaged from the building’s manufacturing years, ask *what’s in a name?* Viewed through yellow stained glass, each contains a music programme detailing the gradual alteration of Leon’s own grandfather’s name – at times imposed, at others desired.

A single speaker emits the second violin part from Edward Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*, a composition played by Leon’s grandfather while in the London Philharmonic Orchestra in the 1950s. By isolating a single instrument, Leon amplifies one voice, otherwise concealed in the cacophony of the orchestra. Two ‘f’ shaped veneered benches evoke the holes on a violin; amplification devices that become support structures for listening. As the piece oscillates between sound and silence, visitors are invited to listen to which voices can and cannot be heard.

Leon’s first publication, titled *The Process*, will be released in April 2024, co-published by Chisenhale Gallery and Mousse Publishing.

As part of the commissioning process, a series of events will be programmed in collaboration with Leon that will run throughout his exhibition. Leon’s exhibition commences Chisenhale Gallery’s Commissions Programme for 2024, which includes new commissions by artists Rory Pilgrim, Simnikiwe Buhlungu, and Bruno Zhu.

Notes to the Editors:

Press images can be downloaded through this [link](#).

Joshua Leon is a writer, poet, and artist based in London. Selected exhibitions include: *Itinéraire Fantôme*, CAPC, Bordeaux (2024); *Presque Partout*, 49 Nord 6 Est – Frac Lorraine, Metz (2024); *THE ARCHIVE AS ...*, Kunstverein München, Munich (2023); *Revision*, PEER Gallery, London (2022); *POST*, Barbican, London (2022); *Expo en boîte*, 49 Nord 6 Est – Frac Lorraine, Metz (2022); *Governmental Fires*, FUTURA, Prague (2021); *Loose Routes Along the Familiar*, Madonna del Pozzo, Spoleto (2021); *Attendance(s) Close to the Close*, Daily Practice, Rotterdam (2020); *The Same Tendency*, Summer Hall Place, Edinburgh (2019); and *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost*, Berlin Biennale, Berlin (2018).

Chisenhale Gallery was founded by artists. The same experimental vision and spirit of possibility that changed an empty veneer factory and brewery warehouse into an art gallery guides our work today. We commission new works of art, supporting artists at every stage of project development, from concept to completion. The gallery has an award winning, 40-year history as one of London’s most innovative spaces for contemporary art. As we build on this rich and varied legacy, we continue to place artists at the centre of everything we do.

The Missing O and E is commissioned and produced by Chisenhale Gallery, London.

Lead Supporters: Federal Ministry Republic of Austria – Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport and Bianca Roden.

With additional support from the Austrian Cultural Forum London and Chisenhale Gallery Commissions Fund.

Chisenhale Gallery's Schools' Programme 2024 is made possible through the generosity of Goodman Gallery and Freelands Foundation.

The Chisenhale Gallery Curatorial Fellowship 2023–24 is supported by the Terra Foundation of American Art.

The 2023–24 Asymmetry Curatorial Research Fellow is hosted by Chisenhale Gallery.

Joshua Leon’s publication The Process is co-published by Chisenhale Gallery and Mousse Publishing. With the generous support of Bianca Roden, Frank Bowling and Rachel Scott.

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Supported using public funding by
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