

For Immediate Release

Jannis Varelas  
*Common People*

March 3 – March 27, 2016  
Opening Thursday March 3, 6–8 pm

James Fuentes is pleased to present an exhibition by Jannis Varelas, his first solo presentation in New York City. A multifaceted artist who utilizes film, performance, painting, drawing and sculpture, Varelas revisits figuration as a means to reproach the concept of this art historical archetype for his latest exhibition. *Common People* attempts to reveal the irrational but possible human identity that lies within the experience of ordinary life.

Within the gallery, Varelas has installed drawings and paintings composed of oil, charcoal, ink and acrylic. A large work entirely covered in charcoal from which the artist has methodically subtracted from its black facade to reveal the portrait of a human/pig hybrid, dominates the exhibition. Varelas, in congruency with his practice, adds and deducts layers to his paintings through a frenetic praxis, executing a stratum of diverse signifiers. The finalized works transcend narration in their structure and behave more like a concentrated imprint of a perception towards a subliminal understanding of the human condition. The artist is disinterested in creating an image that describes roles and activities, rather he records a vibration that reveals the non conventional nature of everyday life.

The work takes as a starting point Allen Ginsberg's journals from *The Book of Martyrdom and Artifice*, dealing with the non cognitive dimension of reality that could exist in various moments of one's life. Varelas is interested in the notion of "experience" and its correlation with the possibility of a transcendence. "*The myth is born in me, in the reality of experience hallucinatory or not*" (excerpt from Ginsberg's journals, June 1, 1952). Following this quote, Varelas believes that inside our ordinary lives one could find doors that lead to a different type of consciousness and of self-understanding.

Jannis Varelas (b. 1977) lives and works in Los Angeles, Vienna and Athens and is a graduate of the Royal College of Art in London (MFA) and the Athens School of Fine Arts (BA).

Selected solo shows include: "Sleep My Little Sheep Sleep", Contemporary Arts Center of Cincinnati, Ohio, curated by Xenia Kalpaktsoglou (2012); "The Oblong Box", Kunsthalle Athena, Athens, curated by Marina Fokidis in collaboration with Jannis Varelas (2011); "Brandybell Series" Autocenter, Berlin (2010); "Blue Soldier-Opera Costumes", The Breeder, Athens (2009). In 2014 he had a Solo Show (with Hugo Canoilas), Franz Josefs Kai 3, in Vienna, Austria

Selected group shows include: Hort Family Collection, New York (2015), "Paper – works from the Saatchi Collection", Saatchi Gallery, London (2013), "Eye Know", curated by Amir Shariat, Hochhaus Herrengasse, Vienna (2014), "Hell As Pavillion", Palais de Tokyo, Paris, curated by Nadja Argyropoulou (2013); "France Chicken or Beef?", curated by Jesper Elg, The Hole, New York (2013), "DESTE Prize 2011", Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens (2011); "Skin Fruit: Selections from The Dakis Joannou Collection", curated by Jeff Koons, New Museum, New York (2010); "Lebt und arbeitet in Wien III: Stars in a Plastic Bag", Kunsthalle Wien, curated by Xenia Kalpaktsoglou, Raphaela Platow, Olga Sviblova and Angela Stief (2010); Cairo Biennial, curated by Ehab Ellaban (2010); New Orleans Biennial Prospect 1, curated by Dan Cameron, New Orleans (2008); "Destroy Athens", 1st Athens Biennial, curated by Xenia Kalpaktsoglou, Poka Yio and Augustine Zenakos, Athens (2007).