

# METRO PICTURES

## Jim Shaw *Before and After Math*

March 11 – April 24, 2021

Metro Pictures presents eight new paintings and five videos by Jim Shaw. The paintings are all made on found theatrical backdrops, a signature of the artist's, with two that incorporate three-dimensional sculptural elements. Shaw's work draws from an expansive breadth of references and idiosyncratic associations to present a surrealistic take on American consumer culture. The pastiche of vintage film, advertising, and television imagery that Shaw poignantly combines in these works engenders them with a pervasive sense of nostalgia and critique for a mythologized, bygone era of American history.

A painting titled *The Bridge* is modeled after Margaret Bourke-White's famous depression-era photo *World's Highest Standard of Living*, first published in the February 1937 issue of *Life*. Riffing on the original's clear juxtaposition of prosperity and poverty in America, Shaw's version replaces the people waiting in line with actual bread loaves, while the billboard image of a happy nuclear family in their new car has been replaced with a similar family from a beloved 1950s television show driving across the Golden Gate Bridge.



In one work, a young boy stares excitedly into a display window. Instead of toys or candy behind the glass, we see several men in suits with typewriters for heads taste-testing soups. In another, wigs float in a circle around the image of a suicidal man standing on a ledge of building. It's inspired by an iconic scene from the film *Fourteen Hours* made in 1951, the year before Shaw was born. Another painting is based on *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, a German silent horror film from 1920 about a mad hypnotist who uses a somnambulist to commit murders for him. Shaw's sleepwalker is constructed from actual cabinets that the artist filled with text on psychological manipulation and its development into a sophisticated professional industry, one the artist believes has led the way for data mining companies like Cambridge Analytica to treat us all as if we were somnambulists.

The videos on view in the back gallery include a performance by the artist's band D'red D'warf at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2017, as well two films from Shaw's Oist project—an ongoing series of artworks based on a homespun American religious cult invented by Shaw. Inspired by 60s horror films such as *Carnival of Souls* and *The Mask*, *The Hole* (2007, 7:19) is a black-and-white film that centers around a woman who discover a group of zombie businessmen stumbling through the fog behind a hole in her wall. *The Whole* (2009, 8:40) is a female version of *The Hole* structured using the same shots only in reverse order. Instead of aimless wandering, the women's movements in *The Whole* reference both Busby Berkeley choreography from the 30s and exercise videos from the 70s.

Jim Shaw was born in 1952 in Midland, Michigan, and lives and works in Los Angeles. He was the subject of a major retrospective, *The End is Here*, at the New Museum, New York, in 2015 and participated in the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. He has had additional one-person exhibitions at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams; BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, United Kingdom; Museum Boijmans van Beun-ingen, Rotterdam; CAPC, Musee de'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux; MoMA PSI, New York; Magasin, Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; and Musee d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva. His work has been featured in important exhibitions at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

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Image: Jim Shaw, *It's for You*, 2021, hair and acrylic on muslin, 48 x 60 inches, 121.9 x 152.4 cm