

**VIEWING ROOM****JIM SHAW: DRAWINGS**

On show as part of its 'Viewing Room' programme, Simon Lee Gallery presents a concise selection of drawings by Los Angeles-based artist Jim Shaw. The remarkable variation in scale and visual narrative on display highlights a crucially important part of the artist's oeuvre, and the works on view trace defining elements in his ongoing artistic practice with humour, skill and insight. Whether as preparatory studies or as works in their own right, these monochromatic works on paper offer an intimate sense of the artist's creative and conceptual process that mines the collective subconscious of American culture through a mix of the familiar and the absurd.

A polyphony of sources - comic books superheroes, Blakean mysticism, utopian idylls, symbols of pop culture - crowd Shaw's drawings and demonstrate his unique style of post-modern eclecticism. The abundance of visual imagery on display, used by Shaw as a critical strategy in his work, is mirrored in the busy installation of the exhibition, at the centre of which is work from the *Blake/Boring* series. Here Shaw mimics the stylised bodies and fantasy world of the pre-Romantic artist William Blake and 1950's silver age superhero comic style of Wayne Boring, a leading Superman artist of his youth. Like the inward-looking, imaginary trajectory of Blake's oeuvre, Shaw's feverish exposure of representational narratives and pseudo-worlds are charged with a supernatural, dream-like subtext.

Also on view are a number of works from two interrelated and ongoing bodies of work, *Dream Drawings* and *Dream Objects*. These austere and journalistic drawings made initially to record his own dreams conflate reality, myth and fantasy and reveal the artist's critical approach to surrealism. Within the exhibition, and central to Shaw's work, are systems of cross-references and repetitions which rework familiar symbols and motifs, allowing a story-like thread to come to the fore. The hair motif, for example, recurs throughout the exhibition as a subject of precise and restrained pencil drawings, as well as the extravagant and eccentric wig sculptures that punctuate the space and are indicative of Shaw's broader practice, which is informed by many of these works.

Jim Shaw was born in 1952, Midland, MI and lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Recent exhibitions include *Michigan Stories: Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw*, The Broad Art Museum at MSU, Michigan, MI (2018); *Jim Shaw: The Wig Museum*, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA (2017); *The End is Here*, The New Museum, New York, NY (2016); *Entertaining Doubts*, MASS MoCA, West Adams, MA (2015); *Jim Shaw*, Simon Lee Gallery, London, UK (2015); *Jim Shaw: The Hidden World*, Centre Dürrenmatt, Neuchâtel, CH (2014) and Chalet Society, Paris, France (2013); *Jim Shaw's Dream Drawings*, LACMA, Los Angeles, CA (2012); *The Rinse Cycle*, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2012) and *Left Behind*, CAPC, Musée de'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France (2010).

Image: Jim Shaw, *BLAKE/BORING*, 2010, Ink on paper / Encre sur papier, 22.9 x 30.5 cm (9 x 12 in.).

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