

GAGOSIAN

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
7/F PEDDER BUILDING
12 PEDDER STREET
CENTRAL HONG KONG
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HOURS: TUES – SAT 11:00AM – 7:00PM



Alex Israel New Waves

Thursday, 24th May – Saturday, 11th August, 2018

Opening reception: Thursday, 24th May, from 6:00 to 8:00pm

I'm not really a surfer but I often think about my approach as related to surfing: I'm on a wave, and I either go with it or I don't. In some ways, I find it interesting to let myself go with it, to see where it goes and to see how it works. Maybe that gives me the energy or the fuel to be able to carve into it, or to do tricks on it, or to change things up without fighting it.

—Alex Israel

Gagosian is pleased to present *New Waves* by Alex Israel, his first solo exhibition in Hong Kong.

In Israel's work, Los Angeles is both city and symbol, reality and fantasy. Brightly colored California sunsets become cinematic backdrops, glimpses of the beach appear in portraits and vignettes, and Hollywood's mythologies shed light on the American dream itself, embodied by celebrity culture, surfer optimism, and the pursuit of luxury and thrill.

New Waves includes multimedia works related to Israel's first feature-length film, *SPF-18* (2017)—a teenage romantic comedy touching on themes of love and loss, with the beating sun and crashing waves of the LA coast giving each scene an ethereal, nostalgic quality. While shooting the film, Israel noticed pelicans silhouetted against the sky or swooping in at the edge of the frame. The closest living species to pterodactyls, these long-beaked birds signal a prehistoric time, suggesting a natural continuity at work within the world's entertainment capital. *Pelican* (2017), suspended from the gallery ceiling, is a lifelike interactive sculpture of a California brown pelican. At the pull of a string hanging

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from the bird's abdomen, its wings flap, its head nods, and its eyes blink rhythmically, slowing down until coming to a stop. The pelican appears again in a short animated video, to be released online on May 24, in which neon lights, newspaper headlines, and art historical references flash into view, showing Israel's deep attunement to the intersection of media, history, and visual pleasure.

In *SPF-18*, protagonist Johnny Sanders, Jr. dreams of a giant animated wave, evoking the sublime power of the ocean, yet imagining this force as a stylized representation, blurring the boundaries between natural and artificial spectacles. Israel expands on this same graphic in his *Waves*, which incorporate the colors and textures of surfing equipment, from surfboards to slick wetsuits. To form the wave logo, pieces of neoprene were sewn together and stretched over canvas supports. Subsequently, these forms were cast in fiberglass resin and airbrushed in bright gradients, creating eye-catching tableaux that recall Hokusai's famous woodblock print *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (c. 1830–32), as well as the work of West Coast artist and surfer Ken Price.

New Waves marks the debut of Israel's Los Angeles-based clothing brand, Infrathin, with unisex apparel available for sale in a pop-up store in the gallery's lobby.

Alex Israel was born in 1982, in Los Angeles, where he currently lives. Collections include Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands. Solo exhibitions include *Le Consortium*, Dijon, France (2013); *Sightings: Alex Israel*, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX (2015–16); *Alex Israel at The Huntington*, Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA (2015); *AlexIsrael*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway (2016); *Using Walls, Floors and Ceilings*, Jewish Museum, New York (2016–17); and *Waves*, Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria (2018). Israel's first feature-length film, *SPF-18*, was released in September 2017 and is available on iTunes and Netflix.

Image: Photo: Jeff McLane. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.

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