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SIMON LEE GALLERY IS PROUD TO PRESENT A SOLO BOOTH OF RECENT WORKS BY JIM SHAW AT HONG KONG SPOTLIGHT BY ART BASEL, HONG KONG, 2020



**BOOTH S05
27 - 30 NOVEMBER 2020**

On the occasion of Hong Kong Spotlight by Art Basel, Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present a solo booth of works from Jim Shaw's iconic *Man Machine* series.

Since the early 1970s Shaw has worked in cycles, many of which are still ongoing. Produced in tandem with long-running series of top-hatted men and profiles of facial hair from the gilded age, the *Man Machine* works exemplify Shaw's rigorous research processes and systematic interrogation of cultural detritus. He employs strategies of the absurd to bring into sharp focus themes such as failing economies and political corruption, deftly revealing the underbelly of society whilst commenting on the construction of individual and collective identity.

The *Man Machine* paintings emerged from Shaw's interest in hair as a source of power. In spite of their absurdity, wigs have historically remained symbols of European authority and control. In opposition, Shaw identifies the wig as a metaphor for the waning authority of the individuals who wear them. In this recent group of works, each character's face is framed by a hairstyle favoured by 'pompous' men of the 1890s. Their facial features obscured by industrial parts or electrical appliances; a signature motif for the artist. The 'machines' belong to the post-war era, when they were considered a symbol of economic prowess. The periodical juxtaposition serves to refract the schisms of the present, an observation that concludes 'we' are evolving to become more mechanical and less human, whilst the antiquated patriarchal traditions attempt to preserve their relevance.

These new works are painted upon theatrical scenic backdrops from the 1940s and 50s, sourced by the artist. Once cut down and stretched, the readymade canvases carry with them a sense of their history. Subsequently, the *Man Machine* is an image of masculine governance from the past which desperately clings onto its power in the present. Having once stated that one could 'understand the meaning of life through misinterpretation', Shaw's practice seems consciously layered and complex in its effort to liberate the minds of both artist and viewer.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Jim Shaw

Jim Shaw was born in 1952, Midland, MI and lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Recent solo exhibitions include *Hope Against Hope*, Simon Lee Gallery, London (2020); *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, Switzerland (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). In 2013 his work was included in *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy. His work is held in major institutions and private collections worldwide, including Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, amongst others.

About Simon Lee Gallery

Founded in London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices explore a wide range of media, from sculpture and painting to video and photography, and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, which introduced its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme. In 2014, Simon Lee Gallery opened an office and private viewing space in New York. In 2017, this space was re-launched with a year-round programme of exhibitions and events, showcasing the work of emerging and established artists in dynamic group and solo exhibitions.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @SimonLeeGallery
www.simonleegallery.com

Image: Jim Shaw, *Blender Man*, 2020, Acrylic on muslin, 83.8 x 71.1 x 4.4 cm (33 x 28 x 1 3/4 in.). Courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

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