

For immediate release:

**JIM SHAW**

**THE WHOLE: A STUDY IN OISM INTEGRATED MOVEMENT**

13 February – 28 March 2009

Opening: Thursday, 12 February 2009, 6 – 8pm



Simon Lee Gallery is proud to announce its forthcoming exhibition of new work by the LA-based artist Jim Shaw. His layered practice combines disparate aspects of contemporary culture; references range from American entertainment to the art historical. This includes zombie cartoons, 1950s Hoover adverts as well as Abstract Expressionist paintings and the surrealist work of Max Ernst, to name but a few.

Since the early 1970's the work of Jim Shaw has emerged in cycles, many of which are still ongoing. One project, entitled *My Mirage* chronicles the personal and spiritual journey of *Billy*, Shaw's fictional teenager and alter-ego from the 1950s. The series consist of over 100 drawings by Billy, which record his state of mind as he rejects suburban life and experiments with hallucinogens and rock music before finding refuge as a born again Christian.

*Oism*, one of Shaw's most enduring projects to date, is also linked to the subject of new-age religious movements. Initiated in the late 1990's, it is a fictional religion complete with a pantheon of characters and rituals. *Oism* is inspired by Mormonism and the Christian Science movement and was allegedly formed in mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century America by *Annie O'Wooten*. There is the central idea that time moves backwards and the belief in the supremacy of a female deity, which is often symbolised by the letter "O". This religion has many elaborate doctrines and rituals which the artist continuously refines.

The forthcoming exhibition marks another chapter in *Oism* and its rituals. Shaw will present new photographs, paintings, sculpture and video installations. In the film *The Whole: A Study of Oism Integrated Movement* the artist orchestrates a symphony of gestures to create a dream like sequence. Here Shaw merges the extravagancy of Busby Berkeley's films with the esoteric dances instigated by spiritual leaders such as G.I Gurdjieff. In another video the dancers demonstrate the ceremonial gestures in a fashion reminiscent of a 1980s exercise video. These implausible and absurdly comical connections are inherent throughout the artist's work.

Having once stated that one could "understand the meaning of life through misinterpretation"; Jim Shaw's practice seems consciously layered and complex in its effort to liberate the minds of both artist and viewer.

Born in Midland, Michigan in 1952, Shaw has had major solo exhibitions at the ICA in London, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Centre in Long Island, MAGASIN Center of Contemporary Art in Grenoble, The Kunstverein Frankfurt and at the St. Louis Museum of Art. Shaw's work also features in prominent public and private collections around the world, such as the MoMA and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museums in New York, the Mamco in Geneva, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. His multifaceted work has been included in group shows at the Whitney Museum in New York, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and at the Sydney Biennial. In 2010 Jim Shaw will have a major solo-exhibition at the Musée d'Art Contemporain (CAPC) in Bordeaux.