

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**JIM SHAW**

**22 NOVEMBER 2013 – 7 JANUARY 2014**

**OPENING: THURSDAY, 21 NOVEMBER, 6 - 8pm**

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present the first Hong Kong exhibition of works by Los Angeles based artist Jim Shaw. While Shaw's methodology embraces a multitude of mediums and approaches, this show of drawings varying in scale and narrative subject highlights a crucially important part of his oeuvre. Part of a ground-breaking group that graduated from CalArts in the late 1970's including Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler, Shaw's practice incorporates a dense medley of iconographic references in an ongoing creative process, which borrows from art history, genre cinema, cartoons, consumerism, religious imagery, history, current affairs and the media. Long-term narrative driven works are psychologically charged with the strange revelatory absurdity of dreams and steeped in references to American pop culture.

Shaw consciously documents and re-appropriates the broken timelines and nonsensical sequences of unconscious images that constitute dreams by correlating them with the open and adaptive structure of comic books. In the *Blake/Boring* series he mimics the stylized 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, Shaw's feverish exposure of representational histories and pseudo-worlds are charged with a mystical, dream-like subtext. Still informing his current practice are two interrelated bodies of work from the 1990s, *Dream Drawings* and *Dream Objects* that in a self-referential, critical approach to the history of surrealism, draw from his own dream diaries. Spanning over 10 years, these were rendered in a sequential narrative, resembling storyboards.

Inspired by cult philosophy, myth, dreams and numerous homespun spiritual movements, Shaw invented a semi-theatrical, experimental fictive religion Oism. Elaborate narratives are used for the story of Oism and in his first major project *My Mirage* (1986- 91), a series of nearly 170 drawn, silk-screened, photographed, sculpted, filmed or painted works charting the life of Billy from his development from adolescence, through his discovery of sex and drugs, to his subsequent fall and finally to his rebirth through organized religion. The hallucinatory, fragmentary quality of Shaw's complex re-imaginings is given form in the cut-up technique of *Partial Ripped-up Face + Leonardo "Deluge"*. The fragmentation of the facial features in the drawing calls attention to how the episodic layers of drawings can also stand as individual components. Similarly, the hair motif recurs throughout the exhibition, both as acid-tinged apocalyptic apparition, and an expression of the ineffable or automated unconscious, echoing the twisting tendrils of *Untitled (Banyan Tree)*, the Banyan tree being an Oist version of the tree of life. Shaw's earnest depiction of alternate realities encourages shape-shifting and defies encapsulation, weaving together various strands of cultural minutiae in an encyclopaedic spectacular of commercial, popular and outsider vocabularies. His many faceted, myth bound constructs are simultaneously revealing and incomprehensible, delving into the oddest recesses of the mainstream and dissecting it with bizarre humour and a brilliant sense of composition.

Jim Shaw has had major solo exhibitions at the ICA in London, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Centre in Long Island, CAPC - Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux, The Kunstverein Frankfurt and most recently, Shaw had a major retrospective at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Arts in Gateshead and a site-specific exhibition of new and existing works at the Submarine Wharf in association with the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam. His work 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.

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