

PRESTIGE



The work of Los Angeles-based artist Alex Hubbard encompasses different media, including video art, painting and sculpture, to explore the boundaries of each through an investigative cross-examination of different practices.

For his second solo exhibition and inaugural presentation at Simon Lee Gallery in Hong Kong, Hubbard has created a series of mesmerising paintings that feature classic and new techniques as well as wide range of materials. One of his latest process, for instance, involves UV printing technology to combine abstraction and figuration in a single canvas.

In his oeuvre, thanks to the use of fast-drying materials, Hubbard embraces chance happenings, revealing the autonomy of his chosen media.

We talked to Alex Hubbard about his Hong Kong exhibition and the meaning behind his art.



Alex Hubbard, Untitled, 2020 (Image: courtesy of Simon Lee Gallery)

Can you tell us about your inaugural presentation in Hong Kong? What can gallery goers expect?

I use a wide variety of materials and techniques to make paintings. They are created from plastics, fiberglass, sprayed automotive paints, oil paint and printed images. The materials and images are layered, building up a surface. In this show, I'm using that process and surface as a springboard to start a painting. Then I paint into the work with traditional oil paint.

How would you describe your artistic style?

I'm not restless, but I do love to explore new materials, new methods. Vito Acconci would speak about his process. It was always the problem, the resolution of that problem in a work and then the problem with that. All to create the next problem and series of problems. It's less explicit in what I make but there is an underlying dialectic approach to materials and medium.

What are the many themes of your work?

I'm often using very common objects from the studio to create imagery. I'm filming chairs, buckets, tools, ladders. I'm painting gloves, caster wheels and printing pictures of wheelbarrows and dollies. The work is very process based. I want it to have life. Getting there is hard, and it takes planning and labor. That's the contradiction for me, I make things that look like an accident – it takes so much time to properly plan an accident.

How did you become an artist?

It was the only thing I was any good at. My mom is an artist, but it wasn't her profession. I never imagined people did it as a profession. I grew up in a rural coastal area in Oregon. I knew an older figurative painter who drank vodka from teacups and lived in a shack next to the ocean. When I attended college, my second college of many, I met other young people who were more familiar with contemporary art. They were going to be artists. I guess that was my introduction. Several colleges later I moved to New York and attended the Whitney Independent Study Program then worked for Christopher Wool in his studio.



Alex Hubbard, *Untitled*, 2020 (Image: courtesy of Simon Lee Gallery)

Did the challenges of 2020 inspire your work in any way? How?

I don't know if inspiration is the word I would use – but a certain sense of liberation brought on by the isolation of Covid. So much of being a contemporary artist is being a part of a general dialogue or rejecting the dialogue – a syntax formed through the public presentation of different ideas and techniques. The exchange that takes place through normal exhibitions, the exchange between artists drinking at a bar together, or studio visits with collectors – all that stopped, and my schedule stopped. Everything was cancelled initially, and it was hard to work. No deadlines, no shows to look at, just the books in the studio and time. I drew a lot at first – I think that's some of what this show comes out of.

Has art been personally helping you to get through the pandemic?

I'm very much a studio artist and I love to work, getting completely consumed in work is a great escape.

You use a lot of mixed media and technology in your works. Can you tell us more about that?

I love problem solving. I love to see how different artists are working through materials and compositions. Good painting can be a window into an artist's internal chain of thought, an unfolding or a record of intelligent ideas and similar to a visualization of good music. I see the materials and technologies I use in the same way. The idea is to always push it, to create something that hasn't been done or seen. I like to present myself with a challenge or puzzle and try to solve it in a graceful and interesting way. I see people make the same painting for like ten years and I just have no idea how they can stand to do it. I would just feel like I was pantomiming myself. I love a good studio disaster, then trying to get out of it.

What is like to be a contemporary artist in LA?

LA has its moments. I have an incredible studio. Los Angeles has great light and the environmental conditions for using so many of the materials I use are perfect. Low humidity and high temperature is how things dry and cure. A good deal of the materials I use overlap with Hollywood, car culture and even aerospace as so many of the chemicals found in my work are manufactured here. There's a tradition of the Light and Space artists using these materials, that thinking is part of the landscape here. There is also the performative history here of Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy and Guy de Cointet. The humor and irony of the Los Angeles masters like Ruscha. There are also hidden masters in the hills like John Knight and Richard Hawkins. I've been here 7 years, but I still feel like a visitor. Like everywhere, the pandemic has been hard on Los Angeles. Many of the great old bars and restaurants are closing, they are some of the better attributes of the city.



Alex Hubbard, Proof of Receipt, 2020 (Image: courtesy of Simon Lee Gallery)

What artistic movement of the past inspires you or inspired you the most?

When I started out it was Fluxus, the intelligence and comedy and light heartedness. We could use a dose of that right now. For the show in Hong Kong, I was looking at Picabia and Duchamp's machine drawings. Inspiration changes a lot, we kind of pull in what we need from history when we need it.

The exhibition will run until March 13, 2021 at Simon Lee Gallery