



P R A Z  
D E L A V A L L A D E

Jim Shaw  
*Unknown* MONSTERS



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24 February – 13 April

Praz-Delavallade Paris

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Jim Shaw in his studio in Los Angeles, CA

Personnalité iconique de la scène artistique californienne Jim Shaw partage avec son complice Mike Kelley, puis en y adjoignant un troisième larron Paul McCarthy, le même désir de produire une œuvre plastique ayant pour but d'explorer cette société américaine.

Jim Shaw et Mike Kelley forment dès 1973 l'influent groupe punk *Destroy all Monsters* avec l'envie de produire un art visant à explorer le côté schizophrénique d'une société qu'ils considèrent conformiste et standardisée, voire sur le déclin. Très tôt les oeuvres de Jim Shaw sont des agrégats issus de sources hétérogènes, des moments d'histoires personnelles et de fragments d'histoire culturelle collective. Si nombre d'entre elles semblent être le produit d'hallucinations façonnées sous le régime du rêve, elles restent pourtant étrangères à une tradition héritée du surréalisme européen. Les travaux plus récents de Jim Shaw grouillent de figures grotesques et délictueuses qui évoquent l'histoire de cette Amérique malade de ses boulimies et de ses excès. Pêle-mêle on découvre cette actualité du quotidien sous la figure de l'oncle Sam rendu malade par des diabolins du Kremlin, le chien Checkers de Nixon, Brett Kavanaugh accusé de viol

et nommé à la cour suprême par Trump, Shaw étale au grand jour les turpitudes de la gente politique et les dégâts causés par la cupidité de certains grands dirigeants de multinationales. Pourtant, bien que ces œuvres soient animées d'un élan satirique des plus acerbes, nous ne sommes pas en présence d'un art «politique». Il ne s'agit pas d'AgitProp – la création d'une communauté idéologique engagée autour d'une forme ou d'une idée. Les modèles historiques de Jim Shaw sont plus singulièrement anachroniques. Nous sommes ici proche d'une Peinture d'Histoire, telle qu'elle était encore pratiquée à la fin du 19ème siècle. Celle-ci alliait des outils discursifs issus d'une tradition rationaliste critique à des dispositifs de production d'images allégoriques.

Autre référent, plus antique encore, les visions cauchemardesques – hermétiques et cryptées – de Hieronymus Bosch, dont les intentions restent aujourd'hui, plus d'un demi-millénaire après leurs créations, sujettes aux interprétations les plus contradictoires. Si ces références de Shaw demeurent inconnues d'un grand nombre d'observateurs dans l'art contemporain, elles appartiennent néanmoins à

un champ qui par définition est ouvert à tous : celui de la culture populaire quotidienne.

Jim participe ainsi à l'élaboration des enjeux de sa génération, notamment à la critique du statut de l'auteur et, en conséquence, à la négociation de la perte de l'aura de l'œuvre. Dans la profusion d'images que l'artiste crée ou recueille, le spectateur est renvoyé à la condition malaisée d'arbitre idéologique. Shaw travaille le plus souvent avec des œuvres formant de larges corpus. Ainsi, *My Mirage* (1986-1991), vaste fiction biographique d'un personnage nommé Billy, compte près de 170 pièces. Depuis 1992, Shaw transcrit ses rêves en dessins (*Dream Drawings*) et réalise en sculpture les œuvres d'art qui lui apparaissent durant son sommeil (*Dream Objects*).

L'ensemble *Thrift Store*, œuvre vivante que l'artiste complète régulièrement par de nouveaux rajouts d'œuvres trouvées dans les boutiques d'occasion, autres séries les incontournables *Distorted Faces* et la création ex-nihilo de «cette religion l'O-isme» née de son imagination dont en Grand Maître de l'ordre il établit les codes et les rites.

À travers elle, c'est à une plongée aux sources mêmes dans les racines de la pensée nord américaine autour d'une multitude d'installations, peintures, vidéos et dessins censés la représenter

et la décrire. Une vaste entreprise de recyclage en somme qui incarne de façon anarchique les obsessions, névroses et valeurs collectives de cette Amérique d'après-guerre. Dès lors, Jim Shaw n'aura de cesse de mettre à jour les défaillances et les déviances de cette culture non seulement en la critiquant explicitement mais en la mettant en scène dans des situations cauchemardesques. Profondément érudits aussi bien qu'anti-autoritaires, fruits d'un processus d'improvisation des plus souverains, les œuvres de Jim Shaw continuent d'incarner depuis plus de 50 ans une beauté étrange qui leur est propre.

Cette exposition s'inscrit dans la perspective de l'hommage que Praz-Delavallade rend à cet immense artiste célébrant ainsi 26 ans de collaboration en lui consacrant une exposition rétrospective avec des œuvres issues de différentes séries s'échelonnant de 1975 à 2019.

Jim Shaw is an iconic figure on the Californian art scene who shares with his contemporaries, Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, the same desire to produce art that explores American society.

In 1973, Shaw and Kelley founded the influential punk rock band Destroy all Monsters with the idea of producing a form of art that would delve into the schizophrenic side of a society they saw as conformist, standardised and even in a state of decline. From early on, the works of Jim Shaw aggregated a wide variety of inspirations, from moments of his own life to fragments of a shared cultural history. If many of them seem to be the product of hallucinations fashioned in the world of dreams, they are nevertheless unconnected to the tradition of surrealism in Europe. Some of his more recent works feature swarms of grotesque nefarious figures that evoke the history of America, a country that is a victim of its own excesses. In no particular order, we discover references to everyday events including a sick Uncle Sam poisoned by the devils in the Kremlin, Nixon's dog Checkers and Brett Kavanaugh, the judge who was accused of rape before being appointed to the Supreme Court by Trump. Shaw lays out for all to see the turpitude of the political class and the damage caused by the greed of the CEOs

of certain large multinationals. And yet, although these works are in a resolutely satirical vein and caustic to say the least, Shaw cannot be considered a political artist. This is not agitprop, i.e. ideological art created to condition the masses. Shaw's historical references are more anachronistic. In fact, they are closer to the form of history painting that was still practiced at the end of the 19th century and which combined the discursive tools of critical rationalism and allegorical images.

Another reference that is older still are the arcane nightmarish visions of Hieronymus Bosch, whose intentions more than five hundred years later are still the subject of the wildest speculations. Although a large number of people viewing Shaw's art are unaware of these references, the latter are nevertheless informed by something that is, by its very definition, widely accessible: pop culture. As such, Shaw is addressing what is a key issue for his generation by contributing to a critique of the status of the artist and, as a result, denying works of art their special aura. Faced with the profusion of images that he himself creates or collects (for example his Thrift Store paintings), the spectator is placed in the awkward position of having to judge in terms of ideology.

More often than not, new works contribute to existing series, such as *My Mirage* (1986–1991), which is a vast, fictional biography of a character called Billy that counts almost 170 individual creations. Since 1992, Shaw has also been recording his dreams in the form of drawings (*Dream Drawings*) and manifesting their content in the form of sculptures (*Dream Objects*). His ensemble *Thrift Store* is a living work of art that Shaw adds to regularly each time he finds a suitable painting in a second-hand shop. Other series include the iconic *Destroyed Faces* and the ex nihilo creation of a pseudo-religion called “Oism” that was born in his imagination and for which, as its Grand Master, he defines the rites. Through this religion, he looks back at the roots of North American thought by means of a multitude of installations, paintings, videos and drawings that purport to portray and describe it. In short, this is a major endeavour in which, by recycling diverse elements in a spirit of anarchy, Shaw gives form to the obsessions, neuroses and shared values of post-war America. In so doing, he continues to expose the failings and deviances of this culture, not only through explicit criticism, but also by portraying it in a variety of nightmarish situations.

Profoundly erudite and equally anti-authoritarian, the art of Jim Shaw is the fruit of a process of improvisation of which he is the sole master. For more than 50 years, his works have continued to embody their own, unique and strange form of beauty.

This retrospective exhibition with works from different series produced between 1975 and 2023 is part of the tribute paid by Praz-Delavallade to this immense artist in celebration of their 26-year-long partnership



**Plastic-Wrap**  
MICROWAVEABLE.

50 FT (66<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> YD x 12 IN) 18.5 m<sup>2</sup> (60.9 m x 30.4 cm)

**Plastic Wrap**



20  
SQUARE

SAFE



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Detail from Jim Shaw's studio

**Jim Shaw**

*Dream Object ("I was finding these metal signs with obsessive writing etched on them by teen gang types, typically their names... I was pouring weird latex columns for Mike that had saggy pagan heads at the bottom."), 2006*

silicon and fiberglass

139.7 x 40.6 x 33 cm

55 x 16 x 13 in

Edition 3 of 3, plus 1 AP





**Jim Shaw**

*The Seat of the Law*, 2019

Acrylic on muslin

152.4 x 94 x 4.4 cm

60 x 37 x 1.75 in







**Jim Shaw**

*Stellaktite and Stellagmite*, 2011

18 ink on board comic drawings

50.8 x 40.6 cm

61 x 50.8 cm (framed)

20 x 16 in (Each :)

24 x 20 in (Framed :)



**Jim Shaw**

*DO (Leda and the saw)*, 2005

Magisculpt resin over armature, oil painting, wood base

41.91 x 31.75 x 15.88 cm

16 1/2 x 12 1/2 x 6 1/4 in



**Jim Shaw**

*My Mirage*

silkscreen on paper

13 31/32 in

43.2 x 35.5 cm

Edition 20 of 50







**Jim Shaw**

*Dream Object (Butt-head bucket)*, 2007

Urethane & foam

49.5 x 61.6 x 80.6 cm

19 1/2 x 24 1/4 x 31 23/32 in

Edition 5 of 5, plus 1 AP



**Jim Shaw**

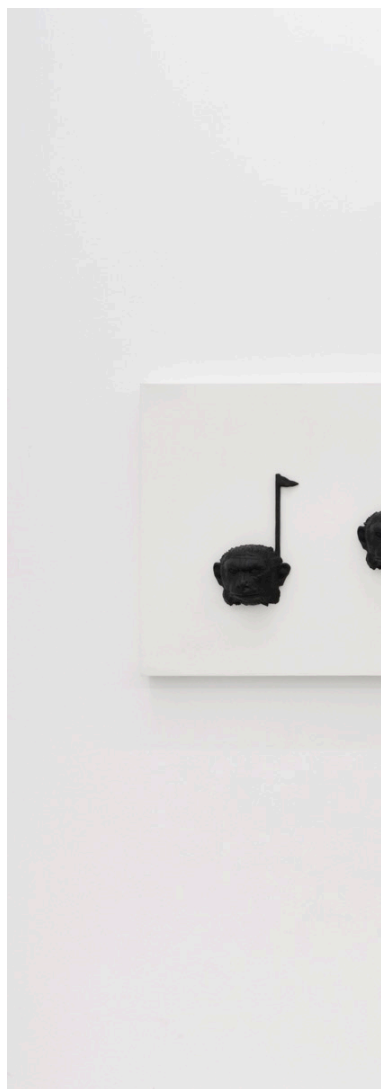
*Dream Object (Butt-head bucket)*, 2007

Urethane & foam

49.5 x 61.6 x 80.6 cm

19 1/2 x 24 1/4 x 31 23/32 in

Edition 5 of 5, plus 1 AP



**Jim Shaw**

*Dream Object ("In a James Bond sequence... On the wall were decorative musical notes with monkey heads for dots..."), 2005*

5 Monkey Head Notes polyurethane

13 3/4 x 7 7/8 x 8 5/8 in

28 x 75 3/4 x 2 1/4 in (framed)

34.9 x 20 x 21.9 cm

71.12 x 192.41 x 5.72 cm (framed)







**Jim Shaw**

*Untitled*, 1974

Pencil on paper

14 x 21 5/8 in

23 5/8 x 31 1/2 x 2 1/8 in (Framed :)

35.6 x 54.9 cm

60 x 80 x 5.4 cm (framed)



**Jim Shaw**

*Untitled*, 1974

Pencil on paper

14 x 21 5/8 in

23 5/8 x 31 1/2 x 2 5/32 in (framed)

35.6 x 55 cm

60 x 80 x 5.5 cm (framed)

**Jim Shaw**

*Dream Object* ("College kids were reminiscing about their innocent days before smoking pot. They had a pile of stuff they needed to hide from a cop on top of a hill. A kid watched from a car below & when the narc showed they held a giant octopus tarot card to block the the cops view.") - *Dream Drawing* ("Using a computer you could visualize sounds."), 2015

Ink and airbrush on paper / graphite on paper

*Dream Object*:

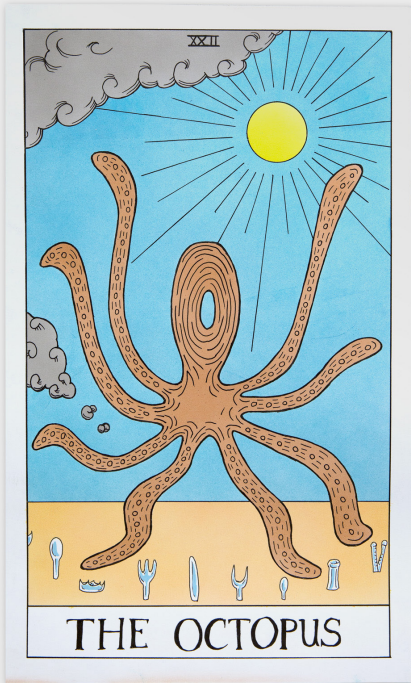
20 x 12 in

50.8 x 30.48 cm

*Dream Drawing*

12 1/8 x 8 5/8

30.5 x 22 cm





**Jim Shaw**

*Initiation Ritual Of The 360 Degrees*, 2002

Film

Edition of 1





**Jim Shaw**

*Untitled (Distorted Faces series: Clint Eastwood)*, 1980

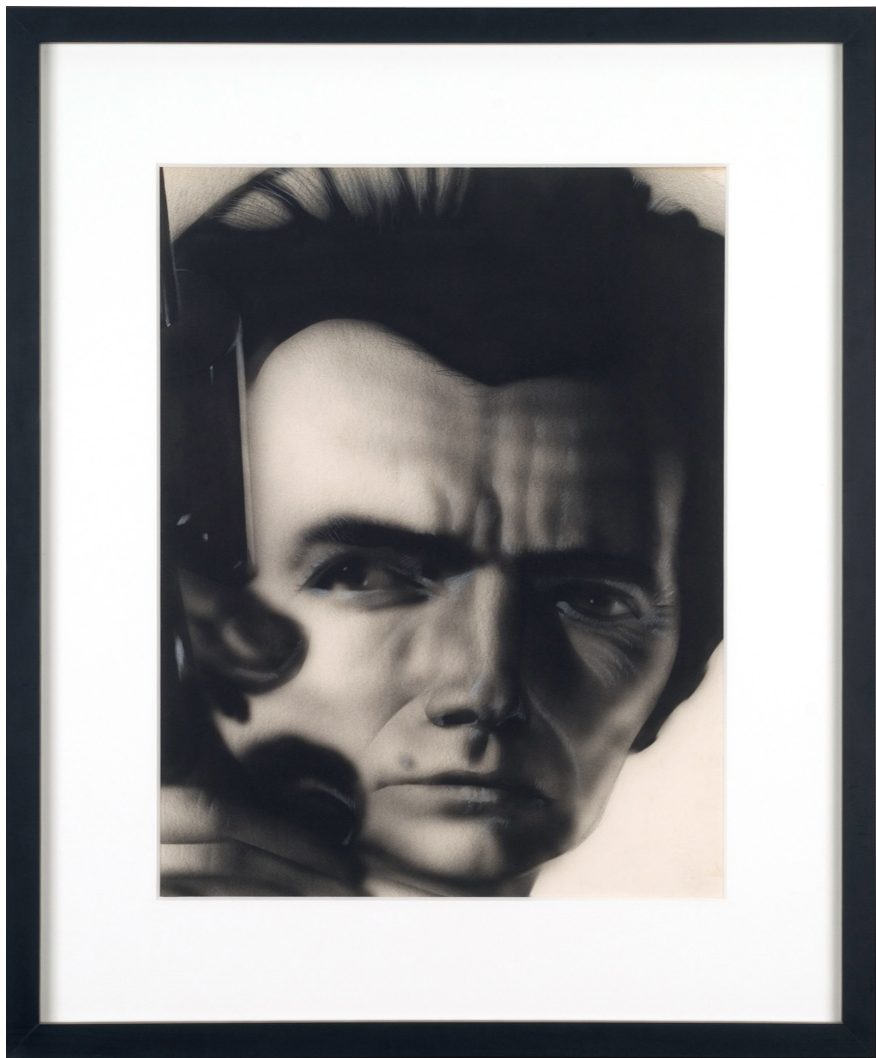
graphite, airbrush and prismacolor on paper

13 3/4 x 10 1/2 in

19 5/8 x 16 1/2 x 1 1/8 in (Framed :)

34.9 x 26.6 cm

49.8 x 41.9 x 2.9 cm (framed)



**Jim Shaw**

*Untitled*, 1974

Pencil on paper

14 x 21 5/8 in

23 5/8 x 31 1/2 x 2 5/32 in (framed)

35.6 x 55 cm

60 x 80 x 5.5 cm (framed)



**Jim Shaw**

*The Music Of The Degrees*, 2002

Color photograph mounted on aluminium

59 x 47 1/4 in

60 7/8 x 49 in (framed)

149.9 x 120 cm

154.6 x 124.5 cm (framed)

Edition 1 of 3, plus 2 AP





# Born in 1952, Midland, MI, US

## Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, US

### Education

1974

BFA, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, MI, US

1978

MFA, California Institute of the Arts, CA, US

### Solo shows

2024

Unknown Monsters, Praz-Delavallade, Paris, FR

The Ties that Bind, Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst  
Antwerpen, Antwerp, BE

2023

ERNSTHAFT?! Albernheit und Enthusiasmus in der Kunst,  
HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Graz, AT

Thinking the Unthinkable, Gagosian, Beverly Hills, CA, US

2022

Zuecca Projects: Squero Castello, Marnie Weber & Jim Shaw,  
Biennale "The Milk of Dreams", Venice, IT

2021

Before and After Math, Metro Pictures, New York, NY, US

2020

Hope Against Hope, Simon Lee Gallery, London, UK

2019

Strange Beautiful, Praz-Delavallade, Paris, FR

2018

Jim Shaw : Drawings, Simon Lee Gallery, London, UK

Jim Shaw, Simon Lee Gallery, Hong Kong, CN

Michigan Stories: Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw, The Broad Art

Museum at MSU, East Lansing, MI, US

2017

Jim Shaw: The Wig Museum, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA, US

Jim Shaw, Metro Pictures, New York, NY, US

Jim Shaw, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA, US

The Wig Museum, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA, US

Jim Shaw, Massimo De Carlo, Milan, IT

Group shows

2023

Summer Spirits, Praz-Delavallade, Paris, FR

Le Retour, MRAC, Sérignan, FR

2022

Hippydrome, Frac Normandie, Caen, FR

Haunted Realism, Gagolian, Grosvenor Hill, London, UK

A Little Comedy, Château du Bosmelet, Val-de-Scie, FR

2021

All Together Now, Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, US

2020

Street trash, Sculpture as special effect, La Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, FR

We never sleep, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, DE

A world of Absolute Relativity, Emerige, Voltaire, Paris, FR

NGV Triennial 2020, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, AU

Drive-Thru Museum, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen at Rotterdam Ahoy, Rotterdam, NL

Energy in All Directions, Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, US

Street trash, Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, FR

2019

Le Magasin, Praz-Delavallade, Los Angeles, CA, US

Habiter l'itime, Fondation Thalie, Ixelles, BE

Sète - Los Angeles International Festival of Contemporary Art,

Sète, FR & Los Angeles, US

Where Art Might Happen: The early years of CalArts, Kestner

Gesellschaft, Hanover, DE

Un monde, un seul, pour demeure, collection des FRAC de

Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Château de Biron, Vergt-de-Biron, FR

Men Of Steel, Women Of Wonder, San Antonio Museum Of Art,

San Antonio, TX, US

Née dans l'Haxagone - FRAC Bourgogne - une collection, Les

Bains du Nord, Dijon, FR

Lignes de vies - une exposition de légendes, MAC/VAL, Vitry,

FR

Un autre monde dans notre monde, FRAC Provence-Alpes-Côte

d'Azur, Marseille, FR

Psyche And Politcs, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, DE

Men Of Steel, Women Of Wonder, Crystal Bridges Museum Of

American Art, Bentonville, AR, US

2018

Mad World, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA, US

I Dream My Painting and Then I Paint My Dream, UNIT 5, Los

Angeles, CA, US

The Angel's Share, FLAX Projects, Los Angeles, CA, US

TOM House: The Work and Life of Tom of Finland, MOCAD,

Detroit, MI, US

La The Archival Impulse: 40 Years at LACE, LACE, Los Angeles,

CA, US

2017

La Tempête, CRAC - Centre d'Art Contemporain d'Occitanie,

Sète, FR

A New Ballardian Vision, Metro Pictures, New York, NY

I Love L.A., Praz-Delavallade, Los Angeles, CA, US

Wither the Winds, LundsKonsthall, Lund, SE

Screen Memory, Simon Lee Gallery, London, UK  
An Uncanny Likeness, Simon Lee Gallery, New York, NY, US

## Collections

Metropolitan Museum, New York, NY, US  
Fri-Art Museum, Fribourg, CH  
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, FR  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, US  
Musée cantonal des beaux-arts, Lausanne, CH  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, US  
FRAC Haute-Normandie, FR  
MoMA, New York, NY, US  
MOCA, Los Angeles, CA, US  
MAMCO, Geneva, CH  
CNAP/FNAC - Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris, FR  
Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Palazzo Forti,  
Verona, IT  
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, US  
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA, US  
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, US  
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, US  
LACMA, Los Angeles, CA, US  
Patchett Collection, San Diego, CA, US









Jim Shaw in his studio in Los Angeles, CA

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This catalog was published on the occasion of Jim Shaw's  
solo exhibition from 24 February - 13 April 2024 with  
Praz-Delavallade Paris.

First edition of 100 copies

Published by Praz-Delavallade  
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Text

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Translation

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Courtesy  
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More about Jim Shaw

[www.praz-delavallade.com/artist/jim-shaw](http://www.praz-delavallade.com/artist/jim-shaw)

