

ALMINE RECH GALLERY



LE CONSORTIUM ET SCRITCH
PRÉSENTENT

ALEX ISRAEL

Well, I was lucky that I got to come see the space before I had to start thinking about how I would fill it. And I really conceived the exhibition to work within the space. So there were specifically installations that I had ideas to make after seeing it. And I wanted to create an experience for the viewer, an experience that would be pleasurable for the viewer.



So "Rough Winds" is a project that I worked on for a long time when I was in school. And for me it was really a way of creating a landscape of Los Angeles. But I wanted it to be something that was easily accessible, so I decided to make this landscape in the form of a web series and it was available and still is available to anybody who wants to watch it at www.roughwinds.com. If you noticed, in "Rough Winds" a lot of the characters are wearing sunglasses, and "Rough Winds" also functioned as a vehicle for product placement, for sunglasses that I developed as a brand called Freeway Eyewear. And this was a project that I did. It's not an artwork; it's just a part of my practice that is meant to exist as a brand, and does, and functions in that way, and we sell glasses through retail stores and on the company's website.

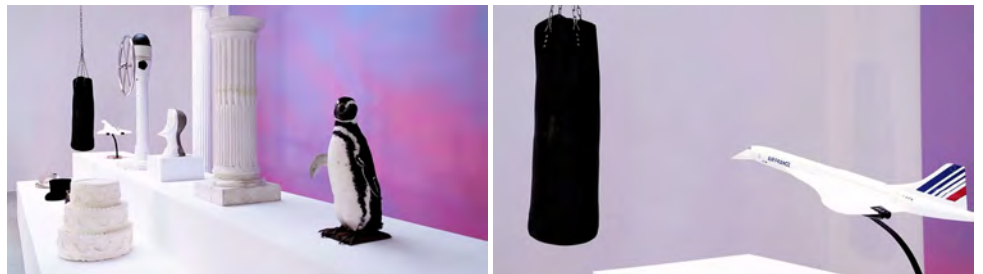
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“Property” is an ongoing project and it’s something I’ve done in different contexts before. I like to rent Hollywood props or cinema props that have appeared in movies and television, and I cast them as performers in my exhibitions. The idea is that they perform the role of a sculpture and at the end of the exhibition they then return to the prop house that I rented them from and they continue to perform various roles in other capacities. There are some really great props that I found in Paris, and in choosing them I often think about the symbolic references that they might carry as objects. I think about design and how they might look together in a room, and I think about narrative and how putting objects together begins to tell a story or can allude to specific narratives that might be meaningful to people in different ways. And I really like that people can bring their own interpretation to these combinations of things.



“Valet Parking” is a mural that I made for this space in The Consortium. I was very excited about this space because it has a wall that opens to the courtyard and has a very indoor/outdoor feeling, which is something that is very common in Southern California, in Los Angeles where I live. And I wanted, with this room, to really recreate the situation that acts as an incubator for me and my thinking, and that’s the situation of driving, driving around Los Angeles and listening to the radio and looking out the window and looking at the trees and looking for parking spots and listening to popular music. It’s really in the car, under those set of circumstances, when I do most of my thinking. And so I wanted to bring that situation into the show.



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The next room in the exhibition features five “flats,” works from a series I’ve made of objects that act really as backdrops. They take their name, which is “Flats,” from the technical term that is used to describe backdrop elements that are made for television and film. The ones that I’m exhibiting I also make directly with the scenic art department at Warner Bros. Studio where they make sets and set elements for television shows and for movies. For me they will always function in that way, as backdrops, and that’s how they function in the set for “As It Lays,” which is in the next room.



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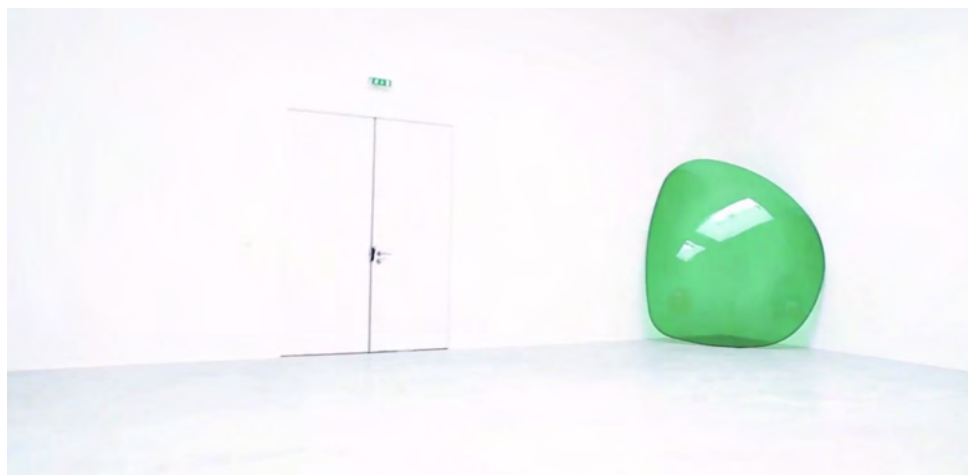
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Here you can see them set up as I had them set up when I recorded a series of video portraits of Los Angeles icons. And this is a project that I did also like "Rough Winds" for the internet. I was able to kind of speak with some of the people that inspired me and have inspired many people who live in Los Angeles and have accomplished things that have helped kind of create the fabric of that city, of my city. For "As It Lays", if you don't get to watch the whole thing at the Consortium, you can watch it online. There are 33 video portraits, and I think it really gives an interesting cross section of the kind of creativity and imagination that has formed Los Angeles, which is a relatively young city. A lot of the people that I was able to speak with were really responsible for shaping it and making it the place that inspires me and inspires my work.



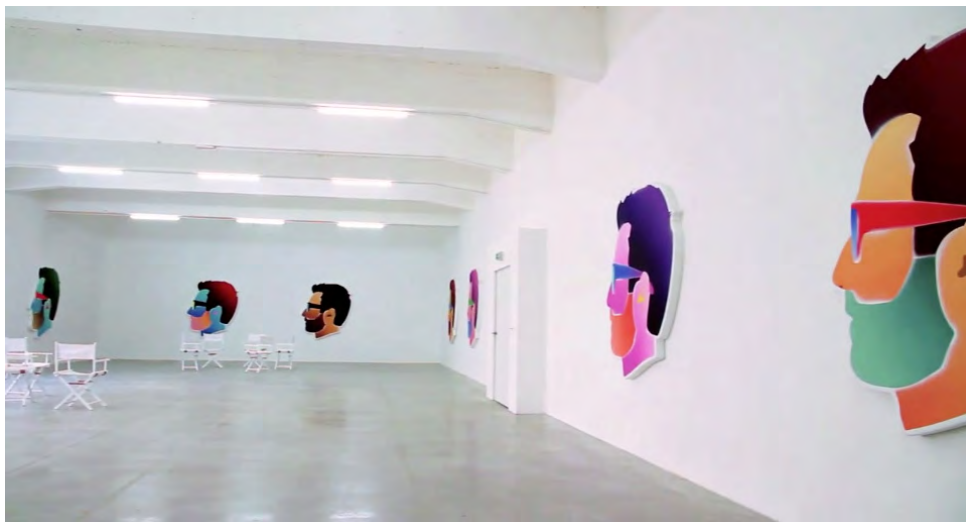
In the next room are two sculptures, freestanding sculptures. They are both giant sunglass lenses, and they are made with UV protective plastic, just like the sunglass lenses that I use in my sunglass line Freeway, but they're blown up and they become these kinds of monuments to Los Angeles, to coolness. And they also pay homage to the Los Angeles artists that I grew up being very inspired by, artists like Larry Bell and John McCracken and DeWain Valentine, who really paved the way for the contemporary art scene in Los Angeles that we have now, that I live in. And these works are an homage to "Light and Space", and like I said they're really meant to be like monuments to California cool, to Southern California coolness.



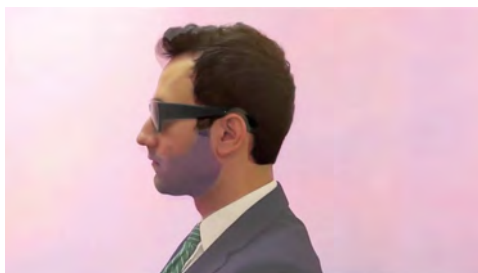
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In this final room I have installed nine self-portraits and this is a project that came out of "As It Lays". When I was working on "As It Lays", I designed a logo for the project using my profile, and this was a decision that was inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's morphing into his profile in the opening credits for "Alfred Hitchcock Presents". And I really always loved that moment and wanted to recreate it with myself so I developed this logo and in the opening credits for "As It Lays" I would turn into the logo.



And I really just loved this logo, and for me it became a template, a way of experimenting with colour to achieve different effects and different moods. It became a way for me to think about painting, really, and a lot of the self-portraits are inspired by the colours of the paintings that I love or by things that have been really attractive to me, like tropical fish and characters from movies. I guess the self-portraits for me were really an opportunity to experiment with colour and to think about painting and to think about myself as a logo and as the context for my work. And we've put some directors' chairs in the room, again to pay homage to the source of this project, who is the director Alfred Hitchcock.



I think that Los Angeles and the place that I come from is all about desire and yearning and dreaming and wishing and hoping and imagining.

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Alex Israel

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