

Flash Art: 'Alex Israel: Almine Rech - Paris', by Timothée Chaillou, p. 101, January - February 2013

ALEX ISRAËL

ALMINE RECH - PARIS

Alex Israël's "Thirty" at Almine Rech Gallery opened just a few days after the artist celebrated his thirtieth birthday. The exhibition includes a large-scale mural painted on the wall of the gallery by Andrew Pike, a Warner Brothers Studios scenic painter. In this work, the gradations of orange and pale blue conjure up the archetypal iconography of Californian sunsets in the Spanish revival style of movie sets from Hollywood's golden age. A similar mural was used as a backdrop for a previous work, *AS IT LAYS*, a series of video-portraits of Los Angeles icons. The backdrop consisted of four arched panels, each stuccoed and spraypainted with shades of sunset, evoking the television chat shows of the '70s and '80s.

The mural is the background for various props that Israël selected, "casted," then rented from a prop rental house for the duration of the exhibition. After the show all these props will be returned. The objects were selected for a variety of reasons, among them "design, style with reference to genre and period, symbology, the construction of narrative and art historical reference." They are gathered in "Thirty" as part of his ongoing

series "Property" (2010–ongoing): a bronze eagle holding a pocket watch in its beak, a box of vintage General Electric flashbulbs, a collection of dismembered mannequin hands, a Guignol puppet theater. Israël likes the fact that the camera lens transforms these rented props; they become as fictitious as the movies in which they were used. Here, objects are displayed as "physical art objects to be experienced without the mediating barrier of the lens." Several interpretations emerge from the associations between the objects brought together by their function, story and shape. Decrypting the objects can't be reduced to the mere readymade. According to Kathryn Andrews, the props "afford a 'truer' readymade experience. That it can only temporarily be the artist's work is of more consequence than how we question the traditional readymade."

Timothée Chaillou

(Translated by William D. Massey)

ALEX ISRAEL, "Thirty," 2012. View of the exhibition at Almine Rech, Paris.
Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris. © Zarko Vijatovic.

