

**Artdependence magazine** : 'This is how the song, California Calling by the Beach Boys starts...' , by Dirk Vanduffel, July 17, 2017

This is how the song, California Calling by the Beach Boys starts...

Alex Israel is without doubt a Californian artist. His location is inextricable from his work. In his work you can see the Californian sun, the optimism and the vibrant colors. Over the last few years he has gained attention from critics around the world, both for his pastel-color panel paintings and his acclaimed TV show 'As it Lays'. His multimedia work is deeply entrenched in the experience of being born and raised in L.A.



"If everybody in the U.S.A

Could come with us to Californ-i-a

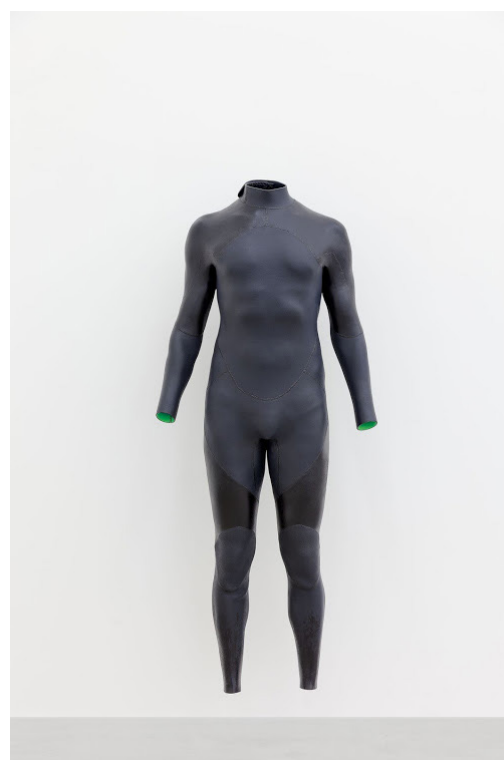
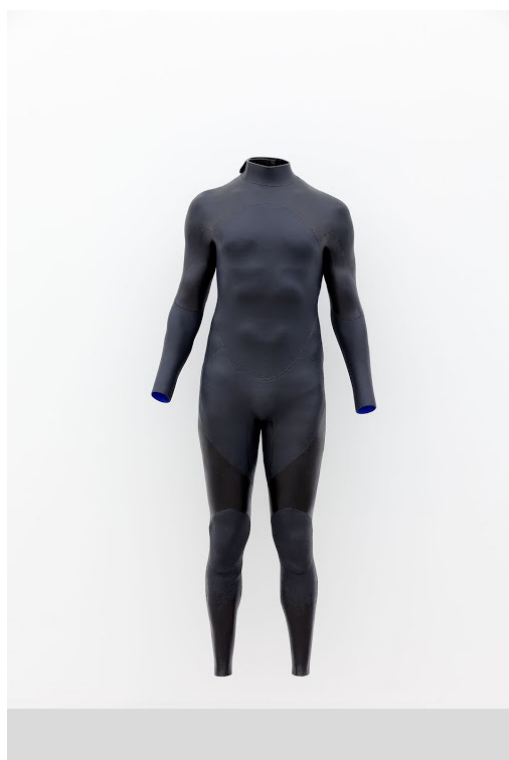
We could take 'em to a place out west

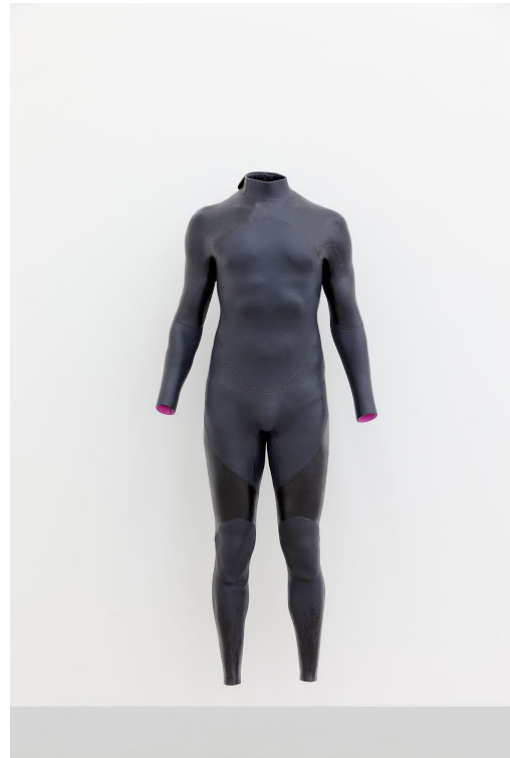
Where the good sun shines everyday"

Alex Israel is without doubt a Californian artist. His location is inextricable from his work. In his work you can see the Californian sun, the optimism and the vibrant colors. Over the last few years he has gained attention from critics around the world, both for his pastel-color panel paintings and his acclaimed TV show 'As it Lays'. His multimedia work is deeply entrenched in the experience of being born and raised in L.A. He explores popular media and images and has been compared to Andy Warhol. Stella McCartney even sighted him as inspiration for her recent menswear line, but this success follows years of hard work and toil behind the scenes. Israel spent several years working in galleries and auction houses, even serving as the doorman at Jason Rhoades infamous Pussy Soirée Cabaret Macramé, before producing his own work. We caught up with him to find out more:

Artdependence Magazine: Are your self portraits influenced by the work of surrealists like Magritte?

AI: Yes, my self-portraits are very much influenced by Magritte. Not only did he paint landscapes within silhouettes, his paintings feel very related to scenic art. There's a scenic-painting quality to the straightforward, economical way in which he painted things. And then there's the theatrical drama of the work. Viewing his work, I sometimes get the sense that I'm looking at a stage, or that a show is about to begin. And sometimes this feeling flips, and I feel as though I'm the one being watched by his paintings, that I'm on stage. That play of painting and viewer, performance and stage has been very influential in my thinking and my work.





Alex ISRAEL, Self-Portrait (Wetsuit), 2017. Acrylic on aluminum, 140 x 61 x 45,7 cm. 55 1/8 x 24 x 18 inches  
© Alex Israel -  
Photo: Zarko Vijatovic. Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech Gallery



Alex ISRAEL, View of the exhibition 'SUMMER 2'. 10.06 - 29.07.2017. Almine Rech Gallery, Paris  
© Alex Israel -  
Photo: Zarko Vijatovic. Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech Gallery

AD: Your work is inspired by Hollywood and the idea of the 'American Dream'. Do you think the American dream still exists?

AI: Yes. Many Americans want to change their lives for the better, and some do. Not everyone's dreams come true, but the possibility that they might do still gives people hope and permission to use their imagination. Los Angeles, in my opinion, is the place where the American dream is most alive. I think it might be the most imagination-driven, and most creative city in the world.

AD: Your path in the arts world has been very a-typical, but very exiting. You went from working for artists, galleries and auction houses to making art yourself - first assisting artists and now being assisted yourself and getting your work in major private and public collections. Does this give you good insight into the world of art and a better understanding than your colleagues?

AI: My work in the art world between college and graduate school was absolutely formative. Becoming an artist is terrifying. Gaining a more transparent understanding of how the art world works alleviated some of my fear and anxiety, and exposed me to an incredible abundance of art and artists, and also to art's potential. A combination of making work, working in the art world, and studying art and art history really gave me the courage to finally put my own work into the world.

AD: How important was 'As it lays' for you?

AI: 'As It Lays' isn't over—it's a work in process! I'm going to begin work on season 2 in the very near future.

AD: Is humor and irony important in your work?

AI: Humor yes, absolutely. Both beauty and humor are very important to me. Irony is something I try to work against. I prefer sincerity to irony.

AD: What are your future plans?

AI: I'm currently preparing the release of my teen surf movie, SPF-18. I'm organizing a tour to show the movie in High Schools across America. Ultimately, the film will stream online.



Alex ISRAEL and Bret EASTON ELLIS, *The Surfers*, 2017. Acrylic and UV ink on canvas, 182,9 x 365,8 cm, 72 x 144 inches  
© Alex Israel and Bret Easton Ellis. View of the exhibition 'SUMMER 2'. 10.06 - 29.07.2017. Almine Rech Gallery, Paris  
© Alex Israel - Photo: Zarko Vijatovic. Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech Gallery



Alex ISRAEL, *Pelican*, 2017. External: Acrylic on fiberglass. Internal: stainless steel, aluminum, plastic, 38 x 203 x 119 cm / 15 x 79 7/8 x 46 7/8 inches. Edition of 3 + 2 AP. View of the exhibition 'SUMMER 2'. 10.06 - 29.07.2017. Almine Rech Gallery, Paris  
© Alex Israel - Photo: Zarko Vijatovic. Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech Gallery