



1 / 6 Alex Israel, "Summer" (2015), installation view. Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech Gallery, Paris. Photography by Zarko Vijatovic.

## Alex Israel Almine Rech / Paris

Alex Israel's second solo show at Almine Rech Gallery, following "Thirty" in 2012, features an ensemble of two self-portraits, three "Lens" works and a display with a "Sky Backdrop" painting. Formal elements of Southern California — its physical landscape, architecture and consumer goods — are still the main subject of the exhibition.

Enlarged and frameless, three eight-foot-tall sunglass lenses made of UV-protective plastic are leaned against the gallery walls. These lenses are presented in a range of the same colors used in the new "Sky Backdrop" painting: yellow, orange and purple. Their surfaces are reflective and transparent, refined and seductive, calling to mind the "finish fetish" art scene. Intimate and monumental, they have a surreal presence.

In the second room, a small polychrome sculpture representing a Chevy Corvette stationed near a cactus is displayed on a white pedestal in front of a large stucco "Sky Backdrop" that evokes a horizontal cinematic expanse (rather than the Spanish Revival windows or doorways from the homes of Hollywood's Golden Age that Israel uses in other works). Once a prop, the Corvette has been reproduced in painted bronze. It's a performing object, an "actor for a part" making possible a cinematic gesture: an *ensemble* to be experienced through an absent camera. The viewer's experience is almost choreographed. Israel's role is "directorial."

The two self-portraits exhibited are the latest updates of Israel's logo — a silhouette of the artist's profile. Here they frame two stereotypical images from California culture: a seagull flying, and a view of the U.S. Open of Surfing. These self-portraits are markers, a logo for a brand that is Alex Israel. By staging himself, Israel is the main subject and the context for his work, using the language of branding to clarify and communicate these conditions.

by Timothée Chaillou