

GREENE NAFTALI

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alex Israel *As It Lays 2*

April 30th – June 15th, 2019
Ground Floor

Trafficking in the seductive, aspirational imagery that characterizes his native Los Angeles, Alex Israel's practice brazenly implements the strategies and aesthetics reserved for commerce and Hollywood. Manifested virally through product placement, the internet, and social media, Israel embraces self-promotion in painting, installation, and the readymade, and the commercial formats of merchandise, film, and TV.

Literally framing the exhibition upon entry is an eight-foot-tall cutout of Israel's profile, emblematic and echoed throughout the space in other *Self-Portraits*, behaving as an initiatory portal into a comprehensively self-branded show. For his first exhibition at Greene Naftali, Israel presents the sequel to *As It Lays*, the artist's DIY talk show: filmed on a set that lifts the signage and Regency style architecture of Bel Air and Beverly Hills, Israel dons his trademarked *Freeway* sunglasses while volleying banal questions to an eclectic succession of celebrity participants. At Greene Naftali, *As It Lays 2* is looped on flat screens and accompanied by its vacant set, central to which are a pair of chairs Israel purchased from Oprah's estate sale, a nod to the work's inspiration. Each of Israel's subjects in *As It Lays 2* represents a unique valence of stardom or notoriety, and all have specific ties to Los Angeles. His questions are untethered to the stars' particular accomplishments, or to even celebrity itself; instead Israel's impersonal questioning renders his subjects at once iconic and interchangeable.

Also on view are five new *Self-Portraits*, Israel's ongoing series of shaped paintings after his silhouetted profile, that take as their subject with various modes of image construction—the selfie, the still life, the portrait. One *Self-Portrait* shows a digitally composed tabletop still life, pristinely organized within the form, its contents variously representing Israel's lifestyle alongside more oblique signifiers of his practice: a foam roller and empty LaCroix carton next to an iPhone with Jeff Koons wallpaper, two novels centered around young Angeleno protagonists, and a sweatshirt emblazoned *INFRATHIN*, Duchamp's elusive term for which Israel named his clothing brand. In the only *Self-Portrait* in which Israel's image literally appears, the artist's face is both repeated and eluded: Israel is still shielded by sunglasses, reflected in his rearview mirror from which hangs a miniature *Self-Portrait* like an air freshener, and isolated in his car at a crowded intersection, forming tautological and self-reflexive image. Israel's silhouette also encloses a view of the Pacific Coast Highway from above; a floor to ceiling, haphazard hang of signed celebrity headshots; and a portrait of two girls, their location at Coachella made clear by Instagram's geotag.

Israel also revisits his earlier practice of decontextualizing Hollywood props with *Idol* and *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, yet unlike works in which the props were rented from actual studios, and returned to their usual function once deinstalled, Israel's newest series on view are solely replicas. Here, Israel reproduces two precious items that propelled movie narratives—the artifact central to Indiana Jones' quest in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and the coveted golden tickets that landed five children a tour of the eponymous workshop in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Counterfeiting what is already fake, multiplying objects fictionalized as rare, Israel plays with authorship, aura, and cultural memory. With the *Raiders* artifact's suggestions of idolatry, and the Golden Tickets' of access, these works reflect the culture of Hollywood and the metrics by which its participants are measured.

This exhibition will be presented simultaneously with *Solo*, at Reena Spaulings Fine Art, 165 East Broadway, New York, May 2 – June 15.

For more information please visit www.greenenaftaligallery.com