

DEATH OF THE DREAM

4 - 17th September, 2017
Herrick Gallery, 93 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, W1J 7NQ

Dellasposa Fine Art is proud to announce the highly anticipated exhibition *Death of the Dream*. The work by distinguished British contemporary artist Alexander James will be unveiled by Dellasposa Fine Art, in association with Herrick Gallery, between 4th - 17th September, 2017. The exhibition will showcase some of Alexander James' latest and most profound artwork, comprising two main series *Death of the Dream of Democracy* and *Transparency of a Dream Illuminated*.

Death of the Dream presents a reimagining of the iconic American flag at an important juncture of American political life, reflecting a nation's foundational ideal overwhelmed by the turbulent waves of gold-etched capitalism and political action. Composed of 2000 roses and tulip petals, the artist has created an image of the flag in the same manner of a Vanitas still life - reflecting the earthly life and the worthless nature of all earthly goods and pursuits - while signalling the death and decay of democracy at the turn of the 21st Century. Alexander James comments, 'For me this work was import and to create and was the very first time in 30 years that politics have influenced such a direct piece. This is my *moment mori* to the American dream; *Death of the Dream of Democracy*'.

The second body of work presented for the first time, *Transparency of a Dream Illuminated* a continuation of the artist's *Swarm* series for which he has become so well recognised. Photographed over a period of several years, *Transparency of a Dream* symbolises the transformative powers of resurrection and rebirth. To achieve this feat James first captured a single 8 x 10-inch film plate with a parent butterfly specimen, it's descendants then overlaid the original transparency plate to create one image in unison.

'This exhibition represents a realisation that I am only satisfied when I cannot distinguish whether I am looking at a painting or a photograph.'

- Alexander James

At once ethereal, joyously beautiful, these works symbolise the transformative power of nature and our emotional and aesthetic engagement with life as we know it. 'Nature is danger', states Alexander James, 'and beauty is intertwined in a never ending dance.' In captivating the butterfly motif, James' cultivated the rare Morpho species with great care, having nurtured the butterflies in his own studio where he then photographed the species underwater.¹ Presented at the exhibition, these new and unique pieces from *Transparency of a Dream* are ingenious creation of extraordinary museum-standard illuminated backlit photography; a technical feat that creates a mesmerising and vibrant spectacle.

'Nothing ever dies', says Alexander James, 'It is just energy moving from one place or form to another.' Indeed, while the exhibition alludes to a sombre time, the artist's new series is simultaneously commemorative; celebrating time and memory interwoven with nature. 'It is the language of nature that guides me', states the artist, 'Its texts were written far before our coming into being. This fact alone negates all religion, replacing them with a divinity of all things.'

For over thirty years, British artist and photographer Alexander James has skilfully composed sculptural scenes from beautifully crafted materials through studio and location based practices. Working solely with an antique analogue camera to convey his philosophy of 'in-camera purity', James explores each piece in relation painting with light through the alchemy of water by distinctively combining photography, sculpture and painting into one singular, unique image.

We look forward to welcoming you to the exhibition and invite you to enjoy the sight of these works of art, on view for a limited time, in the heart of Mayfair, London.

¹ The butterflies were induced into a natural state coma, whereupon they were photographed underwater. Once this process was completed, the butterflies were then revived and able to continue living. No butterflies were harmed in the process of artistic creation.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



Alexander James has explored the alchemy of photography and water as a primary medium for three decades through both studio and location based practice. By fully submerging his photographic subjects his works capture the unique chiaroscuro effect that water imposes upon the image. The Distil Ennui Studio was formed by the artist in 1990. Since 2013 all prints released are unique with no editions ever to be released.

Introductory text on Alexander James, by Andrei Tolstoy:

'Artist Alexander James creates meticulously crafted sculptural scenes; using studio made props, breeding butterflies, growing period specific flowers, hand making the dress and 24 carat gold halo for his Ophelia in 'Witness', 2012 from 'A beautiful announcement of death'; endeavours that imbue a harmonious dialogue with his subject that is ultimately to be encased within a vast underwater landscape.

He does this solely for one purpose, that of documenting the realisation on a single 8 * 10-inch analogue camera plate.

These photographic plates are the only existing record of a far bigger conceptual process that is produced through his complete dedication to a renaissance studio practice. Perhaps in an effort to exercise a form of control; to relive its tragic baroque beauty. To preserve its memory, from ever being able to fade away.

The introduction of water serves its purpose both symbolically and as the functional device through which to achieve the painterly execution of these works; with the interaction of brushes and the artist's bare hands on the surface tension of the water, literally painting the subject in light; the results of which are aching with the dramatic radiance of Caravaggio.

Working with analogue camera equipment and without post production, his lifelong dedication to in-camera purity establishes its provenance when linked to painstaking preparatory work.'

- Andrei Tolstoy, (née. Leo Tolstoy), 1956-2016. Professor of Arts, Russian Academy of Arts & President AICA Russia, May 2014.

THE DEATH OF THE DREAM OF DEMOCRACY



Alexander James, *The Death of the Dream of Democracy* (2017)
Unique Fujitran print face mounted to anti-reflect museum acrylic, with archival zero UV balanced light panel, 175 x 110 cm

The Death of the Dream of Democracy re-examines the ubiquitous icon of the American flag and subjects it to the forces which threaten to undermine its integrity. It is James' Memento Mori to the American Dream, a candescent lamentation to its founding ideals.

For over three decades Alexander James has strived to push the boundaries of photography. By creating meticulously crafted tableau scenes and subjecting them to the unique mechanics of water his works attain appearances both sculptural and painterly. Encased in an ethereal underwater landscape, the subjects of James's practice enter an extraordinary state of purgatory. Simultaneously they are secured by the water and yet threatened to be dissolved by it, and thus falling into the pitch black that surrounds them. James' moment of photography is to capture the beauty of his subject on the brink of destruction, the most delicate instant between life and death. Here the artist turns his attention for the first time to matters of politics and the period of dramatic turbulence that faces the United States under the Presidency of Donald J. Trump.

Reconnecting with the artistic precedence of Jasper Johns, James' iconic distillation of the American flag isolates the image in order to extract its most authentic values of purity, valour and justice. Just as Johns had seen these principles begin to slip within the post-war consumer upsurge of the 1950s, James is concerned for the integrity of the flag under Trump's 'reality TV presidency.' With an ambition to preserve its rectitude, the artist apprehends the emblem of The Stars and Stripes in a dramatic period of instability within the United States. Suspended in a moment of gold etched turbulence, *The Death of The Dream of Democracy*, is not just a lamentation of the vision of America, but a candescent signal for its resurrection.

Composed up of over 2000 individually embroidered rose and tulip petals, the flag is simultaneously radiant yet tragic – haunted by the knowledge that its floral adornment will eventually wither and dissolve into its watery surroundings. James evokes the 16th century artistic genre of Vanitas and the notion that all worldly pleasures are made redundant by life's transience. Just as once the Dutch masters sought to convey the life's ephemerality through their painting, James eloquently expresses through his medium, the fleeting dream of democracy. Exposed to the dynamic nature of the water, the flag is caught between the ability to cleanse and reinvent or to drown and disappear.

Setting it afloat atop the water, James also draws upon the powerful symbolism of gold and its troubled history within the United States. Aware of Trump's adoration of its shining allure and its ability to lead even the most honourable astray, the artist applies the 24-carat gold leaf in a manner reflective of its invasive capabilities. Spreading its way across the frame it begins to obscure the flag and leaves a scar upon its surface.

TRANSPARENCY OF A DREAM



Alexander James, *Transparency of a Dream Illuminated* (2014-2017)
Unique durantrans plate backlit, with gelatine paint by the artist's hand, framed and light panel, 13 x 10.15 cm

Developing upon Alexander James' signature themes from his *Swarm* series (2010), *Transparency of a Dream* re-applies James' butterfly motif, but here with greater attention to the renewal of life and the Surrealist notion of dreams. To achieve this feat James first captured a single 8 x 10-inch film plate with a parent butterfly specimen, all of which were then annotated and stored for several months until their children were born and matured, after which these siblings were then reshot over the top of the original plates. The consequence of this is the creation of a dream like sensation of descendants dancing with one another; something that in nature, never occurs.

These artworks differ with their appearance of sheer fluttering delicacy, ghost like scenes enabled by creating time delayed sculptural scenes underwater with painstaking intricacy. Each piece is not only a unique physical entity but embodies an unrepeatable aesthetic efflorescence that represents the singular, ghostly event of artistic consummation performed through painterly liquid mechanics.

The effect of doubling brought about by the layering of his photographic plates, connects James' work to that of the earliest French surrealists, whose engagement with dreams and the unconscious remains outstanding in Modern 20th C. art today. By overlaying a transparency of the parent butterfly with that of its offspring, James not only forces the two generations into contact but open them to the realm of difference and deferral. The result is a newly constructed reality in which the eye struggles to distinguish between the two subjects, throwing doubt into the separation of original and progeny.

Adding to the distortion of the real, James' use of light and water beam much more present within this series, resulting in a distinct blurring of vision and thus further narrowing the line between reality and dream. By making use of the natural distortion that light and water have upon an object, and by capturing it via the photographic medium, James begins to challenge the very notion of how we perceive the real. One's vision is entirely broken but the effects of nature, drawing into question the distinction we make between dream and reality.

In the same manner of painting, these unique, singular artworks reverse the conventional parameters of reproductive power of photography. Here, James follows in the footsteps of photography's greatest modernist practitioners, whilst pushing forward the boundaries of this medium through complex process and experimentation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About Dellasposa

Dellasposa Fine Art creates exclusive relationships by uniting you with artists and the story of art. We curate exhibitions, offer a bespoke art advisory service, and commission art on behalf of clients.

Whether you are invested in the art scene or beginning your journey, we provide independent, in-depth expertise to guide you through collecting art in today's international, and often complex art market.

With scholarship at the heart of our work, we help navigate the art world for each individual collector to understand their own aesthetic interests and objectives.

Dellasposa Fine Art curates art exhibitions and events, presenting established and rising artists united by their conceptual rigour and ambitious, timeless works of art.

We bring the world of art to you.

Exhibition Title: The Death of the Dream

Exhibition Address: Dellasposa Fine Art, 93 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, W1J 7NQ
In Collaboration with Herrick Gallery

Dates and Opening Hours

Open to the Public:	Monday 4th September – Saturday 17th September, 2017
Press Preview:	Monday 4th September, 18:00 – 20:00
Private View:	Tuesday 5th September, 18:00 – 21:00
Artist Talk/In Conversation:	Thursday 7th September, 18:00 – 20:00
Closing Reception:	Thursday 14th September, 18:00 – 20:00

Gallery Opening Hours

Monday – Friday:	10:00 – 20:00
Saturday – Sunday:	11:00 – 17:00

Exhibition Catalogue

Death of the Dream will be accompanied by a fully illustrated online catalogue, with a contributing essay by curator, Jessica McBride.

Social Media

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

Facebook: /dellasposafineart

Instagram: @dellasposa

Twitter: @dellasposa

#DeathoftheDream #DellasposaGallery #AlexanderJames #DistilEnnui

Admission and Tickets

Admission to the exhibition is free. To attend the private view event, please RSVP to rsvp@dellasposa.com