

GAVLAK

Alex Anderson
Wonderland
June 15 – July 14, 2018

Opening Reception: Friday, June 15, 6-8pm

Gavlak Los Angeles is pleased to present *Wonderland*, an exhibition of new work by Los Angeles-based artist Alex Anderson. A 2018 graduate from the UCLA MFA program in ceramics, this is the artist's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles and his first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Anderson uses the delicate medium of ceramics as his main vehicle to explore the intersections of the sublime experiences that make up both the man-made and natural worlds, as well as deeper, more complicated issues of race and cultural representation. The seventeen works combine his dexterity in the medium with a confluence of baroque imagery and compositions, Japanese pop art references, and current contemporary fashion and design trends in order to probe the depths of reality, illusion and identity. From 18th-century chinoiserie cherry blossoms and gold bees, to the matte black car paint on a popular rap musician's Bentley, the artist draws upon these influences to create his own unique, formal language in each fine white, black and hand painted object.

For this exhibition, Anderson has created his own fantastical *Wonderland*, using a biographical lexicon of characters and symbols drawing from his Japanese and African American heritage, as well as classical Western narratives. In Anderson's practice, inanimate objects are brought to life and imbued with complex and multiple identities similar to his. Flowers are anthropomorphized along with a rabbit and a lamb that both appear to be out of a fairy tale, yet like so many classic children's stories there is also a dark and foreboding story. The Japanese dessert, mochi, is given a vaudeville frown once historically seen in the theatrical and highly controversial use of "blackface". Other vessels have "slanted eyes", another cultural reference the artist both embraces and calls into question. The exhibition also draws upon characters and anecdotes from antiquity, such as the cautionary tale of Narcissus, and Cleopatra's last meal - a footed bowl of fruit with the deadly asp that took her life slithering among the figs. Another vanitas inspired work includes a dagger with eyes next to the head of the artist behind a smiling curtain, a reference to the fall of Caesar.

Anderson's mastery of the medium is evident in extremely challenging sizes and shapes throughout the exhibition, most of which have been formally placed atop white and pink plinths as in the traditional presentation of decorative arts. His Fulbright residency at the China Academy of Art was instrumental in this focus on various traditional styles and ceramic techniques. Anderson's control of the medium is also evident in the elongated leaves and flowers that compose many of his sculptures, stretching the clay to the edge of its breaking point.

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Alex Anderson (b. 1990 Seattle, WA) earned his Master of Fine Arts degree from UCLA, having previously studied at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, PA and the Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute, Jingdezhen, China. Anderson was recently included in group exhibitions at Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, Seattle (2018), RESIDENCY, Los Angeles (2018); American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona (2018); Center for the Arts Eagle Rock, Los Angeles (2017); Galerie Lefebvre et Fils, Paris (2017); and the Center on Contemporary Art, Seattle (2016). Anderson was a featured artist with Gavlak Gallery at Art Basel Miami Beach 2017. The artist completed an artist residency at Warehouse Art Center, Jingdezhen, China in 2017 and was awarded a Fulbright Grant in 2015 to study Ceramics and Ink Painting at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou.

A reception will be held for the artist on Friday, June 15th, from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at GAVLAK Los Angeles (1034 North Highland Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90038).

For more information or for press inquiries, please contact Lauren Wood at 323-467-5700 or lauren@gavlakgallery.com.