

Alex Anderson: The Gazing Pool
January 3 – January 19, 2021
GAVLAK Palm Beach

GAVLAK Palm Beach is pleased to present *Alex Anderson: The Gazing Pool*, a solo exhibition of thirteen new works created during the artist's Fall 2020 residency program at Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts in Helena, MT. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

In this new body work, Anderson explores the narcissism embedded within human nature and society. The artist employs imagery and narrative references drawn from classical mythology to illustrate his contemporary social concerns. Narcissus, according to the Roman poet Ovid in his seminal narrative *Metamorphoses* (8 C.E.), was a handsome youth who fell in love with his own reflection. Using the ancient myth of Narcissus, Anderson's work in *The Gazing Pool* investigates this cultural phenomenon. *Narcissus*, a figurative sculpture that anchors the entire exhibition, depicts this myth with a kneeling figure adjacent to its own detached head. Further drawing upon this myth, the head of Narcissus is crying, dripping exaggerated golden tears into the pool in which he will drown.

In Anderson's *A Violent Reflection* a singular hand grasps the gilded handle of a large knife, the blade decorated with Anderson's signature pastel sky and subtle daffodil motif. This knife is lavishly ornamented and dripping with golden blood, as if it has been recently used. Meanwhile, *Escape from the Gazing Pool* displays the artist's head in profile, floating atop a pink pond and severed from its body. Emerging from the shallow water, we see remnants of a broken gold chain and a large pink daffodil, with a hand reaching out across the heart-shaped pool. This wall hanging sculpture conveys all the trappings of millennial psychology and the cultural propensity towards competition. Perhaps the most optimistic of this suite of works, Anderson's *Escape* offers the viewer the opportunity to contemplate and confront our contemporary moment.

Walking Away is one of the artist's wall-works that challenges conventional notions of 'painting;' while all of Anderson's works are made entirely of clay, he uses ceramic surfaces to 'paint' these unconventional earthenware canvases. For this work, Anderson employs one of his visual archetypes, a blackface minstrel caricature, to embody the figure of Narcissus. Surrounded by a haunted landscape, the protagonist here is pictured walking away from the golden reflection pool, leaving a trail of shimmering footprints behind.

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Working with and updating classic mythology to our current time, Anderson is asking age old questions that have recently become even more pertinent due to a seemingly endless stream of Tiktok dance videos, Instagram likes, and friend requests that have permeated culture. At its most direct translation the artist's provocative new work poses several questions: What is perfection? And why do we want it so badly?

Alex Anderson (b. 1990 Seattle, WA) recently received his MFA in Ceramics from the University of California, Los Angeles, after earning a Fulbright Grant in affiliation with the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China in 2015. His work has been exhibited in galleries and institutions internationally and across the United States, with an emphasis on Southern California. Institutions include the Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach; American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona; and Craft Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA. In 2020, Anderson was a guest artist in residence at Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts, Helena, MT. In 2021, GAVLAK Palm Beach will present the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery, The Gazing Pool. Anderson lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, and is represented by GAVLAK in both Los Angeles and Palm Beach, FL.

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