

MASS MoCA

NEWS RELEASE

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Jim Shaw: *Entertaining Doubts*

Largest U.S. exhibition of west-coast artist features large-scale works that focus on political, cultural, and religious fallibility

"Since 2004, I've been making paintings on old theatrical backdrops, and when I was looking at MASS MoCA's architectural plans, I had this idea for doing a backdrop work in which a variety of dying Supermen would be painted into this sort of wistful, sad view of Manhattan—Central Park on a foggy evening, but in shards, to pull viewers into the space. That idea was eventually merged with an earlier idea for a body of work, *Not Since Superman Died*, a meditation on death." – Jim Shaw, to *Artforum*

Jim Shaw's *Entertaining Doubts* has received significant early attention in the press, including this feature in [Artforum](#).



Jim Shaw, *The Rinse Cycle*, 2012
Acrylic on muslin, 150 x 230 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

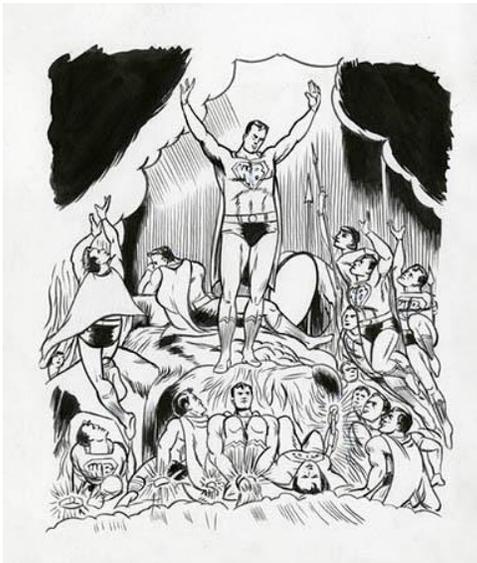
North Adams, Massachusetts – Since the 1970s, **Jim Shaw** has mined the essentials of American cultural detritus – from comic books, pulp novels, and album covers, to vintage advertisements, movie posters, and noise rock. Now the artist comes to MASS MoCA with his largest exhibition in the U.S., a vast body of work that features recurring characters including himself, his friends, fictional superheroes, politicians, and film stars.

In addition to work from the past 10 years – including Shaw's large painted backdrops, drawings, and sculpture – *Entertaining Doubts*, will feature a new site-specific installation. The exhibition will be on view from March 28, 2015, through early February 2016.

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Shaw uses a focus on the over-arching themes of fallibility – fallen heroes, collapsed economies, and political figures – to center his exhibition around a series of large-scale paintings begun in 2004 on old, cut-apart theatrical backdrops. Turning painting into architecture, these works essentially function as political cartoons, populated by figures such as Barbara Bush, 20th-century religious prophet Aleister Crowley, and Dan Quayle, with themes ranging from the seven deadly sins and the four horsemen of the apocalypse to the great deluge. Continuing this series for MASS MoCA, Shaw will create a new work, *Not Since Superman Died*, on a 24x49-foot shredded backdrop, which focuses on an injured and endangered Superman, presented along with video imagery of floods. The superhero in peril is a well-known motif, but Shaw never shows the heroic escape – turning Superman into a mere mortal.



Jim Shaw, *Blake/Boring*, 2010
Ink on paper, 12 x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery, London
and Hong Kong

In addition to these banner works, the exhibition includes additional paintings and objects, and a series of films relating to Shaw's *Oism* project. "Oism," a false religion created by Shaw, draws from the history of American religious practices, from Mormonism to Scientology. Supposedly founded in the 1840s by Annie O'Wooton, who discovered a prophesy about "O," Shaw's religion centers on a virgin who gave birth to herself at the dawn of history and brought writing and agriculture to society, but it was eventually toppled by the "I" – a stand-in for patriarchy/ego. Shaw weaves a believable tale but consistently reinforces the idea that his religion, like all religions, comes from the imagination of its inventor. The films in this series vary – one is part of a rock opera light show; another suggests a 1970s earth mother

performance vibe, recalling early experiments with modern dance; a third echoes low-budget horror film dream sequences; and a fourth records a men's secret society initiation ritual.

By combining text and the painted figure with objects and drawings from his unconscious, Shaw's works twist politics, religion, and belief into one long dream sequence. Throughout, he spans diverse media

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and reference points, all the while reminding us that the end is near and that reality is absurdly plausible.

The New Museum

The New Museum's exhibition *Jim Shaw: The End is Here*, opening October 17, 2015, surveys long-term cycles of works including *My Mirage*, *Dream Drawings*, and *Thrift Store Paintings*, alongside objects from Shaw's collection of pedagogical materials, featuring religious pamphlets and propaganda posters, which he has been amassing for decades.

About the Artist

Jim Shaw (born 1952 in Midland, Michigan) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. He received his B.A. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and his M.F.A. from the California Institute of the Arts. His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including a career retrospective at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK; CAPC, Musee de'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France; MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY; Magasin, Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France; ICA, London; and Musee d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland.

Shaw exhibited at the *Encyclopedic Palace* in the 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; and the Chalet Society, Paris, France. His work is also featured in prominent public and private collections, such as the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN. Shaw is represented by Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; Metro Pictures, New York; Simon Lee Gallery, London; and Praz-Delavallade, Paris.



Jim Shaw, *Nose Sculpture Wall Sconce (Brown)*, 2007
Mixed media, light, and cord
35 1/4 x 20 3/4 x 16 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

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Sponsorship

This exhibition is supported by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Blum & Poe, Metro Pictures, Simon Lee Gallery, Atelier 4 Inc., and ArtNet.

Images

A collection of high-resolution images is available here: bit.ly/1EI0O55.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest (and largest) centers for making and enjoying today's most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. Hundreds of works of visual and performing art have been created on its 19th-century factory campus during fabrication and rehearsal residencies, making MASS MoCA among the most productive sites in the country for the creation and presentation of new art. More platform than box, MASS MoCA strives to bring to its audiences art experiences that are fresh, engaging, and transformative.

MASS MoCA's galleries are open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition is open seasonally, reopening in spring 2015. Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit massmoca.org.

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