

# Todd James

## *Fantasy Island*

**Private View:** Thursday 30th April, 6-9pm




**Exhibition runs:** 1st May - 28th May 2015



Lazarides Rathbone is pleased to present *Fantasy Island*, a provocative new solo exhibition by New York-based artist Todd James. The vivid body of hyper-coloured works extends the artist's exploration of current socio-political affairs, continuing to stretch the boundary between the obscene and the humorous.

The large-scale paintings depict a fantastical reality far removed from the safety of Western existence, seducing the viewer with a seamless mix of luminous compositions and graffiti-infused erotica. The satirical showcase features a striking cast of modern-day Somali pirates, UN soldiers and scantily clad females, adorned with AK47s and over-sized sunglasses whilst basking against tropical backdrops of never-ending sunsets. James illuminates contradictions in our contemporary landscape with playful scenes loaded in metaphor; armed soldiers balancing cups of tea in armchairs and sexualised women brandishing heavy weaponry. The duality of the work is key to the American artist's long-term practice, carefully balancing stylised animations against the stark reality of the times we live in.

*Fantasy Island* develops themes first displayed in *World Domination*, the artist's widely-acclaimed solo exhibition at Lazarides in 2013. Both showcases share themes of survival, ingenuity and ownership, questioning political motives firmly embedded in the present and raising an unashamed spotlight over them. Alongside the main gallery presentation James is set to transform a vintage Chevrolet van positioned outside the gallery doors, expanding on childhood references first curated in his *Vandal's Bedroom*, installed at LA's MOCA and re-constructed during *World Domination*. The artist's manifestation of personal spaces draws on fantasy art influences from the analogue age of his youth, comprised of a customised cluster of all-American 1970's ephemera. The *Fantasy Island* Chevy will play host to the exclusive launch of James' most recent self-released book. The new publication, entitled *Beyond The Gates*, features a myriad of heavy metal-inspired swords and sorcery girls in a haze of fluid lines and sensual scenes.

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**About Todd James**

Todd James (aka REAS) is an internationally recognized artist who began his career as a child in the New York City subway system, and still remains one of graffiti's best-known statesmen to this day. He's had numerous one-person exhibitions globally, spanning New York, Tokyo, Madrid, Brussels, Melbourne, London and Copenhagen. Having co-created the seminal Street Market exhibition at New York's Deitch Projects he has gone on to exhibit at the Venice Biennale, MOCA Los Angeles, The Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, Tate Liverpool, Baltimore Contemporary Museum and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco.

His politically-charged subject matter evokes a comic book sense of horror at the modern world and endless stream of media we find ourselves surrounded by. Merging a pastel paradise of acrylic, oil, graphite and gouache with re-occurring motifs of grinning aircraft carriers, lounging blondes, sneaky missiles, beleaguered tanks, and men at war. James attempts to break the distance between the viewer and what they are trying not to know about the present state of things. His paintings are psychologically and literally unstoppable: The situations they depict are in full swing and degenerating by the moment, and are deeply connected to the reality of our world today.

The American artist's work continues to span the fields of fine and commercial art, with forays into costume design, large-scale installation and work within the music, fashion and TV industry. His most high-profile commissions have included design projects for the Beastie Boys, Kid Rock, Mobb Deep, Eminem, Colette, Open Ceremony and was recently responsible for 12 bubblegum-pink dancing bears behind Miley Cyrus' 2013 MTV VMA's performance.

Noteworthy solo exhibitions include: PUMP PUMP, A.L.I.C.E. Gallery, Brussels (2015), Supernatural, Sandra Gering Inc, New York (2014), Splash Damage, Cooper Cole Gallery, Toronto (2013), Business As Usual, Javier López Gallery, Madrid (2013), World Domination, Lazarides Rathbone, London (2013).

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