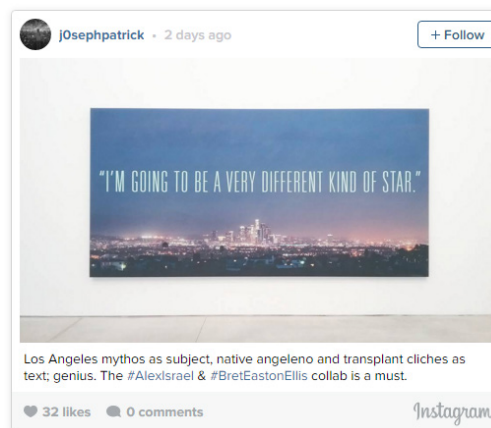


GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Alex Israel and Bret Easton Ellis Team Up at Gagosian to Take Jabs at Los Angeles

Cait Munro



What do millennial market darling Alex Israel and seminal Gen X author Bret Easton Ellis have in common? Early success in their respective fields, a preoccupation with the sun-soaked yet seedy underbelly of Los Angeles, and a fascination with the slick veneer of celebrity culture, for starters.

Now there's "Alex Israel/Bret Easton Ellis," a collaboration between the two figures at Gagosian's Beverly Hills outpost.

The show combines short texts by Ellis with stock photos of typical California scenes—think ocean waves, palm trees, sweeping city views—which Israel purchased the image rights to online. Production crews at Warner Brothers studios fabricated the over-sized works. The result functions something like the opening credits for a film that are both surreal and alarmingly cliché, or highway billboards for some unnamed yet inexplicably desirable luxury lifestyle product.

In one canvas, the words "I am going to be a very different kind of star," float atop LA's sparkling nighttime skyline. "At the party at the chateau I crafted an apology in such a way that it became a form of entertainment. 'Fantastic,' people murmured." The text obscures the outline of a palm leaf glowing in the afternoon sun. Other works reference cultural touchstones like Uber and the Eagles' song "Hotel California."

"If you don't like me unfollow me," reads an actual billboard advertising the exhibition.

According to a press release, Israel initiated the exchange with Ellis, feeling emboldened following his first foray into filmmaking (a collaboration with “Baywatch” co-creator Michael Berk called SPF 18 that will debut later this year). The two Angelinos became fast friends, and the rest is history. It’s the kind of collaboration that makes so much sense, we almost can’t believe it didn’t happen sooner.

In honor of the exhibition’s delightfully tongue-in-cheek billboard, we’ve plucked a few of our favorite Instagrams from the show, some of which even fitting feature real-life celebrities like Rachel Zoe and Tara Subkoff.