

# THE BAKERY

## PRESS RELEASE

### ALEXANDER JAMES

## *DANCING ON LAVA IN A MOMENT OF DECADENCE*

#### Private View:

Saturday 10 October 2020, 12 - 6 PM

#### Exhibition:

Sunday 11 October - Saturday 07 November 2020

#### Opening Hours:

Thursday - Friday, 11 AM - 6 PM

Saturday, 12 PM - 5 PM

and by appointment

The Columbia, 95-99 Lancaster Gate, London, W2 3NS (access via main entrance - The Dining Room)

In *Dancing On Lava In A Moment Of Decadence*, the second exhibition at The Columbia organised in partnership with Roman Road, Alexander James presents a selection of his latest paintings, teeming with idiosyncratic figures and imagined scenarios that reveal an intimate and reflective space of his making. Through processes of abstraction and fragmentation, James' multifaceted and vibrant pieces interweave elements of his memories and introspections into new constructed realities, while at once drawing on the mythologies of people and the concepts of success.

During a decluttering at his home, James stumbled across some old boxes in which he rediscovered a collection of books by British novelist Roald Dahl and the fondly remembered illustrations by Quentin Blake. He began connecting these to his study of traditional illustration, including from Victorian literature, and became interested in referencing the perfected uniforms and 'stage curtain' stylings as shown in such illustrative books and in photographs portraying notable people and members of the royal family, in his own imagined imagery. However, after delving further into such idealised figures, behind the curtain of illusion it seems that not everything is so dandy and laudable. With this, James seeks to draw parallels to the fantasy worlds of his own and the tales that are represented from these influences.

The exhibition features a collection of large-scale canvases alongside a video work that illuminates some of the triggering daily rituals, fantasies and subjective memories in James' paintings. Distinctive figures and recurring objects come to the fore as viewers navigate around the display and deeper into the artist's mind. In *A Flourishing Affair* (2020), a conspicuous blue crocodile can be seen in the middle of canvas, perhaps a nod towards the title character of Dahl's enormously popular story from 1978. A single ladder occupies the right side of the painting and we find another in *My Guardian Angel* (2020), instantiating a climb upward to something important or desired. Through his works, James intimately references and examines the construction of success and ideals, aspirations and the pursuit of happiness, whether it be fiction or truth.

*Dancing On Lava In A Moment Of Decadence* opens on Saturday 10 October and will be on display until 07 November 2020.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alexander James (b.1993, London) works across the mediums of painting, sculpture, video and installation. He graduated from the Camberwell College of Art, London, in 2015 with a BA degree in illustration. Previously, he completed an art foundation course at Leeds College of Art in 2012. James has exhibited widely in solo and group exhibitions in London, Paris, Berlin and New York, and has also curated numerous shows, most recently *One More Slope* at the Elms Lesters Painting Rooms, London (2020), in collaboration with the British Fashion Council. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Look What The Cat Dragged In*, Roman Road, London (2020); *I Loved Your Gestures*, Galerie Joseph, Paris (2019); *Sharper Than Razor Blades, Softer Than Leather*, The Face Apartment, New York (2019); and *A Kid Who Walked The Plank*, Working Projects, London (2018).

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Alexander James, *Dancing In The Palace Gardens*, 2020. Oil on canvas, 142 x 157 cm, unique.  
Courtesy of Roman Road and The Columbia

## ABOUT THE BAKERY

Launched in autumn 2020, The Bakery is a newly renovated and collaborative gallery space at The Columbia, co-initiated by Josh Fresco (Director of The Columbia) and Marisa Bellani (Creative Director of Roman Road). The Bakery aims to primarily showcase and promote emerging artists, bringing to its audiences an ongoing and dynamic programme of young artistic talents in the heart of West London.

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