

Press Release

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OPENING HOURS
TUESDAY - SATURDAY
11.00 AM > 07.00 PM

ALEXANDRE SINGH / LA TOUR BOUCHON

May 19th 2018 - June 16th 2018

*La Tour Bouchon*¹, Alexandre Singh's new exhibition at Art:Concept, presents a complex and multi-referential work, encompassing drawing, collage, watercolour, and sculpture.

Following the successful presentation of his debut theatre play *The Humans* at the 2014 Avignon Festival, Alexandre Singh wanted to conjure up a similarly rich and imaginative world in two-dimensions. As ambitious as the work is in scale and complexity, it has at its genesis an absurdly simple conceit: what if the Eiffel tower were shaped like a gargantuan wine bottle-opener?

Inspired by the paintings of Jan Brueghel the Elder, Alexandre Singh presents the imaginary construction of this Tour Bouchon over the course of four seasons. The first panel begins the story in the autumn of 1887, as a foggy forest is cleared by lumberjacks whilst the tower's iron girders are erected against a smoke-choked sky. Following the snow-bound winter of 1888 (depicted in the second panel), we find ourselves in the spring of 1889 at the opening of an alternative 'Exposition Universelle'. With the tower almost complete, an overeager crowd presses itself against the barriers of the 'Parc Technologique' to gawp at the fictional contraptions on display.

At each stage of the construction, different characters, motifs, and decorative elements reappear, evolve, and transform like scenes in a comic strip. In the first panel we spy a cook laying the foundations for an unappealing 'Cantine' (featured in the second panel), which, by the spring of 1889, has transmogrified into a French gourmet restaurant. In the last panel, which skips forward to an alternative version of summer 1969, the restaurant has devolved into a fast food joint named 'Le Eat Big'. Similarly, the simple dairy maid and her goat from autumn 1888 reappear in a salacious billboard in 1969, alluding to Fellini's short film *Le Tentazioni del dottor Antonio* (1962). The promise of scientific progress epitomized in the third panel by the 'Vin Vite' machine—an invention that turns grapes into wine in under two minutes—is, by 1969, tempered by the sight of the cracked, unkempt tower surrounded by hordes of tourists guzzling cans of Vin Vite™ from vending machines.

Inventive storytelling is at the heart of Alexandre Singh's work. *La Tour Bouchon* invites the viewer to explore and uncover a world full of playful details and references to art, cinema, and history. Can you find Toulouse-Lautrec and Monet, Jacques Tati and his dachshund, or the profile of Alfred Hitchcock? What about Nicola Tesla, George Méliès' man in the moon, or Amélie from the eponymous film of Jean-Pierre Jeunet?



1 In French "tour Bouchon" means "cork-tower" but sounds very much like "tire bouchon" (corkscrew)

As in Alexandre Singh's *Assembly Instructions* installations, which weave together different strands of history and culture into a dreamlike collage, *La Tour Bouchon* echoes both science-fiction and surrealism. Half Eiffel Tower, half corkscrew, the bronze sculpture *La Tour-Maquette* recalls the utopian projects of Russian Constructivist Vladimir Tatlin by way of Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki. *La Tour-Cuisine*, a black bronze made up of the artist's own kitchen utensils, evokes sculptures by Max Ernst and Picasso.

Such a detailed and multi-faceted work encourages the viewer to become an active participant in the creative process: a curious detective, uncovering a trail of clues that lead to a multitude of possible worlds.

Born in 1980 in Bordeaux, France, Alexandre Singh lives and works in New York. Winner of the 2012 *Prix Meurice* for contemporary art, Singh's work encompasses a variety of media, including installation, film, drawing, sculpture, and literature. These diverse approaches are united by a humorous and magical exploration of human nature in all its triumphs and failures.

Alexandre Singh's characters and stories draw upon a wealth of references, ranging from the classical drama of Molière, the ancient Greek theatre of Aristophanes, and the cinema of Federico Fellini. His first play, *The Humans*, was presented at Rotterdamse Schouwburg, Rotterdam (2013), the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York (2013), and the Festival d'Avignon, France (2014). His work is in the collections of the National Center for Visual Arts (Paris), the FRAC Pays de la Loire (Carquefou, France), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In 2019, Alexandre Singh will present a new film, *The Appointment*, in a large solo exhibition at the Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

