

# BOMBAY BEACH BIENNALE

On the weekend of April 14<sup>th</sup> 2017 following the discordantly unquantifiable success of “Year Zero” in 2016, Stefan Ashkenazy, Tao Ruspoli and Lili Johnson White once again secretly held the Bombay Beach Biennale at the town of Bombay Beach on the Salton Sea, California. Through the mass infusion of art, music and philosophy this derelict yet inspiring place, seemingly frozen in time and in an overwhelming state of decay was transformed into a living breathing art movement where creatives and thinkers from all disciplines were invited to explore the theme “the way the future used to be”

## ***BOMBAY BEACH OPERA HOUSE***

For the 2017 Biennale, American hotelier, philanthropist and all round explosive creative conduit Stefan Ashkenazy has perfectly lined up and ignited infamous artist James Ostrer. Between them they have purchased and completely transformed a derelict house in Bombay Beach’s dystopic quadrangle into a fully functioning Opera House and accompanying site specific habitable artwork.

Fittingly located on the San Antonio fault line Ashkenazy could not be any timelier in his decision to have triggered this particular socio political statement within the current political and environmental disaster denying climate.

The area at large of Bombay Beach resonates as a perfect microcosm for what happens when both ecological and social care are neglected in extremity which are a concern greater than ever within the USA.

For the grand opening weekend, just as the last beam of daylight dropped beyond the horizon, the early scores of Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake were etched into the dusty California desert sky by the bow of the amazing violinist Bonnie VonDuyke.

As the crowd sat pin-drop silent with anticipation quite astonishingly the entire façade of this suppositious puzzle box of a house began to open revealing two stunningly beautiful yet entirely bound Alexander McQueen-esque deconstructed couture human sculptures.

The only sounds to be heard were a cacophony of gasps by the mesmerized audience as Joseph Walsh of San Francisco ballet gracefully commenced his Solo of White Adagio from Swan Lake that seamlessly cross-pollinated with Ostrer’s glorious variations.

His exceptional performance was magnified quite brilliantly by a backdrop of many thousands of battered and worn flip flops entirely covering the inside of this now perfectly opened dolls house.

The crowd, now unable to resist clapping and cheering as Joseph with intense virility repositioned these unique sculptural works around the stage perfectly relaying a story of wanton lust and masculine control over all else.

Within a rapid twenty minutes this unbelievable conception having burnt so bright ended with such wonderment that the crowds then surged forward into the wide open Opera house and bore witness to the world premiere of Ostrer's latest series of works "CurrentSee".

The incredible backbone of Ostrer's multifaceted presentation is what appears as a vast synthetic reptilian skin made from the flip flops he found washed up on a remote Nigerian Beach two years ago. Their entirely reimagined purpose perfectly annotates a multitude of emotions held around immigration both economic and environmental while underscoring the increasing endemic of plastic waste suffocating this planet's oceans at large.

The "Currentsee" artworks are presented surreptitiously on wall hung mattress' embellished with 70's floral patterns of a by gone era where as the artist states, "we can't allow the recent political changes to allow us to think it's safe to retreat back into a denial of the affect our species is having on the planet".

The artworks are heavily annotated with a multitude of sea life from the human food chain and with his laser precision the artist has created futurology portraits that perfectly blend the emotional landscape of all that is going wrong in the modern world and its food chains with a reflection of human emotion that creates hope.

He believes with the recent abolitions of arts funding in the USA by Trump's administration it is more important than ever for those that can, to support and produce work that questions the greed of the absolute global minority.

With that in mind after five years since filming it Ostrer has decided to preview his disturbing yet intuitively pre-emptive short film "Snuffling for love Truffles" in the backstage area of the Bombay Opera House. This moving image work takes the form of self-portrait where Ostrer acts out the absolute visual extremity of his own internalized self-loathing and over consumption.

The over whelming feeling of this extremely uncomfortable viewing, similarly to the initial unease of Edward Munch's "The Scream" depiction of anxiety, is that Ostrer has created an exceptional moving image portrait of the increasingly lonely and isolated dystopia we are all without raincheck falling into.

Ostrer's well reported career that predominantly focuses on socio political agitation through his signature art installations has managed to surpass in every way what he has done before with his new and incredible Opera House.

### **JAMES OSTRER BIO**

Ostrer's work often tests the limits of body politics in his ever-evolving analysis of the western body, sexuality, and society.

In 2009, he participated in "The Journey" the globally acclaimed human trafficking project where he staged "Customer Container". In this installation the artist used photographs of himself taken by six different prostitutes under which the only condition was that they order him to perform as they wished. In 2011, his portrait of Nicky Haslam in Lucien Freud's chair was "Curator's choice" for the Taylor Wessing exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery.

Much like Paul McCarthy's or George Condo's seminal works, Ostrer's widely recognised series "Wotsit All About" (2014) formed a bizarre pattern of tribalism or cartoon-like absurdity. The series "Ego System" (2016) saw Ostrer push his semi-permanent sculptural practice even further into characterisations of individuals related to various social issues within humanity. He lives and works in London while exhibiting across the world.