



# MENTAL IMAGES x ALISON JACKSON

A Solo Exhibition of  
Photographs by  
Alison Jackson  
Curated by Indira Cesarine

SPRING/BREAK ART SHOW  
UN PLAZA NY, MARCH 2019

## CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Artist Alison Jackson balances on a tightrope between fact and fiction, exploring the notion of 'What is an image?' Her work challenges our preconceptions and how photography can transform our relationship to what is 'real'. She dives head first into the cult of the celebrity, using carefully casted body doubles to re-enact the most intimate, often salacious, imagined private moments of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe and JFK, Diana Princess of Wales, the Queen of England, Obama, Brad and Angelina, Donald Trump, Kim Kardashian and Kayne West, among others that have ignited media frenzies over their most mundane moments. Her photographic portraits are startlingly realistically staged affairs that cast uncannily styled doppelgängers into an entirely fathomable projection of a future that could have been. They answer the question on everyone's lips, "What if... "

It is perhaps best said in her own words, "'At best, a photograph of a celebrity reproduces something authentic only at the very moment the shutter clicks' says the artist 'yet we have been teased into giving these moments an absolute and unquestioned authority. However, what we actually do is create a narcissistic circle where we assert our control over the object of desire: we transform our celebrities into what we want. This whole projective process is further exaggerated by our capacity for fantasy and the inherently titillating nature of the image of a celebrity like Marilyn in flagrante. In this way, my productions, charged with desire, have become more real than the real life model they are based on, evolving into a 'mental image' rather than a direct record of reality."

Jackson's fantastical realism essentially becomes a subversive form of social commentary, drawing in the viewer to question reality. Is it fact or fiction? Jacksons staged scenarios flip the proverbial middle finger to the traditional celebrity photograph presented to glamorize the personas depicted. The viewer wants to believe when they look at a documentary styled photograph that it is "real," the truth presented with clarity. Alison Jackson's work challenges the mind of the observer, asking them to question what is "truth" What is "reality" as they are forced to question the sanity of the very world we live in. Her work engages a realistic stage, not with digital manipulation, but rather extensively produced photographic shoots presenting a theatre of the unreal, with actors who claim their characters in realistically carved environments rather than creating "fake" images via retouching or darkroom tricks. Jackson's productions use the celebrity aura to address archetypal characters that define the history of human identity and the often humorous struggle of how they cope in an age of mass mediation.

## **ABOUT ARTIST ALISON JACKSON**

Alison Jackson is a contemporary, BAFTA award artist who explores the cult of celebrity – an extraordinary phenomenon created by the media, publicity industries and the public figures themselves. Her work sits squarely in the middle of the current fake news, alternative facts or news debates. Jackson makes convincingly realistic work about celebrities doing things in private using cleverly styled lookalikes. Likeness becomes real and fantasy touches on the believable. She creates scenarios we have all imagined but never seen before.

Jackson's photographs raise questions about whether we can believe what we see when we live in a mediated world of screens, imagery and internet. She comments on our voyeurism, on the power and seductive nature of imagery, and on our need to believe. Her work has established wide respect for her as an incisive, funny and thought-provoking commentator on the burgeoning phenomenon of contemporary celebrity culture.

“My pictures ask where does the truth end and the lies begin...where the subjective triumphs over the objective... My work is about simulation. Creating a clone or a copy of the ‘real’ on paper. It is not a fake, it takes the place of the ‘real’ for a moment. As Baudrillard puts it, simulation is different from feigning. Feigning is pretending, such as, feigning illness or pretending to be ill. The subject is not ill, just seeming to be, but ‘simulation threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’. Since the simulator produces ‘true’ symptoms – is he ill or not? He cannot be treated objectively either as ill or not ill.’ This is what I aim to do: Create likeness of icons, where in image – on paper – the simulation of icons, ‘threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’.’ The ‘real’ subject becomes ‘not necessary’. The image or icon is more important and more seductive. It doesn’t matter if it isn’t the ‘real’ icon – as long as it looks like him or her – it creates a temporary confusion. I search for this confusion and to create and to create it within my work. I explore to what extent should I create complete fantasy pictures not connected to anything ‘true’ or ‘real’ and the relevance of the connection of something ‘true’.”

Jackson's work has been widely exhibited in museums, galleries and in public collections across the world, including: Pompidou Centre, La Louvre, The Frances Foundation, Paris; Tate Modern, The Tate Britain, The Hayward Gallery, The National Portrait Gallery, London; Liverpool Biennial; San Francisco MoMA; Musée de L'Elysee, Lausanne; International Center of Photography, New York, among many others. Jackson's artwork has additionally been featured in The Times, Vanity Fair, The Guardian, Artnet as well as countless magazines and newspapers globally.





**INSTALL VIEWS**











**BRANGELINAS ORPHANAGE, 2008**  
Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 16" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**CLINTON MESSAGE. 2017**  
Museum Archival C-Print 15" x 18"  
Printed on 20" x 24" Semi-Matt Paper,  
Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.



**ELTON COLONIC, 2003**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**KAYNE BABY HEADPHONES, 2013**  
Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**KIM POOL, 2017**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.



**MARILYN AT THE WINDOW, 2000**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**MARILYN BLACK, 2000**  
Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**MARILYN UNDRESSES FOR JFK, 2001**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 16" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.



**OBAMA SMOKING, 2009**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.



**QUEEN ON THE LOO IN REGALIA, 2013**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**QUEEN WATCHES HER HORSES MATE, 2003**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.



**ROYAL BIRTH, 2015**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**TRUMP AND MISS MEXICO, 2017**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**TRUMP AND QUEEN HAVE KFC, 2018**

Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.





**TRUMP KKK, 2016**  
Museum Archival C-Print 12" x 18" Printed on 20" x 24"  
Semi-Matt Paper, Dry Mounted and Framed with Shadowbox.

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Alison Jackson's Photos of Celebrity Lookalikes Take Fake News to Another Level



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## UNTITLED

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## **ABOUT CURATOR INDIRA CESARINE**

Indira Cesarine is a multimedia artist and curator. In 2015, she founded The Untitled Space gallery, which highlights a program of women in art. Cesarine's curatorial for The Untitled Space includes solo shows for artists Sarah Maple, Rebecca Leveille, Fahren Feingold as well as group shows "EDEN" and "(HOTEL) XX" at SPRING/BREAK Art Show; "SECRET GARDEN" presenting the female gaze on erotica; "SHE INSPIRES," a group show of 60 artists exhibiting works honoring inspirational women; internationally-celebrated group shows "UPRISE/ANGRY WOMEN," and "ONE YEAR OF RESISTANCE" responding to the political climate in America since the election of Trump, as well as numerous other critically-acclaimed exhibitions. She is additionally the founder and editor-in-chief of globally distributed art and culture publication "The Untitled Magazine."

Recent press on Indira Cesarine's exhibitions at The Untitled Space includes *Vogue (US)*, *Vogue Italia*, *CNN*, *Forbes*, *Newsweek*, *W Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Teen Vogue*, *New York Magazine*, *i-D Magazine*, *Dazed*, and *The Huffington Post* among many others.



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