

METRO PICTURES

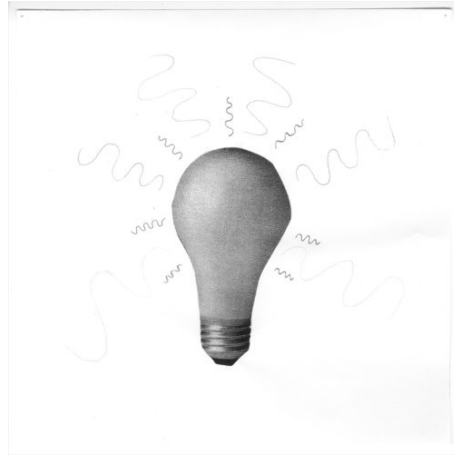
Walleston, Aimee. "Alexandre Singh's Impossible Structures," *ArtInAmerica.com* (January 23, 2013).

Art in America



Alexandre Singh, *Assembly Instructions (The Pledge- Leah Kelly)*, 2011. Framed inkjet ultrachrome archival prints and dotted pencil lines, 18 x 24 inches, #6 from a set of 37.

"There's no real beginning or end, because the beginning is actually two ends. Does that make sense?" French-born, New York-based artist Alexandre Singh asked *A.i.A.* on the opening day of "The Pledge," his immersive new installation of wall pieces at the Drawing Center. This Cheshire Cat riddle establishes the tenor of the show from the start—whether entering from beginning or end, one is met with a vast, interconnected flowchart of small surrealist collages that fill the expanse of the gallery. Each collage is connected to the next with a hand-drawn dotted line. "I wanted people to think, 'which way should I go?' And to be able to choose either right or left." This will not alter the nature of the work's narrative, Singh insists. "If people are just looking at the images, they may get lost. But if they are looking for answers, there are answers. They can find them, but they still have to use their minds."



Alexandre Singh, *Assembly Instructions (The Pledge-Marc-Olivier Wahler)*, 2011. Framed inkjet ultrachrome archival prints and dotted pencil lines, 23 x 23 inches, #29 from a set of 43.

The “answers” are derived, in part, from a printed handout that accompanies the exhibition, which itself is culled from an issue of the Palais de Tokyo’s *Palais* magazine that Singh guest-edited in 2011. The issue is based on the premise of “the pledge,” as articulated in Christopher Priest’s 1995 mystery novel *The Prestige*. It is the first part of an illusion, wherein something quotidian is presented as truth—but later turns out to be unreliable. In the magazine, the artist presents seven interviews with artists and thinkers, including Simon Fujiwara and Michel Gondry. While the texts are derived from real interviews and present themselves as such—illustrating the “pledge”—they quickly depart into the realm of a fantasy. For the exhibition, he created seven interlocking narratives that play to the finer points of the text. To wit: Fujiwara’s background in architecture and his interest in “impossible structures” translates to collages depicting the tower of Babel and the endless staircase.

Gondry’s interview is an absurdist inquiry into consciousness and the creative process. “This story takes place in a dream I had,” writes Singh in the handout. “I awaken and find myself on a train sitting opposite from Picasso. Gondry comes to punch my ticket, and complains how he doesn’t like being a ticket taker, and wishes he had been a film director.” The narrative is represented with a series of collaged photographs of Picasso munching on highly inedible-looking items: first, a normal fish skeleton, which then alters to resemble a tendriled lionfish skeleton and, finally, an unfortunate iguana. Visually captivating, this sequence doesn’t occur in the written text. “A lot of the collages are indicative of moments in the written story. And some of them aren’t,” Singh told *A.i.A.* “Instead of forcing myself to illustrate the stories, I sort of let the images imply their own logic, which would lead me to think about different things.”

Singh’s collages don’t simply follow his own will-o’-the-wisp narratives; they make intelligent inquiries into the realm of space and time—particularly, in this case, as they relate to film and publishing. In one suite of collages, he focuses on images of the “gutter” of a publication, revealing that the space has a significance that sometimes becomes more profound than the image and text. “It becomes this secretive place, just out of view,” says Singh. He aligns this thinking with Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam*—with the fingers of God and Adam that never quite touch—as a way to talk about transitional spaces. “Something you discover when you’re making sculpture or painting is that you don’t want to complete everything,” says Singh. “If you fill in everything, it doesn’t allow the viewer in. It’s creates almost an erotic desire—you want to go and fill it in yourself.”

As enchanting as Singh’s visual transitions are to follow and work out, one can’t help but respond with speculative impulses. Like their creator, a gifted conversationalist, the works ignite banter. His two endings seem, in the end, like two beginnings, inviting a conversation that goes on and on and on.