

SÉBASTIEN LÉON  
*A Crack in My Cosmic Egg*  
13 January - 15 February 2024



Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles is pleased to present *A Crack in My Cosmic Egg*, the gallery's inaugural solo exhibition with artist **Sébastien Léon**. The exhibition will open on 13 January and will run through 15 February 2024.

Sébastien Léon was born in the town where da Vinci died. The great polymath was in Amboise, France, at the behest of King Francis I, acting as a court painter and royal army engineer. This is not only interesting, but salient, because young Sébastien was a frequent visitor to the museum of da Vinci's inventions—the town's greatest claim to fame aside from also being the birthplace of magician and creator of theatrical automatons Robert Houdin. All of this to say, Léon has been speaking the language of surrealism for a very long time, predisposed as he was to accept magic as not only real, but as a way of life. Later, when it was time to become an artist himself, like so many others on the path of new thought and spiritual questioning, he found himself in Los Angeles.

In a new exhibition centering around the impossible drawings in his book *Psychodessins* (Hat & Beard Press), Léon combines the long work of his inner travels with physical manifestations of the insights he discovered—is still discovering—in the realm of the psyche. In an expansive suite of mixed media works on paper, Léon has been channeling the automatic drawing process popular among André Masson and other Paris Surrealists—itsself an expression of the era's fascination with the nascent field of psychoanalysis and self-realization offered by figures like Carl Jung and Otto Rank.

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These works embody the energy of waking dreams—organic color washes spread like waves as energetic ink drawing teases out emergent figures and images from the archetypes of the collective subconscious, and the inner truth of the artist. Serpents, mountains, stars, musical notations, elements of nature and architecture, scenes from childhood, text in many alphabets, faces, angels and demons, body parts, animals, vehicles, planets, water—so much water, rivers and lakes, seas and rain, warm showers and salty tears—and through it all the motif of a single man in silhouette, always on the move. The elusive balance between flow, instinct, and control that animates these remarkable works feels like an allegory for existence itself. And like a studied Jungian, Léon is keenly aware that in these drawings the recurring characters all represent himself, all his own contradictory aspects and the inter-dimensional observers with whom we all share space in our minds.

Building on the insights offered up by the “psychodessins,” Léon seeks to further discover facets of their meaning through other physical manifestations and mediums. A human figure, a theremin-enhanced automaton, invites viewers into a liminal space of strangeness and unself-conscious play. Paintings in the exhibition include a mesmerizing field of pattern, buzz, street lights, and invisible codes, across which our silhouetted traveler is seen to move; another is a palindromic portal, a literal door of perception per Huxley, which also continues the theme of rivers, crossings, and transformations. A site-specific mural weaves a vast tondo of Matisse-like dancer/divers, enacting interconnectedness in a zero-gravity space of art history, symbolism, and poetic narrative. Black like the traveling man, flickering like sinuous flames, the forms of these figures are further echoed in a flame of sandblasted black glass—an abstraction of the ego and a caution against allowing its weight to block magic’s delicate entry into the mind.

Through these and other unexpected visual strategies, Léon continues to search for the answers that reality cannot give you.

—Shana Nys Dambrot

#### ABOUT SÉBASTIEN LÉON

Sébastien Léon is a French, Los Angeles-based artist, designer, and musician. Initially trained as a marketing executive in Milan, Madrid, and New York, Léon created his pioneering curatorial practice Formavision in 2003. Inhabiting the intersection of culture and commerce, he orchestrated global artistic platforms for brands such as Diesel, Coca-Cola, and Starbucks, involving eclectic creative talents including Banksy, Run DMC, and François Girbaud, and institutions including the Whitney Museum, the Palais de Tokyo, and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. After ten years of working with luminary collaborators, Léon’s practice evolved into a multidisciplinary artistic atelier. Inspired by the model of the Italian Renaissance studio, Léon blurs the lines between fine art and design through his eclectic commissions: a monumental sonic sculpture for a high-rise building in Istanbul, a geodesic dome with

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immersive multichannel music for Audi in China, video art and paintings for Samsung televisions, a temporary restaurant for Krug Champagne and Alain Ducasse in Paris, bespoke glass sculptures, and elaborate designs for his award-winning furniture company Atelier d'Amis. In addition, Léon keeps a daily routine of drawings called psychodessins.

Sébastien Léon is the author of Psychodessins (Hat & Beard), Remastered (Gestalten), and the composer/writer of solo record "Jeux d'Artifices" produced by James Truman. His profile was published in the Wall Street Journal, Surface Magazine, ID, the New York Times, IdN, Corriere della Sera in Italy, and NHK in Japan. He is a 2019 Fashion Group International Rising Star Award recipient. Léon has received an MBA from SDA Bocconi in Milan.

**ABOUT SHANA NYS DAMBROT**

Shana Nys Dambrot is an art critic, curator, and author based in Downtown LA. She is the Arts Editor for the L.A. Weekly, and a contributor to Flaunt, Artillery, and other culture publications. She studied Art History at Vassar College, curates and juries exhibitions, writes prolifically for exhibition catalogs and monographic publications, and speaks at galleries, schools, and cultural institutions nationally. She is the recipient of the 2022 Mozaik Future Art Writers Prize, the 2022 Rabkin Prize for Art Criticism, and the LA Press Club National Arts & Entertainment Journalism Critic of the Year award for 2022.

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