

R H O D E S
CONTEMPORARY ART

Presents

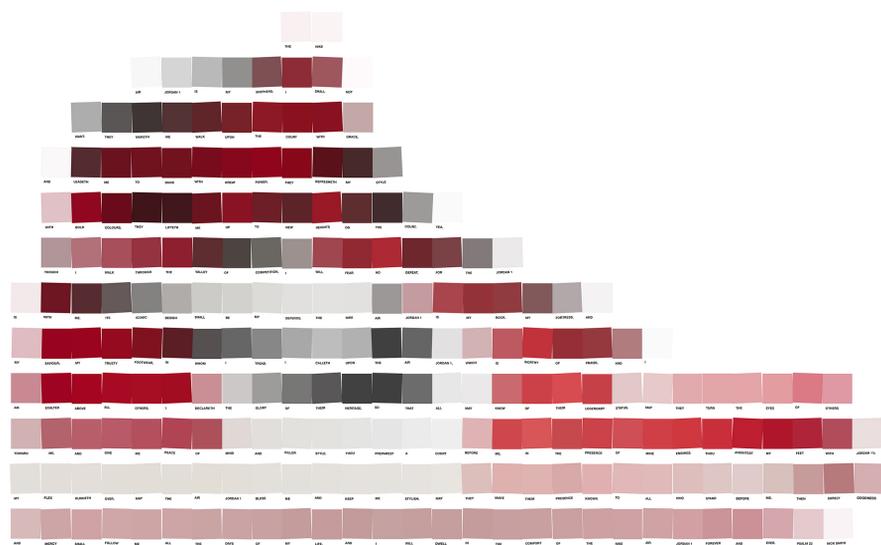
POLYTHEISM

/'pali,θi:ɪz(ə)m/

Noun: belief in and worship of multiple gods or deities

NICK SMITH

Pop Up Exhibition, London. 16. May - 21. May 2023



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RHODES is thrilled to unveil 'POLYTHEISM,' a captivating new solo exhibition in London by leading contemporary artist Nick Smith. In this new series of original collages and limited-edition prints, Smith delves into the multifaceted universe of sneaker culture, exploring the myriad reasons behind our collective fascination.

“Our choice of footwear often mirrors our life's journey, with some treading cautiously and others boldly leaping forward. Shoes not only provide comfort, protection, and a sense of enhanced capabilities but also act as a canvas for expressing our social and cultural identities.”



In a world where sneakers transcend cultural boundaries and are venerated by many as fashion icons, Nick Smith investigates the driving forces behind our devotion, whether it be the comforting memories they evoke, the cultural tribes they signify, or the rarity and value they embody. This loyalty has given rise to a near-religious following for these sneakers.

'POLYTHEISM' showcases 17 iconic sneakers that have achieved cult status, featuring 10 limited-edition prints representing the 'Hall of Fame' – sneakers that have left an indelible mark on culture - and 7 meticulously handcrafted collages celebrating extraordinarily rare collectible sneakers - 'The Grails'. Each piece, in Nick Smith's signature pixelated style, is woven with biblical-inspired text, radiating reverence and adoration for these esteemed shoes.

The 'Hall of Fame' editions will be available individually at the exhibition, or as a very limited edition 'POLYTHEISM' box-set, featuring all 10 editions in a presentation box, plus one bonus edition (available only as part of the box-set).

The fusion of biblical-style text with hallowed sneakers challenges viewers to reflect on the nature of our devotion and the objects we revere in contemporary society. This juxtaposition encourages exploration of the parallels between religious adoration and the near-spiritual loyalty many people have towards these iconic sneakers.

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“By utilising the highly emotive and familiar language of biblical texts, I aim to emphasise the deep, almost worshipful connection people have with sneaker culture. The language of reverence and adoration, typically reserved for sacred scriptures, is applied to material possessions, creating a thought-provoking contrast that prompts viewers to question their values and priorities.”

This pairing also serves to underscore the idea that sneakers have transcended their utilitarian function, evolving into objects that hold cultural, social, and even spiritual significance for their followers. It suggests that, for some, sneakers have become akin to modern-day idols, inspiring fervour and devotion that rival religious practices.



In addition to the artworks, Nick Smith showcases each sneaker that inspired them, affording viewers the opportunity to compare his creations with the shoes themselves and granting an exclusive chance to view The Grails in person, including rare sneakers like the Albert Heijn AM1 and London SB Dunk.

The exhibition will take place in London’s Covent Garden, May 16th - 21st, with an opening reception 6-9pm on Tuesday 16th May, and an artist talk on Saturday 20th May.

Pop up address: 28 Henrietta St, London, WC2E 8NA

All artworks and print editions will be available for purchase in person at the exhibition. Any remaining editions will be available on rhodeseditions.com the following week. Details TBC.

For sales and exhibition enquiries, please contact info@rhodescontemporaryart.com

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