



R & Company to Open Solo Exhibition of New Work by Acclaimed Artist and Designer Job Smeets

Exhibition Inspired by Smeets' Drive Across America, from New York to California

On View November 4, 2022 - January 27, 2023



New York—On November 4, R & Company will open *The American Job*, an exhibition of new work by influential Belgian artist and designer Job Smeets inspired by his many-mile drive across the United States in 2019. Three years in the making, *The American Job* marks the first major American exhibition of his work since 2016 and is the first U.S.-based presentation of Smeets' work since he became a solo practitioner at the helm of Studio Job. Over the course of his multi-decade career, Smeets has gained acclaim for both his impeccable craftsmanship and his vision to push the boundaries of design into new artistic directions. Known for making objects that capture his inquisitive nature and incisive cultural commentary, Smeets brings his singular aesthetic and conceptual approach to the complicated subject of America in the forthcoming exhibition at R & Company. *The American Job* features works that capture some of the sights and symbols of America that Smeets encountered living in Europe and re-

encountered with his partner Rebecca Sharkey as they traversed the expanse of the country, from the Statue of Liberty to Graceland to the Hollywood Hills. *The American Job* will be on view at R & Company's 64 White Street location through January 2023.

With his upcoming exhibition at R & Company, Smeets explores his experience traveling through America, creating his own landscape of American iconography. The inspiration for the exhibition began in 2019, when Smeets purchased a 1970s Cadillac and decided to drive across the United States. The idea formed as Smeets recognized that what he knew of America—a country divided and at the center of international attention—was just the urban centers on the coasts. He began his trip in the Hamptons, making his way cross country through Tennessee, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and California, with numerous stops along the way. The exhibition will be accompanied by video footage of his travels, including snippets of conversations had along the way that capture the wider atmosphere of the experience.

The exhibition is anchored by the artist's contemporary interpretation of the Statue of Liberty. Produced in bronze, the sculpture captures the iconic symbol of freedom in the throes of a storm with her robe, hair,

and torch billowing against strong winds. The work, which contains a set of hidden drawers and doors, exemplifies Smeets' cutting cynicism and suggests there is more to Lady Liberty than meets the eye. Another major work in the presentation, *Memphis*, is a life-size, illuminated sculpture of one of Elvis' famed Las Vegas costumes from the 1970s. Finely detailed, the sculpture offers a nod to Smeets' interest in Surrealism, as the costume, with light emanating from the legs and sleeves, appears in action, on stage, without Elvis himself. The exhibition also features a 1/8 scale bronze model of the El Dorado Cadillac that Smeets drove across the country. Installed as a hanging sculpture, the work is complete with glowing headlights and turn signals.

Other objects in the show explore symbols of Americana and contemporary culture, including a cowboy hat, basketball player, and other homages to Graceland. While all the works appear as sculpture, they also discreetly maintain their functional qualities as cabinets, tables, and lighting, adding an additional layer of whimsy and complexity to the work. The show is at once a revelation of Smeets' mastery of material and form, a love letter to his experiences in America, and an outsider's reflection on a society amid cultural upheaval.

"Job has always created bodies of work around distinct themes and this exhibition continues that trend with a particularly timely subject matter. We could not be more excited to present this exhibition, which is the first solo exhibition for the artist in America in many years," said R & Company's Evan Snyderman.

Smeets first founded Studio Job in 1998. Under Smeets' creative leadership, the Studio committed itself to reviving traditional artistic approaches such as bronze casting, blacksmithing, and hand painting, while bringing those techniques into the contemporary moment through an aesthetic vision that embraced kitsch, pop culture, and humor. The Studio further distinguished itself by working in limited editions and by focusing on singular, one-of-a-kind objects that blurred the definitions of art and design. The practice quickly came to prominence, developing dedicated followers across Europe and the U.S. Studio Job's playful, ornate, and witty objects captivated the imagination and reflected the power of technical precision, leading to significant commissions, exhibitions, and collaborations.

Today, Smeets is a solo artist and is considered one of the most influential designers of our time, continuously evolving the vision on which Studio Job was founded. Working with more than 25 skilled artisans to produce all his objects in-house, Smeets is focusing on more sculptural and monumental works, pushing design further into the realm of fine art through the intricacy of his hand techniques, detailing, and scale. "Job's work has taken on new depth in recent years. This is particularly evident in his newfound use of paint, which he uses to transform hard, heavy materials, such as bronze, into objects that appear as leather, wood, silk, and felt. The painterliness is incredibly distinct, adding a Surrealist quality to his objects," added Snyderman.

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This program is supported as part of the Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York.

About R & Company

For over 20 years, R & Company has championed collectible design, advancing the contemporary marketplace and actively growing a global collector base and clientele. Its founders, Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman, are widely recognized for identifying rising talent, deepening scholarship about collectible design, and developing new avenues for growth in the industry. R & Company maintains two dynamic spaces in New York: its expansive, inaugural space at 82 Franklin Street features a rotating display of interior environments highlighting gallery designers, while 64 White Street offers an active roster of solo and group exhibitions and includes a Library and Archive of more than 4,000 books, journals, and other materials. The gallery is committed to nurturing and sustaining the markets and careers of both emerging and established designers, as well as to maintaining and expanding commercial and academic interest in historic design. Its roster of international designers includes Wendell Castle, Sebastian Errazuriz, Rogan Gregory, the Estate of Greta Grossman, Serban Ionescu, Hun-Chung Lee, Joyce Lin, Jolie Ngo, Katie Stout, Johnny Swing, Studio Job, Joaquim Tenreiro, and Jeff Zimmerman, among many others. With its vision, passion, and expertise, R & Company serves as a critical platform for experiencing 20th and 21st-century objects and discovering innovative, rare, and significant design.

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