



Jim Shaw: My Mirage

Fabrice Stroun

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A bricoleur of uniquely American utopian/dystopian cosmologies, Jim Shaw (born 1952) weds themes from American religious history with motifs from 1960s and 70s counterculture, often coining rubrics--such as his invented religion of *O--or* series under which to unify these narratives. *My Mirage* is Shaw's earliest sequence of this kind. Conceived between 1986 and 1991, arranged in chapters and constituted of nearly 170 works--drawn, silk-screened, photographed, sculpted, filmed or painted in a different style--*My Mirage* recounts the wanderings of Billy, a white, middle-class American sucked into the whirlwind of the 1960s and 70s counterculture. An anxious and withdrawn youth consumed by psychotic hallucinations, Billy joins a psychedelic pagan cult, eventually and inevitably returning to the religion of his youth, "reborn" as a fundamentalist Christian. Shaw's broad iconography for this visual bildungsroman ranges from children's books to contemporary art, religious literature and psychedelic poster art, all juxtaposed en face--one image per page--to relay an associative narrative progression. From the start, the project was intended for the book format as its ideal incarnation, and this edition was therefore created in close collaboration with the artist. *My Mirage* offers one of Shaw's most concise statements on vernacular culture and the wild polarities of religious life in postwar America.

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