

Gianni, Ilaria, "Kathryn Andrews and Alex Israel," *Artforum.com*, March 5, 2014

ARTFORUM

Kathryn Andrews and Alex Israel
GAGOSIAN GALLERY | ROME Via Francesco Crispi 16 January 16–March 15

Ilaria Gianni



View of "Kathryn Andrews and Alex Israel," 2014.

Entering Gagosian Gallery's Roman gallery, visitors are welcomed by what seems to be a deserted room of the Dolby Theatre days before the Academy Awards. A wrapped red carpet is positioned in the middle of the gallery's antechamber, an Oscar statuette stands on a pedestal, and an unlit theater vanity table, with a bullet resting on it, leans against the wall. A sense of absence haunts the space, yet so does the sparkle of showbiz. Alex Israel's *Red Carpet* and *Academy*, both works 2013, and Kathryn Andrews' *Die Another Day*, 2013, combine to inform the viewer the show has yet to begin.

The full view of the gallery's main large oval room is obstructed by a large backdrop panel by Israel, painted sky blue and pink, as if a portion of a Hollywood prop warehouse had been relocated to the center of Rome. Surrounded by heterogeneous objects with no obvious relation—including a life-size toy robot (Israel's *Arigato*, 2013), a weight training set (Andrews's *Full Set*, 2012), and a white mailbox (Israel's *Sweepstakes*, 2013)—the spectator immediately feels immersed in a suspended environment in which a sense of familiar illusion prevails. The rented props, placed either on pedestals or on the floor, all perform the role of sculptures but also function as inanimate characters, activating the invisible magic that only cinema seems to possess. Each work enacts a silent alliance between the history of the articles, their presence in the space, and the dream world of the viewer. Through diverse perspectives and in a perfectly balanced dialogue, Andrews and Israel reflect on the evolution of the everyday object (from functional article to film prop to artwork), questioning the act of appropriation, the original notion of the readymade, and the idea of authorship, while also setting illusion and memory free and defining art as a precious shared ground.