

# DOSSIER

## Jonas Wood

At Los Angeles-based artist Jonas Wood's second solo show, "Interiors" at David Kordansky Gallery, a man in a suit signs a check against a glass-paneled wall, perhaps not realizing the entire gallery can see him. Bets are made on what piece he may have

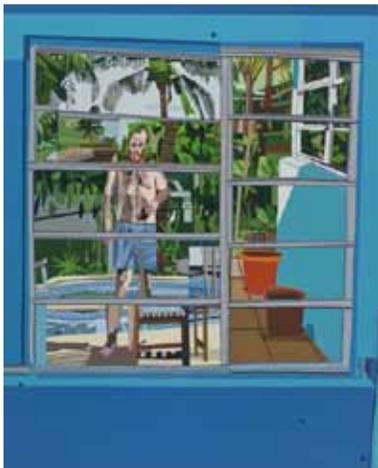
purchased, and it's agreed that it's likely the painting on the front wall leading into the gallery that features a trio of particularly striking cat vases. Though it could have been any of the fractured, child-like paintings that take a glimpse into Wood's life. There is a painting of former Los Angeles Laker James Worthy's trading card, a graphic tennis court in which the lines appear rougher and rougher as you wander closer, and a series of parrot-print tablecloths, rendered with Matisse-like geometric shapes.

It takes a minute to track Wood down, as the Boston native appears to have a lookalike following. Half the crowd is sweated-and-bearded, a bit unusual for an L.A. opening. But then, Wood isn't your usual L.A. artist, dealing more with the quotidian nature of every day life than the spirituality and grandiosity of his contemporaries. I caught up with Wood a few days before the opening and tossed him a few questions about his process and the psychology behind his painting.



*Emma-Louise Tovey:* You've painted a living room, your hypnotist, basketball players... What meaning do you find in everyday life?

*Jonas Wood:* It is true that I paint what's around me in my daily life. I have many images that I look at for a while, sometimes for years, before deciding what to paint and draw. This process of looking and choosing photographs helps to make sure that the ones I pick are meaningful to me. A lot of my paintings are based on current or former living situations. I remake spaces, or re-animate them, creating new versions of my former or current everyday life. I try to preserve the beauty I see in these spaces and share it with the viewer.



*Emma:* How do you approach each painting in terms of process and choosing what to paint?

*Jonas:* A good amount of the time, I approach painting by making drawings. Sometimes I paint directly from photographs that I've taken and collaged, but a large amount of the time I make a drawing, or even several drawings, of a photographic source. From those drawings I make paintings, and eventually the photographic source is left behind in favor of the drawing. Drawings become the model for the painting. I try to achieve all the small subtleties in the paintings based on how the drawings work. Sometimes the drawing is exactly what I want to render, and so I try to make the painting sing just in the same way that the drawing does. In other cases, especially when there's a giant shift in scale from a small drawing to a large painting, things in the painting have to be changed or be added to make them work. Occasionally this is an additive process, in which I work from many sources on the fly to assemble a composition, as in some of the paintings of still life arrangements.

*Emma:* How long does this process take?

*Jonas:* I don't really pay too much attention to how long things take, but I do know that I work pretty fast and that when things are going well, there's a huge sense of excitement and emotion.

*Emma:* Do you ever feel unsatisfied with a painting?

*Jonas:* When a painting is not satisfying, you have two choices: destroy it and move on or hide it and move on. Both approaches can be useful. Destruction, when done sparingly, is very satisfying. Just think of a sharp blade slicing through oil paint and canvas, and then your foot stomping down on the trashcan.

*Emma:* There seems to be an emotional sense of loneliness in your work. Would you agree?

Tovey, Emma-Louise. "Jonas Wood." *Dossier* April 3, 2012. web

*Jonas:* I would say this is true to a certain degree, particularly in many of the interiors, which usually allude to human existence—but without the humans. This could also be said of my still life paintings (and perhaps all still life paintings), in which there are artifacts from everyday life—like vessels, toys, fresh fruit, and flowers—but the people who use those things are not present. Although I spend many hours alone, I don't consider my work to be about loneliness or the emotions that loneliness creates.

*Emma:* Your work has some of the geometry of Matisse and the tiled realism of Hockney. How do you react to that statement? How do you wrestle with recent art history in your paintings?

*Jonas:* Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Calder, Monet, Vuillard, Bonnard, van Gogh, Stuart Davis, and Hockney have all been very real influences to me. When I was a young child, my family would speak about these artists as examples of greatness in painting. I guess even then I took them seriously because these are the artists I ended up fashioning my studio practice after. Wrestling with recent art history in my paintings has occurred naturally because some of the interiors I've painted have had historically relevant art hanging in them. Sometimes I even add artworks that I'd like to live with in an ideal world.

*Emma:* Was there a specific artwork that inspired you to start painting?

*Jonas:* I don't know that it was a specific work, but rather all the art my parents and grandparents exposed me to, all the visits to museums, and all the trips around the world that I was lucky enough to experience before I was 18.



*Emma:* What parallels do you draw between psychology and painting?

*Jonas:* I majored in psychology in college, and was thinking about pursuing a Ph.D. before I decided to apply to MFA programs for painting. I take a lot of time deciding what to paint, because I want to make sure that I'm making honest choices. There's a psychological component to this process. Painting my old bedroom, or a portrait of my mother, are two great examples of using art to connect current emotions with past emotions; somehow these things carry through.

*Jonas Wood is up at David Kordansky Gallery in Culver City through May 12th.*

All Images Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery

This entry was written by Emma-Louise Tovey, posted on April 3, 2012 at 1:52 pm, filed under Art, Exhibits, Features and tagged Anton Kern, David Kordansky, Jonas Wood, Jonas Wood: Interiors.

