

Jonathan Gardner

The Studio

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MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to present *The Studio*, a solo exhibition by Jonathan Gardner, the American painter whose stylised, dreamlike interiors turn the oldest subjects in art – the nude, the still life, the landscape – into invented scenes, at once intimate and archetypal. For his exhibition at the gallery's London space, Gardner takes the artist's studio as his subject: rooms within rooms, paintings within paintings, built in equal parts from memory, imagination and art history.

Across the paintings, a landscape opens where a wall should be; a picture leans against another picture; an easel turns into a tree. The rooms are flat and clean, the colour laid down in blocks, nodding to Matisse and Magritte – designed spaces run on a dreamer's logic. For Gardner, the studio is a set of nested rooms, each a step further from the world and a step closer to the daydream.

Imagined rather than visited, these landscapes have rivers cut through them to keep time moving. For Gardner, the desert is a place of solitude and introspection – an emptiness that unsettles and, for that very reason, makes room for something new.

For all the art-historical poise, something more tender moves underneath. The imagined nudes have begun to read as figures of fertility; the vase held by the woman in *Painter in the Studio* is an old emblem of it and, as the artist puts it, a container for whatever is turning over inside. The theme surfaces more obliquely elsewhere – in *Painter*, a figure moves away down a de Chirico arcade, two children in her arms, toward a dark doorway that suggests both a threat and a new chapter; nearby, a broken classical kouros, all youth and fractured masculinity, stands in for what is carried and what is passed on. Nothing is stated outright. What runs beneath these rooms – something like hope shadowed by unease – is held at a deliberate, painterly distance.

The self-portraits are fictions too. In *Painter in the Studio*, the likeness is loose, the studio not quite his own – furnished from memory with his parents' oriental rug and the vintage guitars he collects, an easel set before a window in open homage to Magritte's *The Human Condition*. These are

autobiographical fragments arranged like a still life – a portrait of what the painter chooses to keep close.

Gardner lets the room tilt until everything settles onto a single decorative plane. What hangs on the walls is the room within the room – an interior of the mind, composed to the last inch. The studio, for Gardner, is less a place than a state of mind; the paintings, as he puts it, are "part memory, part imagination, and part art history."

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Jonathan Gardner (b. 1982, Lexington, Kentucky) is an American painter known for his stylized, figurative works that blend elements of art history with personal imagination. He earned his BFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York in 2007 and his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010, studying under artist Jim Nutt. Gardner currently lives and works in New York City.

Gardner's paintings are characterized by flattened pictorial spaces and a synthesis of traditional genres such as still life, portraiture, and landscape. His compositions often reference modern art aesthetics, drawing inspiration from artists like Henri Matisse, René Magritte, and Pablo Picasso. Through a collage-based process, he manipulates spatial depth and perspective, creating scenes that are both familiar and surreal. This approach results in a cohesive visual language that invites viewers into a world where figures and objects coexist in stylized harmony.

His work has been exhibited internationally, with solo shows at galleries including Casey Kaplan in New York, Almine Rech in London and Paris, and Jason Haam in Seoul. Gardner's paintings are part of public collections such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Daegu Art Museum in Korea. In 2017, he was awarded the Prix Jean-François Prat, recognizing his contribution to contemporary art.