

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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Art in Review

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JONAS WOOD



Anton Kern Gallery New York

"Downstairs Hallway," a 2008 oil on linen by Jonas Wood, part of his second solo show at the Anton Kern Gallery.

Anton Kern
532 West 20th Street, Chelsea
Through Dec. 23

Jonas Wood's paintings remind you that originality starts with sincerity of a high order. It has nothing to do with the irony-versus-no-irony dichotomy, which is false, or at least greatly exaggerated. Even ironists have to seriously mean what they do to be effective.

Mr. Wood, who lives in Los Angeles, is dead serious about his amusing, well-constructed paintings of domestic interiors (presumably his own) and sports-related images. You catch it the minute you walk into his second solo show at Kern.

All the images seem derived from photographs but assiduously filtered through Mr. Wood's sensibility, with its love of pure color, its implicitly geometric feel for composition and shape, and its thorough, flat-footed approach to materials. (Among these are oil on canvas, and gouache and colored pencil or graphite on paper.) Consequently Mr. Wood does something slightly new, or at least his own, with some of painting's most

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basic yet inexhaustible tensions, including those between abstraction and representation, surface and illusion, and photorealism and (for lack of a better word) folk art.

There are repeated references to other art, especially modernism. “Every Morning This Is What I See 2” depicts an unlikely view: a large early-1930s Picasso nude and a small Josef Albers abstraction hanging above a modest bureau arrayed with personal belongings. Some paintings pull back for longer views and continually break apart and reconstitute themselves as images-within-images, or even abstractions-within-images. Examples include a purple door covered with snapshots of animals in “Downstairs Hallway” and the laundry room in “Kitchen on Palms,” in which nestled rectangles in blue, white and gray recede logically, only to come forward as abstraction.

Something similar happens in a large painting based on a basketball card of Rasheed Wallace when he played for the Washington Bullets, showing its subject almost life-size and seemingly watching a free throw succeed or not. The crowd behind him is nearly abstract: three bands of blue punctuated by smaller spheres, amoebas and circles within circles in contrasting reds, grays and blues. A neat reduction of out-of-focus spectators, it also suggests a game seen from overhead and the brushwork from a Chuck Close portrait invading a Brice Marden panel-painting.

When Mr. Wood really goes modern, he paints basketballs flying through the air on solid grounds of silver or black. His precedents include Alex Katz, Alice Neel, David Hockney, Ed Ruscha and, more immediately, Laura Owens and Brian Calvin, a motley crew that he does proud. His paintings are smartly and luxuriously visual. **ROBERTA SMITH**

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