

Mary Mary

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Jonathan Gardner

15 November 2014 - 17 January 2015

Mary Mary is delighted to announce its first exhibition with Chicago based Jonathan Gardner. Presenting a group of new paintings, it will be his first time exhibiting in the UK.

Jonathan Gardner's work takes influence from numerous sources such as Ingres, Gnoii, Richard Lindner, Magritte, Hockney, John Currin and American primitives such as Ammi Phillips and Rufus Hathaway. Each work presents a very particular tableau of images and symbols, containing as Gardner describes, a network of meanings. Though focusing predominantly on representational and figurative imagery, the work is not explicitly narrative with Gardner keen to offer an open-ness in interpretation, more similar to that of abstraction.

Gardner presents a cast of stylized figures here, both comical and melancholic in tone which exist in an idealized world, almost dream-like in its theatricality. A product of Gardner's imagination, the figures, objects and spaces in the work contain their own logic, with many re-used and re-interpreted in different paintings, allowing the work to be in constant dialogue with itself. In doing so Gardner shifts the context and continuously explores it, creating a fluidity where nothing is ever pinned down to any particular role, allowing each to, like actors, play different parts.

Current subject matter includes framed paintings, patterns, fruit and other objects, all drawn from art history and recalling still lives. The nude is also ever present and yet interestingly, Gardner places no greater importance on this part of the paintings, than on the wallpaper, towels, tables and books he includes. For Gardner it is important that these 'objects' exist as blank slates upon which he can insert his own idiosyncrasies, interests and references and therefore the figures are void of personality or any recognizable trait, functioning in the same way as a brushmark or abstract motif.

In many ways Gardner is representing a style of painting as opposed to representing a subject. These new works present a certain kind of spacial flatness, which allows Gardner to play with an idea of illusionism within them. Paying close attention to compositional and formal arrangements as opposed to the narrative possibilities of the individual parts within the painting. This again, allows for an open, intuitive read of each work which Gardner plays with from painting to painting.

In works such as 'Daisy' or 'Superga' there is a disruption of the image. Often focusing on a sense of displacement or transformation within the painting, Gardner seeks to present a formal tension within the work. By repeating or doubling motifs or images, distorting backgrounds or layering imagery and pattern, Gardner is presenting painting as a kind of open-ended problem solving which can never be fully resolved.

Born in 1982, Jonathan Gardner lives and works in Chicago, having graduated from The School of Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. Recent exhibitions include solos at Corbett vs Dempsey, Chicago both in 2013 & 2011; 'Inside Arrangement', Mary Mary, Glasgow (2014); 'Plant Life', Western Exhibitions, Chicago (2013) & 'Private Future', Marc Jancou Contemporary, New York (2011).