

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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ART IN REVIEW

Paintings by Jonas Wood

By ROBERTA SMITH

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Anton Kern Gallery
532 West 20th Street
Chelsea
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Jonas Wood's painting continues to mature impressively, gaining pictorial and psychological weight. More than ever his works negotiate an uneasy truce among the abstract, the representational, the photographic and the just plain weird. They achieve this with a dour yet lavish palette, tactile but implacably workmanlike surfaces and a subtly perturbed sense of space in which seemingly flattened planes and shapes undergo shifts in tone and angle that continually declare their constructed, considered, carefully wrought artifice.

A case in point is "Sun Porch" and the several browns that denote the spindled back of an armchair at its center, although it takes the eyes a while to notice, given the room's crowded topography of furniture, embroidered textiles and, overhead, the beamed ceiling.

Mr. Wood paints the artist's life that happens to be his own. In its broadest outlines the subject has not changed all that much from, say, Vuillard and Matisse to Alex Katz and David Hockney. In Mr. Wood's case it includes the hallway leading to his studio, a stack of birdcages stored in a corner somewhere (occasioning a riotous extravagance of parallel lines) and a large cluster of incised ceramic vessels, suffused in a weirdly palpable gray light, by the artist Shio Kusaka, to whom Mr. Wood is married.

The show's most ambitious work is "The Hypnotist," which turns out to depict Mr. Wood sitting stoically in the office of a man whose oddly set expression seems to hold the entire, tilting room in check.

Each painting here presents a highly personal but impersonally observed reality that has been astutely cobbled together but is almost too much to take in. It is presented whole, but with all the seams showing for easy disassembly. That's enough to make one of painting's most frequent subjects — the artist's life — seem new again.

2021 S WABASH AVE
CHICAGO IL 60616
+1 (312) 226 2223