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Art Review: Making the ordinary pop out



Jonas Wood, "BBall Studio," 2012. (David Kordansky Gallery / May 1, 2012)

By David Pagel

When you think about it, paint-by-number sets are the analog version of pixelated images: Each type of representation consists of small, single-color sections that add up to coherent pictures. At David Kordansky Gallery, Jonas Wood's nine big paintings have one foot firmly planted in each of these two media. The combination captivates.

From the hobbyist pastime, Wood's oils and acrylics on linen or canvas borrow charm, earnestness, steady, one-step-at-a-time craftsmanship and just the right touch of hokey sentimentality. From the digital world, they embrace our tendency to look at things quickly, scrolling through the image glut without batting an eye.

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Wood's best paintings, "Still Life with Cat Vessels," "MV Guest Room," "Untitled (Parrot Pattern)" and "BBall Studio," make everyday spaces and the ordinary things in them look better than ever, as if the rooms themselves were in good moods, and those moods were infectious.

When people appear in Wood's paintings, they disrupt the fresh, for-you-alone fantasy. This happens with comic aggression in two portraits of athletes, James Worthy and Tommy Hearn.

Things go better in a double portrait of people peering into the mirrored interior of a sculpture by Yayoi Kusama. And they go best in "Calais Drive," in which Wood appears to be an intruder in his own home.

That's not a bad metaphor for the artist's place in society, nor for a world that has fallen out of step — and out of sorts — with itself.

David Kordansky Gallery, 3143 S. La Cienega Blvd., Unit A, (310) 558-3060, through May 12. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.davidkordanskygallery.com