

tomorrow

An LA Thing: Jonas Wood's SoCal Still Lives



The young Los Angeles artist Jonas Wood has a sly, macabre streak, though you wouldn't necessarily know it from his solo show at Anton Kern Gallery in New York's Chelsea. On first glance, these paintings are crayon-bright, playful, and fun—so much so that you might be forgiven for missing, at least initially, the skull that lurks in *The Still Life* (pictured) or the weird loneliness that suffuses *Fish Tank*. Taken as a whole, the show, consisting mostly of small-scale portraits, still lives, and the occasional image of a professional ballplayer, is likely to rally New Yorkers to some of their favorite anti-LA-isms: But it's so clean! Or, as Alvy Singer famously told Annie Hall, "They don't throw their garbage away—they turn it into television shows."

But these days, the dour East Coast must share the blame for the world's televised trash, and shiny LA deserves credit where credit is due. Wood's work recalls some of the giants of 20th century painting, with its intimist leanings and adoring eye for the body and the accoutrement in all their physical glory—the very thingness of things. Peter Blake, Alice Neel, and that most Angeleno of Angelenos, David Hockney, all occasionally come to mind. Like these painters, Wood has found a way to marry a child's eye with an adult's perception, intertwining the invincible and the fallible, and tossing in a welcome touch of humor to boot. His show at Anton Kern—Wood's first solo engagement on the East Coast—promises big things. At the very least, after taking in his ambiguous still lives, you'll be hard-pressed to look at a houseplant the same way again.

On view at Anton Kern Gallery through August 12.

Matthew Schneier 07-24-07
2007 Tomorrow Unlimited, LLC