

# Damian ELWES

Artist Studios from Picasso to Jeff Koons

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MODERNISM

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"Jeff Koons' Studio, New York," 2016, mixed media on canvas, 66" x 65" (168 x 166 cm)



"Keith Haring's Studio, New York," 2016, acrylic on canvas, 60" x 74" (152 x 188 cm)





"Hockney's Studio While Painting Paper Pools," 2016, acrylic on canvas, 66" x 66" (168 x 168 cm)



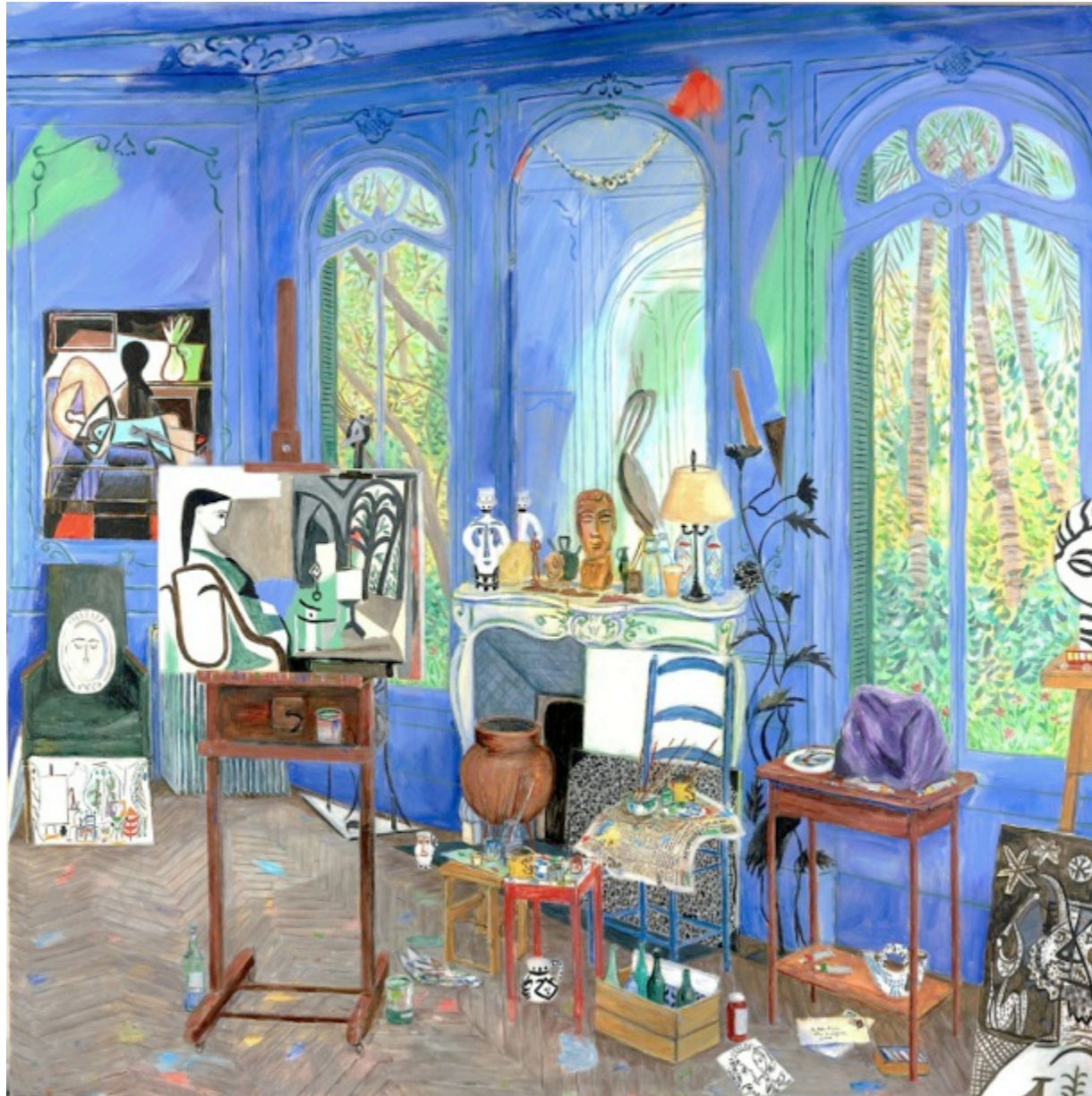
"Calder's Home in Saché, France," 2015, mixed media on canvas, 68" x 68" (173 x 173cm)

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"Magritte's Studio, Brussels," 2014, mixed media on linen, 50" x 64" (127 x 163 cm)



"Picasso's Studio, Cannes," 2015, mixed media on canvas, 66" x 66" (168 x 168 cm)





"Matisse's Studio, Collioure," 2015, mixed media on canvas, 66" x 66" (168 x 168 cm)





“Peter Doig’s Studio at Chelsea College of Art,” 2015, gouache on board, 20 x 27 in (50 x 68 cm)





“Ai Wei Wei’s Studio, Beijing,” 2015, gouache on board, 19” x 26” (49 x 66 cm)





“Cy Twombly’s Studio in Gaeta, Italy,” 2015, gouache on board, 20” x 20” (51 x 51 cm)



“Keith Haring’s Studio,” 2016, gouache on board, 19” x 30” (48 x 76 cm)





"Lucian Freud's Studio, London," 2015, gouache on board, 19.25" x 24" (49 x 61 cm)

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"Giacometti's Studio in Paris," 2015, gouache on board, 19.5" x 19.5" (50 x 50 cm)





“Georgia O’Keeffe’s Studio, New Mexico,” 2016, gouache on board, 18” x 27” (46 x 69 cm)



Works on Paper:



“Picasso’s Studio, Cannes,” 2014, acrylic on paper, 42” x 72” (107 x 183 cm)





“Miró’s Studio, Mallorca,” 2016, watercolor and gouache, 12.5” x 12.5” (32 x 32 cm)



"Diebenkorn's Studio, Ocean Park, Santa Monica," 2016, watercolor and gouache, 13.5" x 12"





"David Hockney's Studio, London," 2016, watercolor and gouache, 11" x 11" (28 x 28 cm)





"Matisse's Studio, Nice," 2016, watercolor and charcoal on paper, 12" x 18" (31 x 46 cm)





“Frida Kahlo painting ‘Portrait on the border between Mexico and U.S.A.,’” watercolor, 9” x 12 “ (23 x 30 cm)



"Picasso's Studio, Rue de la Boétie," 2016, watercolor and charcoal, 12.25" x 12" (31 x 30 cm)

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"Study for Hockney's Studio While Painting Paper Pools," 2016, gouache on paper, 12" x 14" (30 x 36 cm)



"Miró's Studio, Mallorca," 2015, watercolor, gouache and pierre noire, 12.5" x 9" (32 x 23 cm)



## CREATIVE SPACES

By Anthony Haden-Guest

In these paintings Damian Elwes has recreated many of the primary engine-rooms of Modern art. Each of these images initially registers as a joyful act of homage, but as they soak in, the viewer is likely to become aware of depths and subtleties. Yes, these are icons in the religion of art, but Elwes demonstrates that great artists provide food for more than just the eye.

His reconstruction of Picasso's first Paris studio in Le Bateau Lavoir is an example of his method. Le Bateau Lavoir was the seedy Montmartre tenement where his neighbors included Modigliani and Juan Gris. This studio view is dated 1908 and amongst the work Elwes depicts is *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, which Picasso had painted the year before, and which so undid his fellow artists and contemporaries that he didn't show it in public until 1916. But alongside it is another canvas, *Three Women*, which so pleased these same contemporaries that Picasso and Braque were encouraged to pursue their as yet unnamed Cubist project.

You will see that Elwes has filled the canvas with apparently casual details, from the bottle, the glass, the jar, the skull on the table on the left, to the carved head on the floor. And, since he has avoided the easy option of mimicking Cubism, you will note the unnatural tilt of the bowl holding the apples.

There is nothing random here. Every single object has been taken from one of Picasso's paintings, drawings or gouaches. Other details refer to crucial elements in the artist's life. The head is one of the Iberian Stone Age sculptures that, along with African carvings, opened up the repertoire of forms that allowed Cubism to be wrenched free of the visual vocabulary of the Renaissance.

So the easy looking aspect of Elwes's canvases, the sense of painterly well-being that pervades them, comes from painstaking research. He visited each studio and culled hundreds of photographs of them from the Internet and more traditional resources. These were attached to the walls of his California studio as he worked.

This detective work paid off. When Elwes traveled to Collioure to research the earliest studio in the series, the one in which Matisse invented Fauvism in 1905, he found that the former fishing village in Le Midi had become

a tourist trap, given over to Matisse and Derain. Oddly, nonetheless, nobody could tell him just where the Matisse studio had been, except that it was somewhere “over in the port.”

Elwes was, as always, armed with his research. This included two photographs that Matisse had taken through his window and reproductions of a number of drawings and a painting, executed from the same vantage point. And nothing quite added up. One image would be slightly but significantly different from another. In one you could see boats, in another a tree, and so forth. And none of them appeared to have been done looking from anywhere in the port.

Elwes showed the photographs to some boules players on the beach and asked from where they might have been taken. They asked why? He said he was looking for Matisse’s studio. They told him, no, no. It was over in the port. He said very well. But from where did they think the photographs had been taken anyway? They indicated a house just behind them.

Elwes knocked. They were renting and he was allowed up to the second floor. The door opened onto Matisse’s early studio. He found the screws where the balcony had been. The little tree had grown mightily, blotting out some of the port, and there was a restaurant where there had been a few white chairs. The visual dissonances between the Matisse images were instantly cleared up. The studio had two windows. A magic moment.

Elwes had another loaded experience in Frida Kahlo’s “Casa Azul”. The museum director said he wasn’t allowed to sketch in her studio. He was, though, allowed to draw in the garden and began to do so. He had seen that the studio bore little resemblance to the way it had been during Kahlo’s lifetime. It had been virtually emptied. Such furniture as remained had been shoved into a corner and roped in. Elwes set to drawing. Later, the museum director looked over his shoulder and asked why he had moved everything around? Elwes explained that he was not the one who had moved the furniture, that he was drawing the place just as it had once been. The director said he could work in the studio.

This is not pedantry. It is no accident that the artists are not physically present in any of their painted studios, that Picasso’s hefty thereness in his Cannes studio in 1956 is indicated only by the bentwood rocker in which he would sit to study a work in progress. Elwes wants the viewer to feel he is witnessing creation, which is why his paintwork never sets out to confront his subjects “mano a mano” but has a feel of openness, of a space in which something is surely about to happen.

In some sense, Elwes wants the viewer to feel what it is like to inhabit each of these painters. You do not absolutely have to know that Dali similarly levitated Velasquez’s studio in a painting, but, along with the immediate visual impact, such decodings are part of the pleasures of the work.





“Picasso’s Studio, Le Bateau Lavoir, Paris”, 2008, mixed media on linen, 42” x 72” (107 x 183 cm)





"Matisse's Studio, Vence," 2007-15, mixed media on canvas, 60" x 60" (152 x 152 cm)





"Matisse's Studio, Vence II," 2007-15, mixed media on canvas, 58" x 58" (147 x 147 cm)





“Picasso’s Villa La Californie, Cannes”, 2008, mixed media on linen, 66” x 132” (107 x 183 cm)