

MODERNISM

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Gallery Exhibition Schedule

Damian ELWES

Artist Studios: From Picasso to Kusama

September 12–October 26, 2019

In the 1940s, Henri Matisse advised young artists to make copies of their favorite paintings. Nearly half a century later, Damian Elwes decided to follow his advice with a twist. "I went to Paris and made paintings of the studios of my favorite artists," Elwes says. What began as a way of learning from deceased masters—including Matisse—has developed into a vast body of visually- and conceptually-rich work to be exhibited in a solo show at Modernism Gallery in September.



Elwes has painted the studios of great artists ranging from Claude Monet and Paul Gauguin to Pablo Picasso and Yayoi Kusama to Roy Lichtenstein and David Hockney. His lush canvases not only reference their work aesthetically but also excavate their creative processes by meticulously reconstructing spaces that no longer exist. To research each artwork, Elwes delves deeply into history, scrutinizing dozens of photographs and literary sources as well as the masters' own paintings. He also seeks out the buildings where the artists' studios were once situated. In the case of Matisse, his sleuthing resulted in the rediscovery of the house in Collioure where the artist invented Fauvism in 1905. In others he successfully reconstructed the original arrangement of objects and furniture.

"The sense of painterly well-being that pervades [Elwes' canvases] comes from painstaking research," explains the art critic Anthony Haden-Guest. "Elwes wants the viewer to feel he is witnessing creation... to feel what it is like to inhabit each of these painters."

For Elwes, there's also the conviction that these studios are found compositions. "These people were so visual that even the negative space has been thought about," Elwes observes. "So what I'm doing is painting thousands of still lives laid out for me by the most creative minds of the last century."

Picasso's many studios, as painted by Elwes, are emblematic. Included in this exhibition will be a special installation of the panoramic eight-panel painting of Picasso's studio at Villa La Californie, Cannes, 1956. Elwes spent more than twelve years creating this monumental, immersive painting, which depicts hundreds of works of art that Picasso worked on in that year.

In historical terms, Elwes' canvases represent an invaluable contribution to the understanding of how some of the 20th Century's greatest artists were influenced by their physical surroundings. In conceptual terms, the paintings are absolutely contemporary, reactivating familiar masterpieces through recontextualization, as has been achieved in different ways by Roy Lichtenstein, John Baldessari, Jeff Wall and Cindy Sherman.

Damian ELWES (born 10 August 1960) is a British artist who lives and works in Santa Monica, California. His work has been exhibited in galleries and museums across America and Europe, and was most recently the subject of a retrospective at the Musée en Herbe, Paris, in 2018.

The public is cordially invited to attend an opening reception on **Thursday, September 12th**, from 5:30-8PM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL: 415/541-0461 / FAX: 415/541-0425,
OR EMAIL TO: INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM.

HI-RES IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

image: *Yayoi Kusama's Studio (Tokyo, 2012)*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 84 inches

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