

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Jonas Wood

Gabriel Coxhead



Jonas Wood: 'Frimkess Chilean Landscape Pot', 2015. © Jonas Wood. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian Gallery



In case you haven't heard, the hottest trend in the art world right now is ceramics – pottery given a conceptual, postmodern twist by contemporary artists. And Jonas Wood adds a further twist, of sorts. The American isn't a potter but a painter, yet he has filled half his debut London show with absolutely gigantic portraits of different sorts of vases: a rotund, wood-effect pot with a shrivelled plant poking over the lip; a tall, straight-sided piece decorated with a tropical jungle theme; an austere black-and-white jug featuring dinosaurs (made by Wood's wife, the ceramicist Shio Kusuka).

Wood's painting style is crisp and sharp, and the intense hues that he uses are evenly deployed across the canvas surfaces, almost like a screenprint. The result is a feeling of flatness and distance – as if Wood is both fascinated by ceramics and their decorations, but is also keen to emphasise how he's one step removed, limited to being a mere observer.

These ideas become more complex and intriguing in the other half of the show, where paintings of various interiors – a children's playroom, an arty-looking living room, a birdcage – are done

in an even more flatly lustrous, almost cartoonish style. The official blurb says that the works recall Matisse or Hockney; yet there's an endearingly clunky, tremulous quality which means you can't help but think of comics or animation – some stylistic cross between 'Beavis and Butthead' and 'South Park', perhaps. And this thinning, two-dimensional effect is used to depict all sorts of details and cultural artefacts – from piles of oriental rugs to children's toys to Picassos hanging in a collector's apartment to, yes, more pots – so that after a while the objects start to achieve a sort of prop-like interchangeability. It's curiously, subtly provocative.