



DELPHIAN  
GALLERY

# HAUNTED BY PARADISE

DAVID GARDNER

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WILDER

# Haunted By Paradise | A Solo by David Gardner

Presented in collaboration with Delphian Gallery

7th - 27th March 2024

*"We should have learned from the grass, humble in its abundance, offering food and shelter wherever it spread. Instead, we stamped our feet like gods, marvelling at the life we made, imagining all of it to be ours." Tishani Doshi - Species.*

David Gardner (b. 1987) is a British artist whose hyper-saturated delicate artworks reference sexuality, spirituality, and a deep understanding of what it is to be human. The sun is a prominent feature of this body of work, its presence felt through the glow on flesh and the tips of leaves and stems. It radiates a warm, heavy saturated light throughout the images, an inner glow that shines through everything. The sun appears to have traversed each image, capturing at the zenith of its cycle before dipping toward the horizon. A passing of time is felt through each frame, the journey approaching its ultimate end. This sun seems as if it is about to explode, setting everything alight. A destructive boiling point is imminent, one that might reset the balance of the Earth and engender a new beginning. The eye is overwhelmed, the colours bold but never heavy-handed or excessive. Febrile, as if vibrating with explosive potential. The work is vibrant in both colour and form, and everything depicted glows as if lit from within. Using traditional mediums such as watercolour, gouache and egg tempera, Gardner lavishly paints these vibrant environments, in which the constricted human form is shown enveloped in lush wildness. Many of the works are painted on Taroni Silk which gives the works a smoothness and a slight translucence, and an evanescent feel to the works. The silk echoes the tenderness, vulnerability, and

strength of human flesh. Many of these works feature a solitary figure, surrounded by flora that exists both symbiotically and at odds to the presence of the human form. The figure is often cropped so closely that it is only one body part that is presented, and the surrounding plants grow over and through the statuesque flesh. The one single inspiration that gave birth to this entire body of work arose after David encountered the practice of the Modern Primitive performance artist, Fakir Musafar. Through intense body modifications Musafar seeks and encounters transcendental out-of-body states, recreating ancient rituals such as the Native American Indian Sun Dance where the flesh is pierced and suspended. This piercing of the flesh, a devotional ritual to something greater than oneself, is an ancient image that runs through many cultures in every part of the world - from the Hindu Kavadi processions to the image of Christ sacrificed and nailed to the cross. Whilst Gardner is not religious his religious schooling has imbued his work with certain iconography, both through the way the figures in his work are in a constant battle with the environment and in the way that their godlike beauty is not constrained by their turmoil. It is with delicacy and reverence that he handles these subjects, and the defiance of that beauty amidst the chaos imbues the work with a spiritual and otherworldly quality inherent in every gesture. The flesh, figures, and feet in the images are very present, and they occupy the full plane as if to escape (or transcend) beyond the perimeter of the canvas in search of liberation. They are also inexorably rooted to the Earth, albeit by seemingly violent means. On closer inspection however, the stem has grown slowly through the foot, the vines have wrapped and bound carefully around the form. The body and nature are recombining, entwining as if by divine necessity. Like a transformed Daphne trying to escape Apollo. The feet are the obedient

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humble underdog of the body, and are what root us to the Earth. We find ourselves in a world where we are becoming disconnected to the natural world with dire consequences - a slow sustained annihilation. Hermaphroditic flowers such as dandelions and sunflowers exist as recurring motifs, where explorations of masculine and feminine, apparent polarities that are fused together. The flowers are never shown in full bloom, wilting in their last beautiful twist towards the Sun.

For Gardner, drawing and painting have been a way for him to explore his sexuality from an early age. Michelangelo's David, John Martin's The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Peter Hujar's Daniel Schook Sucking Toe were early instigators as to how Gardner handled the human form in his work. The elegant beauty of David's namesake towers above the viewer, whilst in his own work the intimate size invites closeness. In particular it's how Hujar captures his sitters in an "empathetic pure moment of stillness" that captures Gardner's attention, and his portrayals of "humans being beautifully human, and beautifully vulnerable". The works initiate an act of looking. The penetration of a boundary; a threshold; a gateway. They aim to serve as a way towards healing this relationship between humanity and its relationship to the natural world through personal, cultural, and spiritual ways of looking. "It seems for a long time we have been living from the outside-in, instead of the inside-out. A personal and collective deep dive inward looking might just unleash a new super human power."

Delphian Gallery, the artist-run, nomadic gallery and arts platform was launched back in 2017 by Benjamin Murphy and Nick JS Thompson. Primarily London-based, their joint passion is to discover and show the most captivating and challenging work by emerging and early-career contemporary artists.

David Gardner is the winner of the 2022 Delphian Open Call, culminating in this collaborative solo presentation.

# DELPHIAN GALLERY

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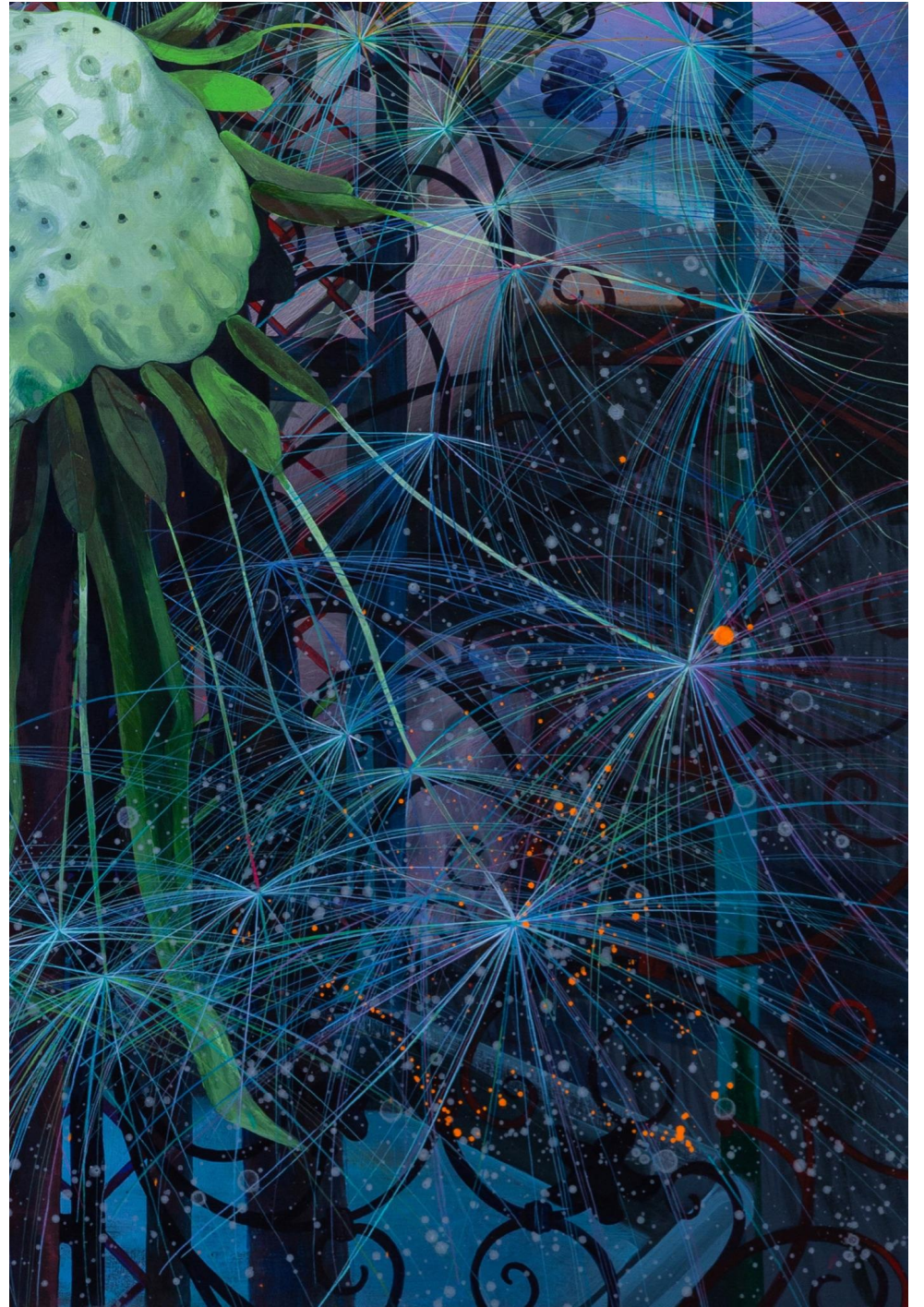




*Must I Always Be On The Outside*  
*Looking In? (II)*  
2024  
205 x 145 x 2 cm  
Acrylic on linen















*Who Can Turn Skies Back and Begin  
Again?*

2023

Watercolour and gouache on

Taroni silk

18 x 24 x 2 cm





*A Sun Dance For Fakir*  
Watercolour, gouache and acrylic on  
Taroni silk  
140 x 120 x 2cm











*Of All The Springtimes Of The Earth,  
This Is The Ugliest*

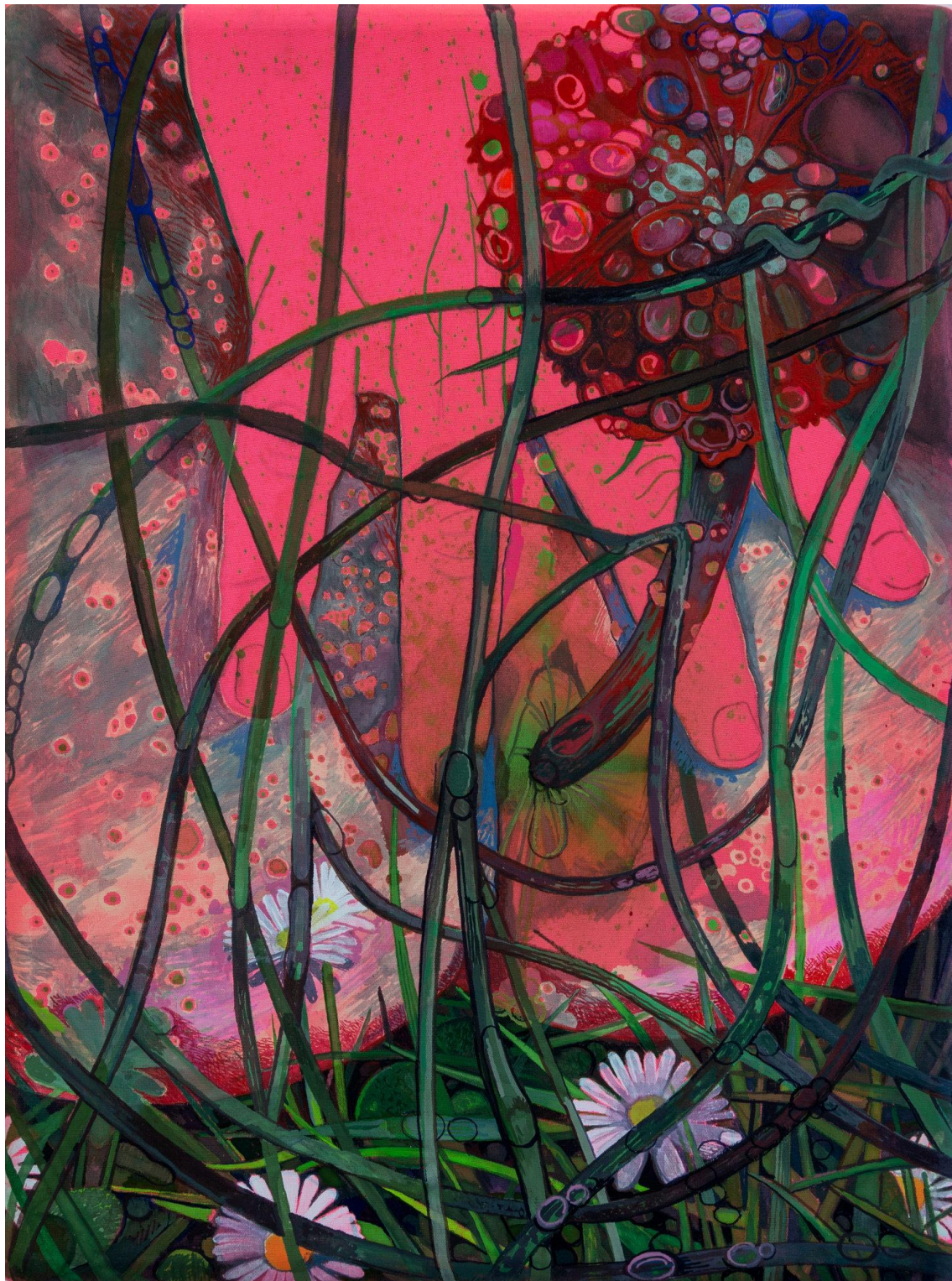
2023

Watercolour, Gouache and Egg

Tempera on Taroni Silk

30 x 20 x 2 cm





*Pulling Daisies*

2023

Watercolour and gouache on  
Taroni silk

18 x 24 x 2 cm





*Apomixis*

2023

Watercolour and gouache on  
Taroni silk

18 x 24 x 2 cm





*STILL*

2023

Watercolour, gouache and egg  
tempera on Taroni silk

30 x 20 x 2 cm





*When Secrets More Tender Than Evening Airs Have  
Passed*

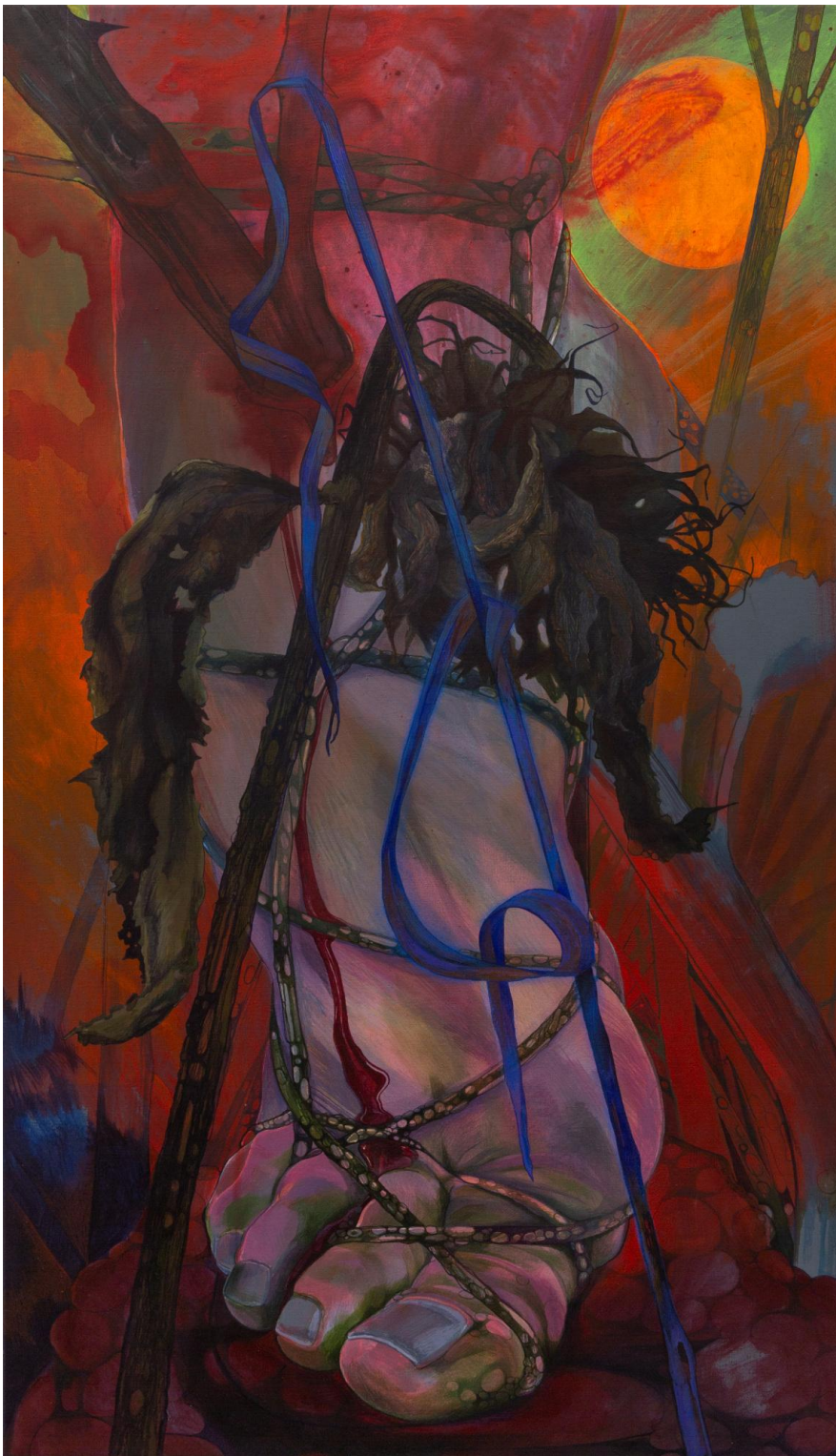
2023

Acrylic on linen

140 x 80 x 3.5 cm







*David as Daphne*

2023

Acrylic on linen

140 x 80 x 3.5 cm



*Under Ashes*  
2024  
60 x 20 x 2.5 cm  
Acrylic on linen















*David as Diana*  
Acrylic on wood 2023  
46 x 46 x 2.2 cm



*Dusk Dust Settle*  
2024  
46 x 46 x 2.2 cm  
Acrylic on wood







*Show Us Your Face, Sun, From The  
Veil; We Desire Blinding Light.*

2023

Watercolour, Gouache and Egg  
Tempera on Taroni Silk

26 x 20 x 2cm

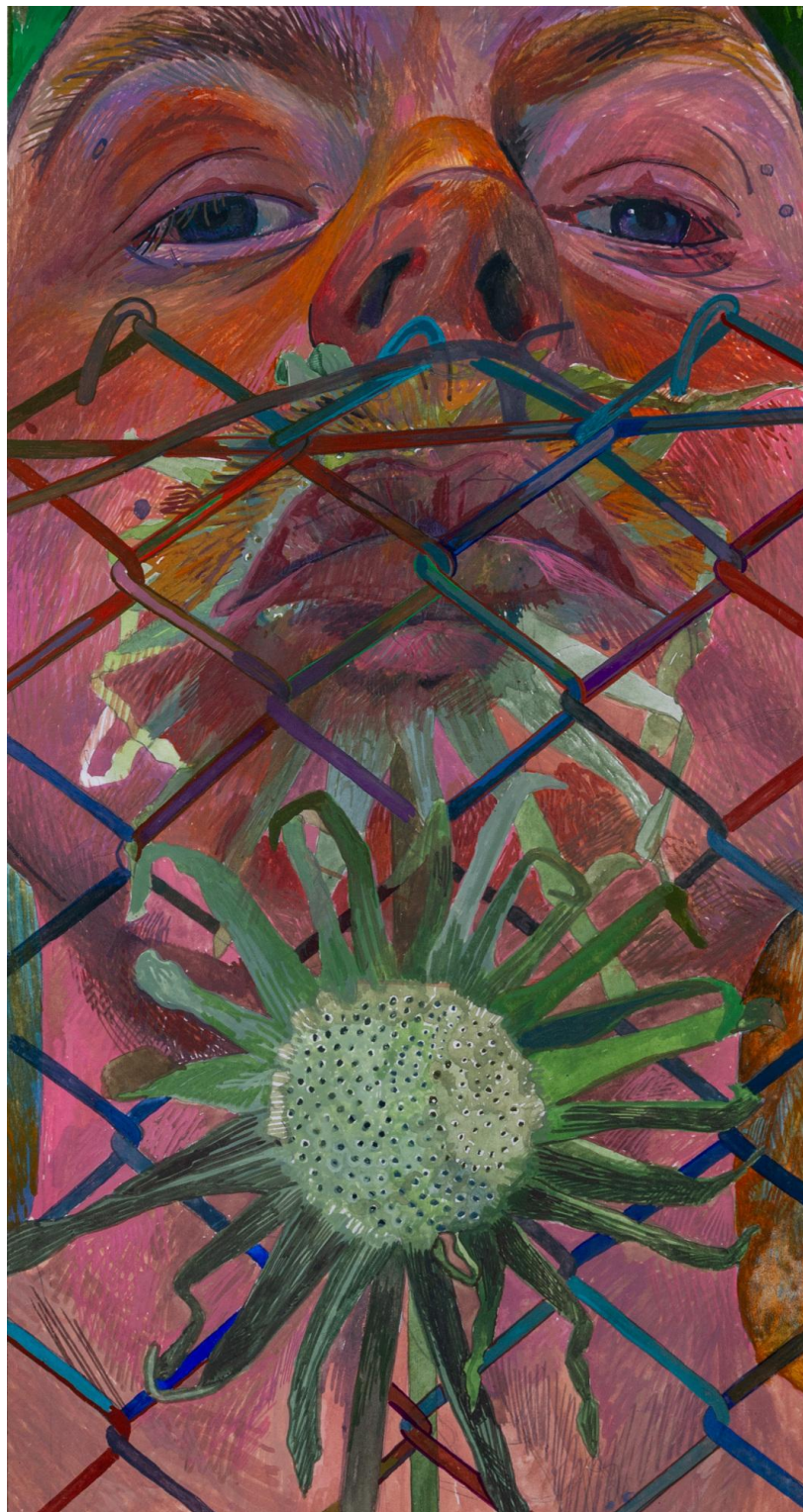


*I, Garden.*

2024

Gouache and watercolour on paper

Framed dimensions 39.7 x 25 x 3 cm







*Five Leaf Clover*

2023

Watercolour and gouache on paper

13 x 18cm

Framed dimensions 26.2 x 21.3 x 3 cm

Light wood box frame













*Modern Primitive*

2023

Watercolour and gouache on paper

13 x 18cm

Framed dimensions 26.2 x 21.3 x 3 cm

Light wood box frame



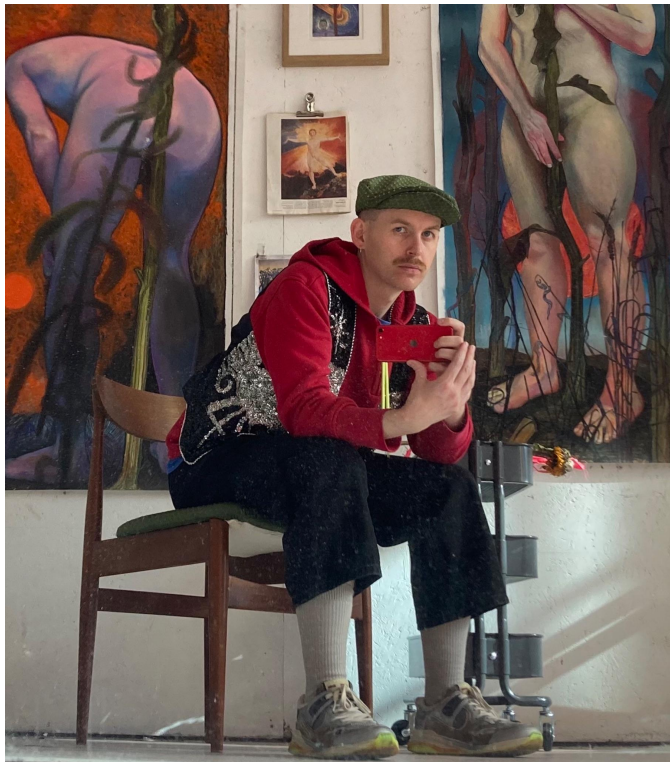








David Gardner (b.1987, Newcastle upon Tyne)



Royal Drawing School MA Postgraduate Drawing Year, 2019. Central Saint Martins School of Art & Design Charing Cross Road, BA Womenswear Fashion Design, 2011. David has lived and worked in London since 2007. David is part of the faculty at the Royal Drawing School, teaching there since 2020.

2023

Al Dente; Feast For The Senses / Group Show / Berntson  
Bhattacharjee, London

Shipping Address / Group Show / Palazzo Monti, Brescia, Italy

Disrupted Harmony / Group Show / Stockholm, Sweden

Group Commission at Hauser & Wirth Somerset for the H&W Art Farm Shop opening in Mayfair, London

Papier / Group Show / Delphian Gallery, France

ACS Winners Group Show / Gurr Johns / Pall Mall, London

Palazzo Monti Residency / Bercia, Italy

Ralph Lauren Group Show / Mayfair Flagship Store, London

Wild Things / Group Show / Hexum Gallery / Vermont, USA

2022

Winner of the ACS Studio Prize 2022

Paint Talk Group Show / VO Curations, Angel, London

Delphian Open Call Winner's Show / Group Show / Unit1 Gallery, West London

African Fashion Exhibition / V&A, London and touring internationally

Emergence / Group Show / Hew Hood Gallery, Islington, London

Missing you / Group Show / Windsor Castle, Windsor

Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize / London and national tour

I'll be your Mirror / Boisdale of Bishopsgate, Liverpool Street, London

2021

Venus as a Boy / Solo Show / Maison Bertaux, Soho, London

Ruth Borchard Self Portrait Prize / Group Show / Online

2020

Maison Bertaux / Group Show, Soho, London

2019

Best of Drawing Year / Christies, Mayfair, London

End of the Drawing Year / Royal Drawing School, Hackney, London

RDS Drawing Year Open Studio Show / Space Studios, Hackney, London

Residency and Group Show / Borgo Pignano, Tuscany, Italy

Maison Bertaux / Summer Group Show, Soho, London

2016

Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize / London and national tour

2011

Colin Barnes Drawing Award / London

Graduate Show / Central Saint Martins, London

#### **Residencies and Awards:**

Palazzo Monti Residency, Brescia, Italy. 2023.

ACS Studio Prize Winner. 2022.

Delphian Open Call Winner. 2022.

Borgo Pignano Residency, Tuscany, Italy. 2023.

Colin Barnes Drawing Award. 2011.



Partnership Programmes:



Wilder Gallery partners with Own Art, enabling art buyers from the UK to acquire work between £100 - £2,500 over a 10 month interest free period. The artwork is delivered immediately and available to enjoy before the first instalment is paid. If you would like to purchase with Own Art or find out more please email Michelle [info@wilder.gallery](mailto:info@wilder.gallery).



Wilder Gallery partners with Art Money, enabling art buyers from the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand to acquire work between £1,000 & £100,000 over a 10 months interest free period. The works is available to deliver immediately. To follow the simple sign up process please click [here](#).

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