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*Dusk*

Jonathan Gardner

Jonathan Gardner (b. 1982, Lexington, KY) presents *Dusk*, an exhibition of eight new oil paintings rendered with a surreal approach to form and perspective. Scenes within scenes deconstruct planes into isolated storylines that recall cinematic motifs, creating tension that disorients and entices. Using architectural devices to warp space and time, compositions hover in a transient space between a dream and the ordinary as dusk turns into darkness.

In a recent departure from tableaux of leisure, the artist considers the moments that lead up to or follow. Gregarious scenes of pleasure, consumption, and entertainment are absent; in their place are constrained images of stark moments and suspended dialogue. A series of neoclassical columns (a reappearing artifice throughout the exhibition) divides *The City at Night* (2023) into multiple incongruous narratives. Though arranged to read like a film reel or storyboard, the composition infers a series of events from left to right that quickly disintegrates into the unknowable. Devices leave the viewer adrift: a shadowed silhouette, a statuesque figure in grey scale opposite a severe vanishing point, a highly stylized collage of faces in silent discourse, and an eerily quiet cityscape oscillate in and out of the picture frame like a montage of cinematic sequences. Influenced by Giorgio de Chirico's (1888 - 1978) metaphysical period (circa 1911 - 1920), Gardner detaches the viewer from our shared physical realities.

Merging unconscious visions sourced from the depths of his dreams, Gardner imparts self-referential associations. A painting within a painting hangs at a sharp angle in *The Arranger* (2023), semi-obscuring the image of a portrait that physically hangs in the exhibition, titled *The Magic Spell* (2023). In *Dusk* (2023), three figures in three independent environments are inexplicably linked. In an ambiguous self-portrait, a solitary figure is seated at a Venetian red table among a collection of framed artworks sourced from the artist's unconscious. Calling to mind Henri Matisse's (1869 - 1954) *The Red Studio* (1911), Gardner renders images that exist solely in his mind, leaving the viewer with both insight and intrigue.