



Photo: Artist's Studio, August 2015. © Rachel Chandler

Wardell Milan The Charming Hour

September 10 - October 17, 2015
Opening reception: Thursday, September 10, 6-8pm

David Nolan Gallery announces *The Charming Hour*, Wardell Milan's first solo exhibition at the gallery. On view from September 10 through October 17, 2015, the exhibition will include a group of new works, and coincides with a fully illustrated monograph on the artist, published by OSMOS.

Over the last decade, Milan (b. 1977, Knoxville, Tennessee) has become known for his expansive practice, which includes drawing, collage, photo-diorama, and more recently, painting. Throughout these diverse media, the artist sustains a thoughtful enquiry into the nature of self-identity, beauty, the unconscious, and sexuality. In much of his work, Milan draws liberally from a range of sources that include magazine imagery, historical artworks, family snapshots, and illustrated books.

In two eight-foot wide drawings, the artist casts the viewer in the role of casual observer to a host of naked figures who express various states of contemplation and relaxation. Milan presents these leisurely figures against idyllic scenery abound with lush flora: exotic flowers, ferns, and wild strawberries – all of which provide a verdant setting for subtle narratives to unfold. Occupying the extreme foreground of the composition, these unconventional bodies are the result of the artist's ongoing interest in the deconstructed human form, which he renders by way of viscerally shaded volumes.

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Paralleling his large-scale drawings, Milan's new photographic works – which document the tabletop dioramas he constructs in his studio – continue the vision of a dreamlike setting in which fanciful events transpire. In order to make these works, the artist carefully cuts out props and characters from a vast array of visual material before photographing the arrangements in his studio. In these works, personal images of the artist and his family coexist alongside imagery culled from porn magazines and art historical sources from Paul Gauguin to Lucien Freud. In this distinctive approach, Milan weaves together elements of his own biography within a broader landscape of vernacular culture.

The subject of flora takes on a singular focus in the artist's series of "Tulip" works. These images began as a reference to the popular flower craze in seventeenth-century Holland, which culminated in an economic bubble that ultimately collapsed after a period of burgeoning trade. For Milan, the "Tulips" serve as a powerful metaphor for the frailty of any financial system. Starting in 2008, the series has until now chiefly consisted of works on paper. The elegant new paintings on view in the exhibition represent his first foray into the medium in his decade-long career.

Born in 1977, Milan received his MFA from Yale University in 2004. His recent exhibitions include *Kingdom or Exile: Parisian Landscapes* at the Savannah College of Art and Design and *Body Language* at The Studio Museum in Harlem. From 2006-07, Milan undertook a residency at The Studio Museum, resulting in a three-person exhibition entitled *Midnight's Daydream*. His work can be found in various public collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Denver Art Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Milan lives and works in New York City.

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