

# BERGGRUEN

GALLERY

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**JJ MANFORD**  
**In a Western Town**

**March 30 – April 29, 2023**

Berggruen Gallery is proud to announce *In a Western Town*, an exhibition of recent paintings by JJ Manford. This show marks Manford's first solo exhibition with the gallery. *In a Western Town* will be on view from March 30 through April 29, 2023. The gallery will host a reception for the artist on Thursday, March 30, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

JJ Manford layers oil pastel and oil stick over Flashe on burlap or linen to construct vibrantly animated paintings that explore concepts of transcendent self-discovery and collective fantasy. *In a Western Town* presents thirteen new paintings inspired by the rich architectural landscape of California and the West. From ruminative renditions of Paolo Soleri's experimental neighborhood of Arcosanti, Arizona to a kaleidoscopic depiction of the William Westerfeld House in San Francisco's iconic Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, this new body of work reflects Manford's interest in interior design and the intersection of structural landscapes and human life.

A salient feature of his work, Manford often includes art historical references in his imaginative dwellings. Nods to Bay Area artists, such as Joan Brown, Richard Diebenkorn, and Ruth Asawa can be found throughout this new body of work, as Manford pays homage to the greats of modernity. Elaborately patterned textiles, checkered rugs, mid-century furniture, and lush houseplants adorn these effervescent rooms, their decorative objects carefully curated by the artist to create culturally rich domains. Glowing sunsets, sublime blue skies, and verdant foliage seen through windows give glimpses into the outside world, though it is what lies within these abodes that facilitates moments of reflection, existing in a dreamy haze somewhere between comfort and chaos. These whimsical rooms lack human inhabitants, rather this void is filled by the presence of charming animals such as cats and foxes. This liberation from human occupancy creates a tranquil moment for the viewer to contemplate the demeanors of the hypothetical residents, perhaps even projecting themselves into the illusory space.

Another defining feature of Manford's work is the prominent texture of the burlap and linen materials. Adding depth and dimension to the surface of his compositions, this masterful use of texture uniquely underscores the material presence of Manford's work. As he intuitively layers oil stick and pastel, Manford is succinctly aware of the intrinsic malleability of color and light. Paying close attention to the saturation, temperature, and tone of his pigments, his constructed environments reflect a playful spirit and a vivacious ambiance, resulting in a dynamic visual experience. Imbued with fervid optical colors and tactile warmth, Manford's art maintains a refined psychedelic aura. A vibrational current seems to echo throughout the cultivated interior environs, leaving viewers to find themselves within a dream world that is both familiar and surreal in equal degree.

JJ Manford was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1983. Receiving his bachelor's degree from Cornell in 2006, Manford went on to obtain a post-Baccalaureate certificate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2009, graduating with his MFA from Hunter College in 2012. Manford's work has been exhibited in New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago, London, Rome, Copenhagen, and Puerto Rico. His work has been included in multiple private and public collections, including the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida. Manford is currently an adjunct professor at Pratt Institute. In 2013, Manford co-founded Underdonk—an artist-run exhibition space and collective located in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn. Manford currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

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*In a Western Town*, March 30 – April 29, 2023. On view at 10 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Images and preview available upon request. For all inquiries, please contact the gallery by phone at (415) 781-4629 or by email at [info@berggruen.com](mailto:info@berggruen.com).

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