



THE NEW YORKER

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

ART

JJ Manford

There is a beguiling stillness reminiscent of the bedtime book “Goodnight Moon” in this New York painter’s domestic scenes—and, in fact, there is at least one lunar orb to be found in most of the vibrant canvases in Manford’s new show, at the Derek Eller gallery. (“Interior with Giraffe Sculpture and Calder Print,” from 2021, with its patio view and candy-colored sky, is a sunny exception.) These beautifully, and sometimes bizarrely, decorated rooms are devoid of people, but they’re occupied by a menagerie of animals. Textiles are another prominent presence, their rich textures echoing Manford’s process: his use of layered color and scumbling accentuates the tactility of his paintings’ linen and burlap surfaces. The works vary in scale, and the largest evoke theatrical sets. Among the most enchanting pieces on view is “The Toucan Vase,” rendered in a palette recalling that of van Gogh’s “The Bedroom.” Nearly eight feet tall, it places viewers at the base of a grand red staircase, as if extending an invitation to climb it.

— *Johanna Fateman*

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300 Broome St.
Downtown

212-206-6411