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BASKETBALL, POKER PROPEL PAINTER TO PINNACLE OF THE ART WORLD

by Katya Kazakina



Jonas Wood in his Los Angeles studio. Photo: Brian Forrest, Courtesy of the artist

A 5-foot-tall basketball with a chair hidden within is the centerpiece of Jonas Wood's Los Angeles studio -- a throne that burly men could parade around on a festive occasion.

Wood, an avid sports fan and card player whose paintings have depicted NBA Hall of Famers Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Charles Barkley and Bill Walton and poker legend Doyle Brunson, has plenty to celebrate.

His first museum survey in the U.S. opens this week at the Dallas Museum of Art with more than 30 paintings, including portraits of his family and friends. Billionaires Yusaku Maezawa and Eli Broad, Guess founders Maurice and Paul Marciano, as well as museums such as the Whitney and Guggenheim, are among those loaning works for the event.

"This is just the beginning," said Wood, who turns 42 next week. "It's still, in a way, an audition for greatness."

Wood, a burly 6-foot-3, often appears in public sporting a beanie and baggy pants and has risen from obscurity to the top of the contemporary art pyramid. His auction sales generated \$13.2 million last year, the most of any artist in the "ultracontemporary" segment, according to Artnet. Next month, Gagosian gallery will stage its first solo show of his new paintings in New York, with prices for some pieces exceeding \$600,000. In May, a 10-foot-tall canvas of a flower pot fetched \$2.3 million at Christie's.