

dovetail

Curb Appeal

Gabrielle Garland celebrates the inner life of homes

By Kate Mothes | February 2023

New York-based artist Gabrielle Garland has always been fascinated by homes and interiors, instilled early on when she worked for a decorative painting firm owned by her mother, where she developed an interest in the relationship between painting and interiors. Her paintings of elastic interiors and playfully distorted exteriors imbue an array of residential styles with vivacious personality, highlighting the details of mailboxes, stoops, landscaping, and glimpses of the neighboring dwellings in acrylic and oil.

Bold shadows cast from trees, power lines overhead, or beneath the lips of siding boards emphasize the details that make every plot unique. “Their significance, or one of the messages I am trying to convey, is that although these spaces are devoid of human form, they clearly are the settings for particular lives,” Garland says. From the style of a fence to how well-maintained the shrubbery is, an observer can learn a lot about the inhabitants’ tastes, habits, or influences without ever meeting them. She continues: “My body of work might be interpreted as an investigation of the physical fabric of society. I believe it documents the constantly shifting balance between our desire for independence and interconnection, between the comfort and familiarity we seek and the strangely disorienting spaces we create.”



Untitled, 2022, Acrylic and oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

Most of Garlands’ whimsical subjects are based on photographs she has taken herself, but in some cases she utilizes found images, too. Every detail of a photograph makes its way into the painting, and while not intentionally creating a narrative, when seen as a body of work, there are discernible changes in the seasons or the direction of the light. One can imagine walking around a neighborhood and observing subtle shifts like someone’s new patio furniture, freshly trimmed hedges, the way a very bright day casts enormous shadows onto the lawn, or the folks across the street still have to wheel in the empty recycling bin.

Garland’s current focus is on suburban landscapes that illuminate the myriad styles and influences of the American vernacular, but she doesn’t limit herself to a single region, era, or theme. “I have always been interested in the ways we claim and define domestic space—inside and out. We all live in some kind of domestic environment, with its unique features and furnishings, and I think this translates across cultures and historic periods,” she says.