

Bernardo Siciliano
American Pastoral

November 11th – December 11th, 2021

V.I.P. Reception & Press Preview: Thursday, November 11th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm
35 Great Jones Street, New York N.Y. 10012

Aicon is delighted to present *American Pastoral*, Bernardo Siciliano's third solo show at the gallery. The present exhibition brings together an intensely personal body of work that mines the artist's self-perception and how that informs his view of the world. Siciliano paints what is closest and most personal to him, thrusting these intimate and private moments into the spotlight with his dazzling technical ability and mastery of palette. There are six large canvases on display, each of the canvases in the exhibition conjure a tension between the viewer, the sitter/subject and the artist himself – a quality that is typical of his oeuvre.

American Pastoral, the title of the exhibition and also of one of the canvases, is suitably titled after Philip Roth's 1997 novel concerning Seymour Levov, a successful Jewish American businessman and former high school star athlete from New Jersey. Levov's happy and conventional upper-middle-class life is ruined by the domestic social and political turmoil of the 1960s. To say that America, under the previous President and the current health crisis has undergone some turmoil is an understatement. *American Pastoral* depicts Siciliano's friend seemingly relaxed in Utah with his eyebrows raised and glasses perched on his nose, however, the topic of conversation is indeed about the current political, health and personal turmoil's that we have all been through in recent years and upon closer reflection that is clear to see.

Another significant work, *Thanksgiving*, depicts a family reunion in Dumbo where the artist lives and keeps his studio. The cooking is underway, and the table nearly set for the most important meal in the US calendar. The canvas is reminiscent of David Hockney, who is a virtuoso in balancing portraits with interior scenes and also has an element of Johannes Vermeer's domestic interior scenes of middle-class life. The artist's daughter, dressed in pink, looks out towards the viewer, breaking the surface of the canvas and forcing us to engage directly with her. Siciliano's



American Pastoral, 2020-2021, Oil on canvas, 88 x 76 in

daughter looks like she feels anxious, she has a worried look in her eye. Anxiety is a feeling that is often shared by her father and was the theme of the first solo exhibition “Panic Attack” of Siciliano at Aicon in 2015.

As the artist Vincent Desiderio says:

“The paintings of Bernardo Siciliano imply a ferocious will to see and record. They are unadorned by finery, presenting, as it were, just the essential facts. They are brutal in both their scrutiny and the limits which the artist imposes upon himself. Yet, though empirically driven they seem overcome by a sense of visual panic. They are haunted by nagging suspicion that though everything in the optical field has been accounted for, there remains an ineluctable other that drives the imagination beyond the quotidian”

Siciliano is a Professor at the New York Academy of Art, where he has been teaching for over a decade. *Don't Think Twice it's Alright* shows an ex-student, friend and painter working in her studio with Siciliano watching from afar, he is always in the canvases even if you cannot physically see him.

As a young man Siciliano consumed as many visual resources as he could find - the Italian Renaissance in particular - but also images of the artists Edward Hopper, Lucian Freud, Balthus and Richard Diebenkorn to name a few. Above all Siciliano is an Italian painter who learned the rules of perspective from Piero Della Francesca and from the drawings of his architect grandfather.

It takes years of teaching, practicing, mastering the technical skills to paint such works. Dr. K. Anders Ericsson of Florida State University found that it takes around 10 years or 10,000 hours of practice to reach the top of ultra-competitive performance fields. As an avid amateur tennis player, Siciliano is on his way to mastering this sport but he is well past this point for his professional craft, already a master of paint, perspective, emotions and landscapes, a true Renaissance man living and working in New York.

About the artist

Siciliano was born in Rome in 1969. Il Gabbiano and Forum Gallery have presented his works at both international and national Fairs: the CIAE in Chicago, the FIAC in Paris, the Arte Fiera of Bologna, the LA Art Show and Art Miami. In 1992 the director Piero Maccarinelli commissioned him to paint the sets of the comedy *Verso la fine dell'estate* by Carlo Repetti for the 35th Festival of Spoleto. In 1995 he collaborated on Bernardo Bertolucci's movie *Io ballo da sola*. He was among those highest classified in a referendum held among readers of the magazine *Quádrì e sculpture* for the exhibition *The Other Art?* at Palazzo Barberini (Rome). In 1998 he was an award winner at the invitational XXXII Prix International d'Art Contemporain de Montecarlo. In recent years, he has been included in group shows at Albright Knox Museum (Buffalo), Galleria Forni (Bologna), and DFN Gallery (New York). His latest solo exhibitions have been at the Museo D'Arte Contemporanea (Rome), The Chiostrò del Bramante (Rome), The Palazzo della Ragione (Milan), the Italian Heritage Culture Foundation (Los Angeles), Studio Forni (Milan) and Forum Gallery (Los Angeles and New York). He was a Runner-Up for the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery in 2018.

Press Queries: Please contact Erica Kyung at erica@aicongallery.com for more information.