

**ShulamitNazarian**  
**LosAngeles**



**Daniel Gibson**  
*Valley of the Moon*



Daniel Gibson, *Two Lovers*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 72 x 72 inches.

## **Daniel Gibson**

### ***Valley of the Moon***

November 13 - January 8

Opening Saturday, November 13, 4pm - 8pm

Walk-ins welcome, appointments encouraged.

Shulamit Nazarian is pleased to present *Valley of the Moon*, a solo exhibition of paintings by Los Angeles-based Daniel Gibson. This will be the artist's first solo exhibition at the gallery.

Gibson's paintings explore a lexicon of symbols that relate to his familial past and his identity as a Mexican-American. The new works in *Valley of the Moon* are set between the desert and the ocean, employing references to the natural world while speaking to hardships, resilience, and freedom.

# Shulamit Nazarian

## Los Angeles

Growing up in California, along the border with Mexico, Gibson bore witness to migrants who crossed the desert, risking their lives as they desperately sought a better future. Confronted by the harsh realities of the world at an early age, he turned to his imagination, often reshaping reality with fantasy. As a painter, Gibson brings to life the surreal narratives that captivated him as a child, reimagining memories and family stories from the point of view of his earliest years.

Shifting between the genres of portraiture, landscape, and still life, Gibson's surrealistic scenes demonstrate an adoration for nature. Desert landscapes are populated with generously painted lush flowers that often take on an anthropomorphized quality. The ocean is prominently featured in many of his family stories and creates a stark contrast with the arid desert landscape of his childhood. Abundantly filled vases serve as a celebration of life, referencing the imagery of *ofrendas*, urns, and wombs. Gibson revitalizes the world around him in painting, reverently returning to familiar symbols such as flowers, butterflies, figures, desert mountains, beaches, and seas.

Oversized butterflies feature prominently in several works in *Valley of the Moon*. Beyond a symbol of migration, the insects conjure a childhood memory of the artist desperately trying to understand how a person could safely make their way across the desert border with little sustenance. In the mind of a young Gibson, giant butterflies relieved these individuals from their grueling journey by carrying them safely to distant lands. Rendering this imagined scene in a painting, the artist employs a child-like imaginary, one filled with curiosity and wonder, in an effort to face a bleak reality. This youthful frame of reference also impacts the very construction of a landscape for Gibson. Many of his paintings build around a blunt horizon, succinctly dividing the Earth from the sky. Looming above is a pregnant sun, endowed with the power both to sustain life and to take it away, a brutal reality for anyone crossing this terrain.

Giving prominence to nature, Gibson in turn depicts the man-made world diminutively, a perspective that is in stark contrast with his earliest years. He grew up in Plaster City, CA, just outside a massive gypsum factory that employed his father. This larger-than-life structure grumbled with power and spit white dust, leaving an indelible impression on the artist as a child. As seen in *Plaster City East*, 2021, Gibson has rendered this immense structure as a miniature form obscured by the vast natural world. In equal measure, the presence of the border wall can be seen in the same painting as a structure reduced to near abstraction, quietly fading in the distance. This gesture pays homage to the natural world over the man-made and monumentalizes the natural forces that dominate us.

Gibson is largely a self-taught artist and has developed his visual language and painting process through intuition and imagination. Under pink, purple, and near-black skies, everything—flowers, butterflies, figures, mountains, beaches, and seas—appears drenched in sunlight. Vibrant colors illustrate each canvas, illuminating his penchant for realizing a rich memory. For the artist, his works are as much autobiographical as they are collective stories that document moments of struggle and celebration that would otherwise be lost to time.

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Daniel Gibson (b. 1977 Yuma, AZ) has had solo and two-person exhibitions at Almine Rech, New York, NY; New Image Art, Los Angeles, CA; Ochi Projects, Los Angeles, CA; LAX Art, Los Angeles, CA; and Mexicali Rose, Baja, Mexico. Recent group exhibitions include Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, CA; Institute of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, CA; The Pit, Los Angeles, CA; Bozo Mag, Los Angeles, CA; and BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA. His works have been written about by *WideWalls*, *Juxtapoz*, and *Brooklyn Rail*.

# Shulamit Nazarian Los Angeles

## Daniel Gibson

b. 1977 Yuma, AZ

Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

Employing references to the natural world while speaking to hardships, resilience, and freedom, Daniel Gibson's paintings explore a lexicon of symbols that relate to his familial past and his identity as a Mexican-American. Growing up along the California border with Mexico, Gibson was confronted by the harsh realities of migration to America at an early age. In an effort to face the bleak nature of these journeys, he turned to his imagination—often reshaping reality with fantasy. As a painter, Gibson brings to life the narratives that captivated him as a child, reimagining memories and family stories from the point of view of his earliest years anew.

Gibson is largely a self-taught artist and has developed his visual language and painting process through intuition and imagination. Shifting between the genres of portraiture, landscape, and still life, Gibson's surrealistic scenes demonstrate an adoration for nature. Gibson revitalizes the world around him in painting, reverently returning to familiar symbols such as flowers, butterflies, figures, desert mountains, beaches, and seas. For the artist, his works are as much autobiographical as they are collective stories that document moments of struggle and celebration that would otherwise be lost to time.

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**Daniel Gibson**

*Butterfly #14 (In the Valley of the Moon), 2021*

Oil on linen

78 x 90 in



**Daniel Gibson**

*Plaster City East, 2021*

Oil on linen

73 x 64 in



**Daniel Gibson**

*Butterfly #12 (Across the Sea), 2021*

Oil on linen

73 x 64 in

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**Daniel Gibson**  
*Butterfly #13*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
73 x 64 in



**Daniel Gibson**  
*Two Lovers, 2021*  
Oil on linen  
72 x 72 in

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**LosAngeles**



**Daniel Gibson**

*On the Yaqui Shoreline*, 2021

Oil on linen

64 x 73 in

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**LosAngeles**



**Daniel Gibson**

*Pretending to Be Flowers, 2021*

Oil on linen

73 x 64 in



**Daniel Gibson**  
*Painted Gorge, 2021*  
Oil on linen  
73 x 64 in

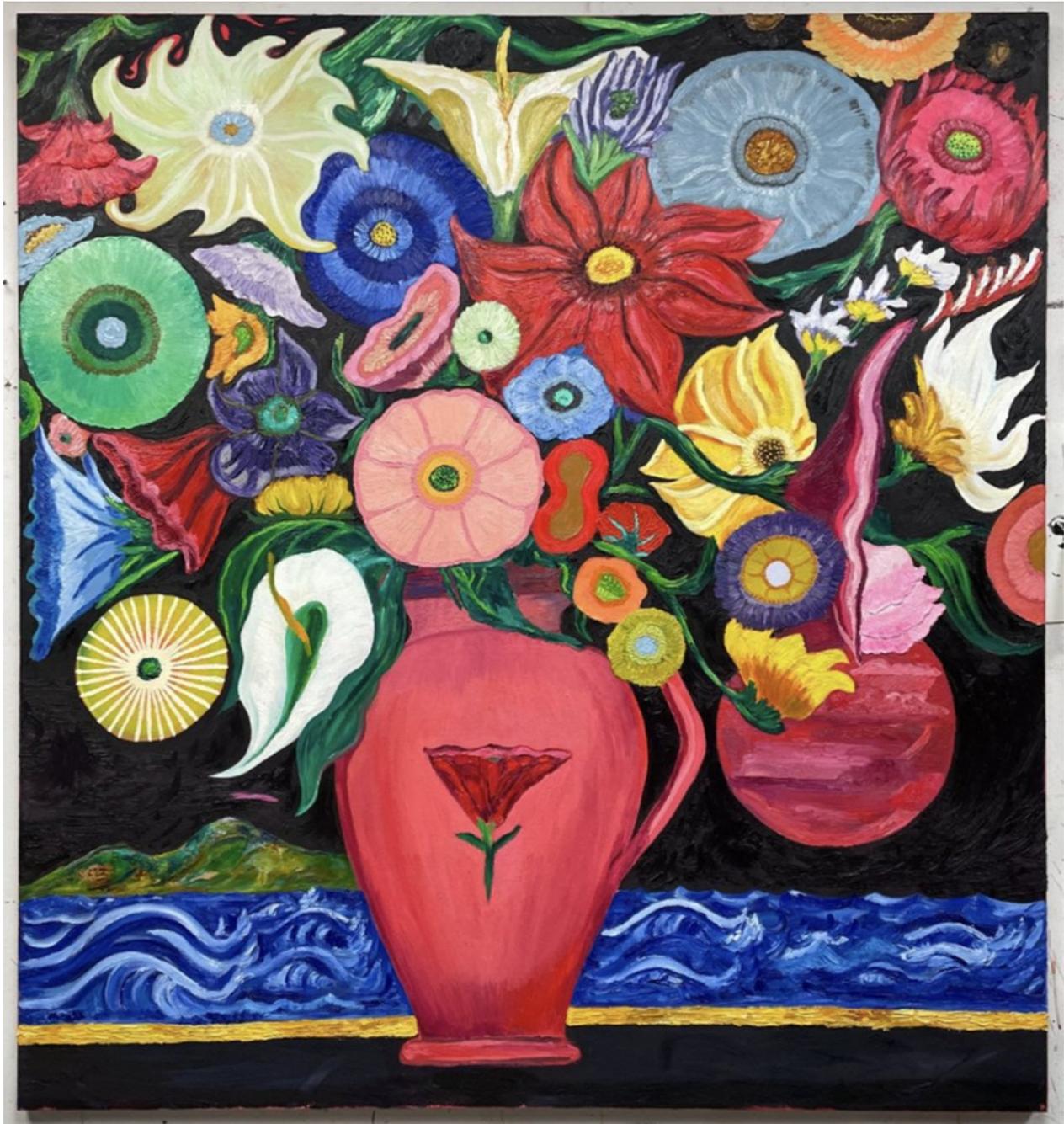


**Daniel Gibson**

*Mother with Three Flowers, 2021*

Oil on linen

60 x 56 in



**Daniel Gibson**

*Vase with Sand Dollar* 1978, 2021

Oil on linen

60 x 56 in



**Daniel Gibson**

*Vase with Sand Dollar (Flower Moon)*, 2021

Oil on linen

60 x 56 in

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**Daniel Gibson**

*It's All Around Us, 2021*

Oil on linen

60 x 56 in

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**Daniel Gibson**  
*The Lovers*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
20 x 25 in

# Shulamit Nazarian Los Angeles

## Daniel Gibson

b. 1977, Yuma, AZ

Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

## Education

**2004** San Diego City College

**2005** Art Center College of Design

## Solo Exhibitions

**2021** *Valley of the Moon*, Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, CA  
*Ocotillo Song*. Almine Rech, New York, NY  
*Little Light*. Almine Rech (online)

**2019** *Todo Fine w/ Timo Fahler*. New Image Art, Los Angeles, CA  
*Earthlings Ochi Projects*, Los Angeles, CA

**2017** Two Person Show with Zio Ziegler, Antonio Columbo Gallery, Milan, Italy  
*Always Be Drawing*, 2017 survey, S.D.S.U gallery. Calexico, CA.  
*Tryin' to stay on the bull*, New Image Art, Los Angeles, CA

**2016** *Always Be Drawing Vol1*, O.N.O, Los Angeles, CA

**2015** *You got to come from somewhere, you don't just fall out of the sky*, O.N.O, Los Angeles, CA  
*HOWL, I beat the devil*, Slanguage at LAXart, Los Angeles, CA

**2010** *Dont Draw like that*, Mexicali Rose, Mexicali B.C., MX

**2007** *Falta Pintura*, Driftwood, Los Angeles, CA

## Group Exhibitions

**2021** *Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá*, Organized by Charlie James and Ever Velasquez, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Animal Nitrate*, Bill Arning Exhibitions, Houston, TX

**2020** *The Creator Has A Master Plan*, Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*I am not this hair, I am not this skin, I am the soul that lives within*, Curated by Amir Fallah, Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, CA  
*Glyph*, Curated by Ryan Schneider, Yucca Valley, CA

**2019** *Nepantla*, Gamma Galeria, Guadalajara, MX

# Shulamit Nazarian Los Angeles

*The Flat Files*, The Pit, Los Angeles, CA  
*Human Nature*, Curated by Jaime Munoz, The Pit, Los Angeles, CA  
19191919, New Image Art. Los Angeles, CA  
*Emergent Matter*, Curated by Nilay Lawson. Garash Galeria, Mexico City, MX  
*Gardens*, Curated by, Rachid Bouhamidi. Last Projects. Los Angeles, CA

- 2018** *Untitled (show #3)* Arvia, Los Angeles, CA  
*Pt. 1 Lives not fair and people don't act right*, BBQLA, Traveling show  
*Solar Flare*, Torrance Art Museum  
*Threes Company*, Curated by Aaron Wrinkle, Dan Gram 3.0, UTA, Los Angeles, CA  
*INCOGNITO*, Institute of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
- 2017** *The Other Line: Daniel Gibson & Bruna Massadas*, Sometime Salon, San Francisco, CA  
*Negra Sangre*, Univeristy of Arizona, Curated by Marco Vera, Sculpture Resource Center, Tucson, AZ  
*Night Sweats*, Curated by Quinn Harrelson, Current Projects, Miami, FL  
*The Upside of Her Hell*, Bozo Mag, Los Angeles, CA  
*Wouldn't it Be Nice If We Could Dream Together*, Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Teeter Totter*, Curated by Timo Fahler, BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA  
*Facing*, Organized by Paul Pescador, BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA  
*Rodeo Drive*, BBQLA. Toronto Art Fair, Toronto, Canada
- 2016** *Global Times Painting Painting To*, Curated by Alex Becerra. Half Gallery, New York, NY  
*End of Semester*, BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA  
*Chicos pero locos*, Mini Art Museum, Slanguage at LAXart, Los Angeles, CA  
*Make me really happy*, 24hour Charlies, Los Angeles, CA
- 2015** *The steak flew over the rainbow*, BBQLA, Los Angeles, CA  
*LFPC Group Show*, Daniel Rolnik Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*SUNrise: California 8*, IPNT Gallery. Los Angeles, CA  
*I BE 22ft 9in*, Avenue 50, Highland Park, CA  
*We Are Coming!*, Mexicali Rose, Baja, MX

## Awards & Residencies

- 2019** The Macedonia Institute, Hudson Valley, NY
- 2017** Bed-Stuy Art Residency, Bed-Stuy, NY

## Bibliography

- 2021** Waddoups, Ryan. *Daniel Gibson Embeds His Roots Into Sun-Soaked Landscapes*, Surface Magazine. July 28  
Heskes, Nicholas. *Art Unseen Daniel Gibson Ocotillo Song*, Brooklyn Rail. July 14  
Pricco, Evan. *The California Artist: Daniel Gibson "Ocotillo Song" @ Almine Rech, New York*, Juxtapoz. June 16  
Takac, Balasz. *The Borderscapes, Plants and Desert After Daniel Gibson*, WideWalls. June 10  
*Whitehot Recommends: 3 Current Exhibitions*, Whitehot Magazine. June 2021

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**2017** *Daniel Gibson is just "Tryin' to Stay on the Bull,"* Juxtapoz. June 16  
Vasquez, Mayella and Richard Montenegro Brown. *Plaster City Days, Desert Skylines, Migrants Inform Artist's Work*, Holtville Tribune. June 11

**2016** McManus, Austin. *Daniel Gibson: Desert Trails*, Juxtapoz Magazine. June 20

# BROOKLYN RAIL

## Daniel Gibson: *Ocotillo Song*

Nicholas Heskes | July 14, 2021



Daniel Gibson, *Into the Sea*, 2021. Oil on linen with Sand Dollar, 38 x 46 inches. Courtesy Almine Rech. Photo: Dan Bradica.

The most recent exhibition by Los Angeles painter Daniel Gibson at Almine Rech summons various descriptors to mind: psychedelic, floral, surreal, Boschian. But the one that connects them all is *autochthonous*. Originally derived from the Greek word *autokhthon* (meaning “sprung from the land itself”), it is the most appropriate characterization of Gibson’s body of work, which is to say a certain earthiness permeates Gibson’s iconography of gardens, flowers, butterflies, and farmers, all sprouting up from the soil like the exhibition’s namesake, the native ocotillo plant of southern California and northern Mexico. Gibson’s earthiness has to do with labor, familial roots, family history, and genuine contemplation of *this* locality in particular. We see his specificity, for example, in *Strawberry Fields* (all works 2021), which pictures Gibson’s mother picking strawberries in Salinas, surrounded by mountains beyond which the beaches of Monterey Bay and Marina touch the Pacific Ocean. This is a California that is still really Mexico.

The most obvious artistic parallel for Gibson’s paintings are those of Diego Rivera, specifically his series of flower vendors. The fertility of Gibson’s giant, spiny desert flora evokes the sheer abundance of Rivera’s flowers, both their virile bloom and the rich, pak choi-like thickness of their stems. We see this clearly in works like *Vase No.6*, *Sinaloa Clouds and flowers*, *Butterfly #11 Ocotillo Song*, and *For BIHA*. The flourishing of Native American and Mestizo culture is emphasized by the brown-skinned figures that sprout from the soil in *Vase No.6* and admire the large white flowers of *For BIHA*—a powerful contrast to the dark women of Rivera’s pictures, who often appear burdened by their harvest. The implication here, as with Rivera, is as much mythological and aesthetic as it is political. The past and a people’s collective heritage are like crops that must be carefully sowed, tended, and reaped.



Daniel Gibson, *Strawberry fields*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 72 x 72 inches. Courtesy Almine Rech. Photo: Matt Kroening.

Gibson's most potent symbol, his strawberries, suggest to me an entirely different artistic lineage, however: that of Hieronymus Bosch. In the central panel of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490–1510) strawberries appear throughout the composition, carried on backs, held and hugged, at the center of weird rituals. I see Bosch's and Gibson's strawberries as complementary, though not precisely the same. In both cases, they represent the yield of an expansive garden landscape, but they are more than just a product of toil in the field. For Gibson, it seems that the fertility of the landscape and the crop itself stand in for matriarchy and familial origins. As I noted earlier, Gibson's own mother is pictured farming strawberries, masked, giving the middle finger to the onlooker in *Strawberry Fields*. She is also innocently posed in the mud guarding a strawberry in *Lil' Virginia in the field*. The strawberry also comes to represent a vessel that connects the root of the earth to the blossoming of new generations in paintings like *Holding a heavy Strawberry Vase* and *Flowers with Strawberry vase*. Gibson's strawberry has little to do with literal strawberries; instead it is analogous to a womb, alchemical furnace, or cocoon. The strawberry can also suggest endings—it serves equally as both womb and tomb, as we see in *Strawberry Tomb*. Here, plump, ripe strawberries and flowers sprout from the vine, extending to the frame's edges—as this painting's title implies, harvest time is always a return to death as well as a new beginning.

In a recent interview for *Widewalls*, Gibson calls his paintings “borderscapes,” in reference to the unique conditions along the border between California and Mexico. In many parts of the desert between San Diego and El Paso, the border between the United States and Mexico is not actually marked in any way, because the desert itself acts as a barrier to be crossed at one's own peril. The ocean likewise serves as a treacherous barrier, despite the fact that it stretches across all political borders. So it is not surprising that Gibson's “borderscapes” are deserts and beaches. *Upside Mountain*, *Butterfly #11 Ocotillo Song*, and *Butterfly #10 Indio Ca.* are all deserts in which “bright big butterflies [guide] migrants safely,” as he puts it in the same interview. Pacific Ocean shores are represented in *Sinaloa Clouds and flowers*, *Into the Sea*, *Spirited Sunset*, *Two trumpets by the sea*, and *Flowers with Strawberry vase*. All indicate a yearning to linger against the infinite horizon of the sea, and to blossom at its edge.



Daniel Gibson, *Butterfly #11 Ocotillo Song*, 2021. Oil on linen, 73 x 64 inches. Courtesy Almine Rech. Photo: Dan Bradica.

The paintings then, taken as a whole, could be broken into three overlapping categories: agriculture, beaches, and deserts. But it is where the desert meets the ocean that the ocotillo plant, pictured in *Butterfly #11 Ocotillo Song*, *Spirited Sunset*, and *Upside Mountain*, makes its decisive appearance, representing autochthony and resilience across the borderland. *Ocotillo* is a Spanish diminutive of the Nahuatl word *ocotl* meaning “torch,” in reference to the vermilion flowers that sprout from its long stalks, and though it resembles a cactus, it is more closely related to tea and blueberries, with a variety of medicinal uses. In Gibson’s borderscape, the blossoming of ocotillo flowers represents a native torch that lights the way between borders. But it is also the strawberry of the desert, a symbol for survival even in the most inhospitable of climates.

# WIDEWALLS

## The Borderscapes, Plants and Desert After Daniel Gibson

Balasz Takac | June 10, 2021



The current socio-political turmoil has been entirely coated with a new layer with the COVID 19 pandemic. All of a sudden, numerous social injustices related to the contemporary migrations, as people were unable to continue their desired goals and enable themselves a secure future, seemed to have been put on a side. Nevertheless, the borders, migrations, and notion of belonging are still coloring our reality and pose numerous questions primarily in terms of race and class.

Different artists explore these issues through their practice, one of them being [Daniel Gibson](#). Through his outstanding charcoals, inks, and watercolors, this artist tends to speak of both personal and collective histories and landscape as a signifier of socio-political shifts and plants. Influenced by growing up in the border town of El Centro, five minutes north of Mexicali, Baja Mexico, Gibson mostly depicts abstracted human figures, elements of nature, objects, and dream-like narratives.

His current solo exhibition *Ocotillo Song*, which will be on display at [Almine Rech Gallery](#) in New York until 30 July 2021, features the artist's most recent paintings that extend his interest in the mentioned subjects. Fascinated by the Ocotillo, a shrub dominant in the southern and southwestern deserts of North America (term deriving from the Spanish diminutive of the Nahuatl word, *Ocotl*, meaning torch), Gibson poetically thematizes the elegies of transnational borders and often lost stories of sadness, home, and labor.

We had a chat with Daniel Gibson to find out more about this exhibition and more generally about his artistic practice.



Daniel Gibson, *Strawberry fields*, 2021. Oil on canvas 182.9 x 182.9 cm 72 x 72 in. Photo by Matt Kroening

### Exploring The Hardships of Migration

**Widewalls:** *You grew up in the border town of El Centro, close to Mexicali, Baja Mexico. Could you tell us something about your memories growing up and the way they continue to inform your practice?*

**Daniel Gibson:** Drawing the desert landscape still to this day anchors me. Growing up within a sheetrock factory (Plaster City) in the middle of the desert a few miles from the border had this feeling of isolation or desertion from the rest of the world. Seeing and hearing migrants crossing in the night, often using our water hose to rest and fill up before they continued their journey is forever burned in my memory.

**Widewalls:** *Your latest exhibition Ocotillo Song, opening at Almine Rech, continues to explore themes of identity and migration. Could you tell us something about this new body of work, but also about the title of the show itself?*

**DG:** I am paying my respects to migration and the struggles. This body of work talks about: my mother picking strawberries in the fields as a child in Salinas, CA with her family when they first came to this country, my paternal grandmother giving birth along a fishing vessel and shoreline in Sinaloa, desert flora and art historical nods. Ethan from Almine Rech came up with the name when we were driving together from Taos to Santa Fe. I thought it was perfect! I always feel the song in the works, and relate more as a songwriter when I paint. When Ethan paired those two words together it felt right just like wind blowing in the desert.



**Left:** Daniel Gibson - Butterfly #11 Ocotillo Song, 2021. Oil on linen 185.4 x 162.6 cm 73 x 64 in. Photo by Dan Bradica  
**/ Right:** Daniel Gibson - For BIHA, 2021. Oil on linen 185.4 x 162.6 cm 73 x 64 in. Photo by Dan Bradica

### The Dreams, Inspiration and Plants

**Widewalls:** *One could state you use landscape/nature as a tool for socio-political articulation. To achieve that you must observe closely, think, and produce. Would you say your painterly practice is conceptual or even performative to a certain extent?*

**DG:** Yes, I would say that, and thanks for noticing! It is conceptual in the formation of imagery. The symbology of the imagery can be read and related to shared concepts. For example, I paint bright big Butterflies guiding migrants safely in desert landscapes.

**Widewalls:** *Tell us a bit more about dreaming and plants; what is the connection?*

**DG:** The flowers and plants are figurative for sure. When I combine lived experiences and sights with family narratives a dream-like landscape does take shape. Meditation and dreaming become synonymous when I paint.

**Widewalls:** *Are you inspired by any particular ideology, art movement, or scholarly thinking that eventually drives your creativity?*

**DG:** I am a painter and I look to some classics for art historical relevance; German expressionism, the Mexican muralists and painters ranging from José Clemente Orozco to Maria Izquierdo, and of course the New York School and obviously Picasso.



Daniel Gibson - Into the Sea, 2021. Oil on linen with Sand Dollar 96.5 x 116.8 cm, 38 x 46 in. Photo by Dan Bradica

## Exploring The Hardships of Migration

**Widewalls:** *Your work synthesizes the past as a way to further examine the present. Could you describe your working process?*

**DG:** Everything begins with drawing. It's still the most immediate technology I have to document when I see ideas taking shape within. Time is certainly present when I work. Depictions of familial histories may intertwine with a bush of flowers I just saw on a run.

**Widewalls:** *Have you considered exploring the notion of borderscapes and family histories through other media?*

**DG:** I have worked around notions of borderscapes and family histories since forever. I started with an activist ethos early on, hanging banners atop freeway overpasses in San Ysidro and wheat pasting messaging around San Diego and the Imperial Valley. My output has evolved and currently I retain and use that early spark to paint with straightforward oil painting.

**Widewalls:** *The pandemic is still not over, so it seems hard to speak about future plans. Perhaps you could share your dreams regarding the developments in your career?*

**DG:** I really want to wake up every morning and paint, and take a nap and then paint again.

# JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture

**The California Artist: Daniel Gibson "Ocotillo Song" @ Almine Rech, New York**

Evan Pricco | June 16, 2021



Daniel Gibson, *Strawberry Tomb*, 2021. Oil on Linen, 60 x 56 inches. Courtesy of Almine Rech.

When I think of the works of Daniel Gibson, I think of him as the quintessential California painter. His subject matter is one of the state's past, present and future, its vitality and wealth, its labor and its people. The works, especially his newest paintings, are landscapes but in a truly California sense, where fields of flowers, farmland, farm workers and the sun all combine into a rich heritage and deep reds and browns and earth tones everywhere.

The title of Gibson's new show, *Ocotillo Song*, on view at Almine Rech, New York through July 30th, refers to the *ocotillo*, "a shrub ubiquitous in the southern and southwestern deserts of North America." Again, the backdrop is this utopian dream of California and the reality it may present. This isn't the Gold Rush or Hollywood, or even the Golden Gate. Those only occupy in memory a certain stature of opportunity and Manifest Destiny that is often self-referential. Gibson is working in a Steinbeckian fashion of land and labor, or movement and migration.



Daniel Gibson, *Holding a Heavy Strawberry Vase*, 2021. Oil on Linen, 38 x 46 inches. Courtesy of Almine Rech.

The gallery notes in particular "A portrait of Gibson's mother in *Strawberry Fields* reimagines a fraught moment, a biographical story from her days picking strawberries, with her family, as a child in Salinas, California. A defiant gestural middle finger in extreme perspective protrudes upwards from her body – seemingly motion-captured – as she carries the weight of one giant strawberry across her back." These works are personal for Gibson, but also set into the backdrop of a wider history of the state. He has grown into being a particularly special storyteller, one that redefines what a place means and what a lineage looks like in oils.