Gareth Cadwallader
Goodnight Moon

November 6, 2026 - January 9, 2027
GRIMM, 54 White Street, New York, NY (US)

Gareth Cadwallader | *Goodnight Moon,* 2024-2025

GRIMM is pleased to announce *Goodnight Moon*, a solo exhibition of paintings by Gareth Cadwallader, on view at the New York gallery from November 6, 2026 to January 9, 2027. The artist will have a book launch during the opening reception on Friday, November 6 from 6-8pm featuring his paintings that coincide with the exhibition.

'Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?
Considerest though alone the burial of the stars?'
- Walt Whitman, On the Beach at Night, c. 1856

Margaret Wise Brown's children's story *Goodnight Moon* (1947) is less a book than a ritual, complete with chanted incantation. Offered as a source of comfort, its pages populated with softness and warmth, it nevertheless portrays a world in which adults and children face the kingdom of the night apart from one another. The scene it describes is a transitional one, in which a child acquires the skills necessary for an acceptance of darkness and solitude.

There is no parent within the pages of *Goodnight Moon*, and the litany recited from it acknowledges a child's nocturnal fears. A pictureless page reads: 'goodnight nobody'. The closing line is addressed to noises everywhere.' Read askew, *Goodnight Moon* threatens to disintegrate into a horror story of parental abandonment, recounting the evidence of absence that is amplified by night.

Gareth Cadwallader has borrowed the title *Goodnight Moon* for a pivotal painting in a new sequence of watercolours. Each of them composed in a small, elongated landscape format, similar in dimension to Illustrations in Japanese handscrolls. Like a picture book, this is a storytelling format. While nothing as easily accessed as a narrative binds these works, they carry a progression of ideas and experiences. Across nine panels, the series moves between death and life, and a transition between an identity as a son and that of a father.

Ashes (2024) positions us on a high ridge looking over a gentle rural landscape. A neat pair of hands emerges, tiny, at the lower right, tipping a cylinder which releases a cascade of something pale and light. Air currents lift this light material, dispersing it in a dancing cloud of greenish-blue particles. At its heart this tumbling cloud carries the figure of a man, his eyes closed, his face slack, his thin hands clasped around his bedsheets. The figure in the cloud is recognisably close to death. This is not an easy painting, but it whispers of transcendence: a bright scene, a domesticated landscape, an emblem of the human spirit carried up to meet the scuddling clouds.

This luminous scene of death and remembrance is followed, in *Alice and Kaya* (2022-25), by winter, and a body lying within the earth, held in the darkness like a fossil in sedimentary rock. This body is not dead, but waiting; not buried, but preparing to emerge. The periods that precede both birth and death can be

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curiously parallel. Each is a certainty but takes place in its own time. Or, perhaps, outside of time. To wait with someone in either state is to experience the flow of time suspended. *Alice and Kaya* offers the final stage of pregnancy as a geological event, with the mother body abstracted into a mystical sequence of modular forms and billowing volumes, like a costume from Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet*. It is the mother who waits to emerge from the earth - her new identity born in the same instant as the baby. A nest of concentric circles hovers low above the ground beside the winter trees. Carved into the wall of a Medieval church it would be a protective emblem: here it is rendered in the cool metallic tones of a Hollywood spaceship, a thing of the future.

In *Night Feed* (2025-6) the mother body expands to become a protective nest, its strands glinting with a spectrum of improbable colors carried by the stippled midnight sky. The painting reflects an infant worldview, in which the baby's head and the rounded breast from which it feeds appear as twinned forms - two eggs occupying a nest formed by the mother who melds into the surrounding landscape.

Over the last seven years, I have seen Cadwallader as a painter concerned with technical, pictorial problems: issues of composition and balance, the build-up of tension, vertiginous plays with perspective. While there have been moments of tenderness and introspection in his work - the young man trimming an older man's beard in *Shave* (2023), a father looking into a pool of water with his son in *Starfish* (2023) - I have never thought of him as an autobiographical artist.

In *Goodnight Moon*, this has shifted. Through the 'minor' medium of watercolour, Cadwallader engages with 'minor' subjects: the home, babies, family, love, care and grief. The fundamental stuff of life and death, in other words. This is not untrodden territory for men artists. In a way these paintings are part of a legacy that stretches from the Dutch interiors of Pieter de Hooch, through the sentimental family tableaux of Jean-Baptiste Greuze and the intensely patterned realms of Edouard Vuillard, to the ramshackle interiors of the British 'kitchen sink' school. In a key regard, Cadwallader sits apart from this tradition: he does not position himself outside the domestic realm looking in, but as intrinsic to it.

I am often asked about fatherhood in art. There has been no shortage of artist fathers. Many of them have devoted time to painting their children (see, for example, Augustus John and Lucian Freud). However, a portrait of a child is not an artwork about fatherhood. While the painting itself might reveal - consciously or otherwise - something of the parental relationship, the subject of the portrait remains the child. To devote time to painting one's own child is not evidence of devoted and active fatherhood (see, for example, Augustus John and Lucian Freud).

Goodnight Moon (2024-26) and *Little Hands* (2025) are rooted in an engaged, hands-on experience of fatherhood that is as much a phenomenon of Cadwallader's own time as revolutionary ideas of infant development were of 18th century France when Greuze was painting. In *Goodnight Moon*, the father is stretched on the floor of the 'great green room' with its night sky the colour of day intruding through uncurtained windows. The bars of a white cot stretch out impossibly into the distance, as though the child occupies a bed the length of a racing paddock. The parent body is gnarled and whorled, like piece of old wood or the chrysalis form that floats across another painting in the series. He is elongated and flattened as though sinking into the floor. This is an exhausted body: a limp, grey, alien thing within this prettily coloured picture book realm.

This is the other side of *Goodnight Moon* - the world off the page, in which a young child refuses sleep, rejects solitude and will not acclimatise to darkness. The recumbent father raises one wrist, his index finger gently extended like the hand of Adam, and through the bars of the cot, a tiny hand reaches out and grasps it. Rather than the stern, beardy patriarch giving life to Adam, here the enlivening contact comes from an infant. Parents can not only give but also receive love and comfort from their children, even in the same moment that they experience exhaustion and frustration.

Little Hands (2025) speaks to an experience that the modern lexicon of parenting describes as being 'touched out'. Elongated, as though pulled thin like a gob of chewing gum, the father appears asleep, his face half burled in a purple pillow as a troupe of pudgy, disembodied infant hands dance across its upper surface. They grasp his hair, ruffle his beard, dandle and tug at his ear, probe his eyes and mouth. The illusion of bodily sovereignty apparently afforded by adult life has broken, and the physical territory of the parent becomes shared property.

Still, careful and diminutive as they are, the paintings in *Goodnight Moon* feel generationally significant. They reflect how it is to live within a mesh of human connections and dependencies, how it feels to grieve, to love, and to be a father. This is ancient stuff, seen anew: the kingdom of the night, encountered not alone but together.

Text written by Hettie Judah

About the artist

Gareth Cadwallader's (b. 1979, Swindon, England) paintings are at once both dreamlike – almost lysergic – and rigorously formal, almost completely diffusing the limits of figuration and abstraction. His scenes are familiar, yet exist outside of specific space and time, held at a point of electric tension by rigorous consideration.

Gareth Cadwallader studied at the Royal College of Art and Slade School of Fine Art, London (UK) and Hunter College, New York, NY (US). Selected exhibitions include *Summer,* Frestonian Gallery, London (UK), 2025; *Metabolic Rift,* Josh Lilley, London (UK), 2025; *Nocturne,* Lyndsey Ingram, London (UK), 2025; *The Nature of Things,* Castor Gallery, London (UK), 2024; *10th Anniversary Show,* Lychee One, London (UK), 2024; *Let Me See the Colts*, Josh Lilley, London (UK), 2023; and *The Painted Room*, curated by Caroline Walker, GRIMM Gallery, Amsterdam (NL), 2023.

Gareth Cadwallader is represented by Josh Lilley.