

Jonathan Lasker

A Survey of the Maquettes 1986-2026

September 10 – October 31, 2026
Rue Saint-Georges 13, Brussels 1050



Jonathan Lasker
Untitled, 1991
oil and magic marker on paper
12 x 15 cm | 5 x 6 in

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Jonathan Lasker
Study for "Look Alike", 1986
oil on paper
13 x 17 cm | 5 x 6 in

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Jonathan Lasker
Study for "The Spiritual Economy", 1990
oil on paper
12 x 15 cm | 5 x 6 in

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MARUANI MERCIER is delighted to present *A Survey of the Maquettes 1986-2026*, a selection of important works in oil on paper spanning nearly four decades of the artist's practice. Invariably executed on a small scale with painstaking precision, Lasker's earliest fully rendered 'maquettes' or 'studies' date from 1986 and have since occupied an essential place in his process. Underpinning some of the key large-scale paintings, the studies in the exhibition form a standalone body of work and offer insight into the dialectic of planning and spontaneity inherent to Lasker's artistic production.

The introduction of oil studies in the mid-1980s coincided with the consolidation of Lasker's highly reflective conceptual approach to painting. Whilst the artist had previously used only a preparatory sketch in pencil on paper, he now began to introduce complete and detailed oil studies for future paintings, which were subsequently enlarged and translated onto canvas. Despite their visual synchronicity, the study and the painting embodied two directly opposing modes of making a mark: the former operated as a site of intuitive and rapid gesture, rooted in Lasker's longstanding interest in Surrealist automatic drawing; the latter slowly retraced each element with precision and control, as if delineating a quote from the subconscious mind. Exporting all intuition and compositional iterations to the oil studies, the iconic marks in Lasker's paintings attained a degree of autonomy and inevitability that came to define his singular artistic language.

The echoes and deviations of specific pictorial elements across works in the exhibition underscore the dynamism and openness of Lasker's decision-making process. In *Study for "Look Alike"* (1986), the earliest work in the exhibition, three triangles delineated in impasto configure into a kind of perspectival vanishing point, an element that subsequently emerges in the later painting titled *Born Yesterday* (1989). Likewise, the motif of a pared-down shape evoking an ampersand recurs in a renewed form in *Study for "The Spiritual Economy"* (1990) and in *Untitled* (1991). Through this repetition of cryptic drawn marks, the highly subjective mode of working becomes objectified. Shaped in free hand on a small scale, the unique lines that initially seem to evade the possibility of replication solidify into idioms in the artist's complex visual vocabulary. For Lasker, oil studies thus highlight and probe the crucial boundary between impulse and consideration that is fundamental to understanding his broader practice: "I realise that there is a pretty deep split in our lives between that which is conscious and unconscious. It is a very important split: it is where existence and transcendence almost touch. And I think it is quite interesting to pursue that meeting point."