

RANDALL SCHMIT
Sans Serif

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essay by Robert C. Morgan

WOODSTOCK ARTISTS ASSOCIATION & MUSEUM
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MYSTERIES BETWEEN THE WALLS

Recent Paintings by Randall Schmit

Robert C. Morgan

I have been looking at Randall Schmit's paintings for twenty-five years and have never grown tired of them. They continue to evoke mysteries unknown in works by other painters at large today. To find anything comparable, I am compelled to look to the past. My first thought recalls the strange, deftly harrowing, erotic paintings by the Swiss artist Henry Fuseli from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century. Another would be the suspenseful and obsessive imagery put forth by



A Table Breathes, 2014; 62.25 x 40.75 inches; oil, acrylic and marker on gessoed canvas

Pierre and Balthazar Klossowski in the late twentieth century. The fact is that few artists today are capable of retaining the kind of eccentric beauty, confessional poetics, and sheer visual power that characterizes the work of Randall Schmit.

The recent paintings in this exhibition carry a sense of irony and the absurd. Two works, in particular, *A Table Breathes* and *The Guest* (both 2014), combine the artist's knack for expressionism with a propensity for what is surreal. His abstract figures are as much physical as they are mental; as much body, as they are mind. Schmit synthesizes these antipodal tendencies in a way that reinforces a feeling of estrangement. For example, in *A Table Breathes*, an upright figure



The Guest, 2014; 62.25 x 40.75 inches; oil, acrylic and marker on gessoed canvas

on the right side of a wall holds an elegant demeanor while dressed for the atomic age. The wall separates the figure from an eerie spatial disruption on the opposite side where a mutated creature clings sideways. On a small table below, a withering plant has gone berserk and appears in desperate need of revival.

In *The Guest*, a solitary androgynous figure gives rapt attention to a red diving board in the lower foreground of the painting. One speculates as to whether the “guest” will perform a dive or some other raucous antic. It is not clear what will happen or how the plot will unfold. “Guest” suggests an unruly, mysterious aura related to some type of performance within a dreamscape cluttered with partitioned rooms.

Randall Schmit’s paintings often pose existential questions that are both metaphorical and openly psychological. They are allegories that reinforce our belief in the mystery of life and in the loss of innocence as felt in our earliest childhood dreams. In the virtual moment of the cell phone and the laptop, these highly imaginative paintings serve as an antidote. They send a vital message that we cannot ignore the internal realities of how we impact one another no matter how abstract our world becomes.

Robert C. Morgan, August 2014

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