



Robert Schlegel: Rural Sightings

June 26 - August 3, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, June 29th, 2:00 - 4:00 pm

First Friday Artwalk: Friday, July 5, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Karin Clarke Gallery is pleased to present a large retrospective exhibit of smaller works by the late and much beloved Oregon artist Robert Schlegel (1947-2021). The majority of these pieces are later works, exhibited for the first time and freshly framed. This selection of very desirable works will not disappoint all those who over the years have come to love and appreciate Schlegel's singular art, with its characteristic landscapes, buildings, figures and birds.

Most of Schlegel's landscape imagery is rooted in the Northwest: farmland, barns, boxlike houses, city buildings, even industrial landscapes. Colors are sometimes muted, sometimes bright, evoking overcast or sunny days, the atmosphere of the seasons. Always, structure matters – how the lines and planes intersect, the shapes interact, how the shadows fall. According to him, the way he painted and drew was “all about balance and imbalance.” His brushstrokes are textured, bold, spontaneous. His goal was to try “to move away from being photographically representational.” He wanted, he said, to be more spontaneous, make more mistakes, be less precise, in a word, be more childlike. As a result, his work straddles the representational and the abstract, probes the tension between the two.

This is true also of his colorful birds and unconventional figures. The latter are sometimes seen from an unusual perspective: from above, from behind, in reflective or intimate moments, or caught in improbable

poses. Despite generic titles, they are intensely individual. They eschew precise details yet are immensely suggestive. Their emotional complexity is conveyed through Schlegel's unique ability to imbue his figures with an expressive body language capable of evoking a wide range of feelings, from poignant to impish. This is in part due to the painter's idiosyncratic mark-making, eloquent pictorial distortions, and a deliberate rejection of strict realism, in order to suggest or even reveal what a literal representation cannot. Whatever their subject-matter, Schlegel's paintings exude playfulness, charm, and whimsy, combined with a hint of melancholy, pensiveness, and at times even a kind of brooding.

Wherever he found himself, Schlegel sketched people and places obsessively, using charcoal, pencil, or oil pastel. These sketches in turn formed the basis for his oil and acrylic paintings. Aside from several works on canvas or panel, most of the pieces in this exhibit are mixed media on archival paper, combining acrylic with charcoal or pencil. Schlegel at times also included found paper in his mixed media works, such as music sheets, book or ledger pages, and even stamps.

Schlegel earned a BA from Willamette University and an MS from Portland State University. A lifetime resident of Banks, Oregon, he became a full-time painter in 2002 until his untimely death in 2021. He shared a studio with his brother Bill, also a printmaker and painter. His work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibits in California, Montana, Oregon and Washington, and is included in many institutional collections across the country. The Hallie Ford Museum also recently acquired a selection of his work to add to their permanent collection. Additionally, Schlegel was featured on Oregon Public Broadcasting's Art Beat in 2016.

Schlegel's family will be attending the opening reception on Saturday, June 29th, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Please join us to celebrate this artist's delightful work!

– *Sylvie Pederson*

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