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Jenny Morgan's Search for Ghosts
Sola Agustsson



Jenny Morgan spent her childhood searching for ghosts. Intuitively, she sensed there was more to this world, constantly using her playtime to explore unseen phenomena. Eventually, she procured a copy of **James M. Deem's** 1988 instructive book *How to Find a Ghost*, which validated her otherworldly suspicions.

Morgan's current exhibit at the **Driscoll Babcock Galleries** is named after this book, as her hunt for ghosts has evolved into an artistic excavation for spiritual apparitions. Her work is hauntingly realistic but retains a spooky quality. Technically intricate yet mysterious, her paintings experiment with psychological visual realism, which obscure the physical to expose the spiritual.

"I feel like I am still searching for the spirit within all my subjects. The work is all about finding and bringing to life that invisible force in people," said Morgan.

Depicting her close friends, family, and herself, she focuses on the familiar, attempting to draw out her loved ones' phantoms. Though many of her subjects' faces and bodies are washed out or obfuscated, they remain striking, intimate, and raw. Eerie hair strands radiate from these blurred faces, meticulously full of energy as though they just stuck their hand in a light socket. Circular orbs appear in many of the paintings, as sites for metaphorical spirits.

Mother is one of the more impacting works in the series. The pose of the woman (her close friend) and six-month-old baby is tender and vulnerable, yet the red color scheme gives the work a sense of power and strength. Often, Morgan goes in search of other's hidden spiritual ghosts and ends up unearthing her own, as this piece both lends insight into the joys of motherhood as well as Morgan's fears about the process.

Morgan is classically trained as a figure painter, but the Brooklyn-based artist shies away from the cold painter-model divide, choosing to only depict people she knows and trusts. For her it's a way in which to deepen her relationships. Though her renderings are always sensitive and compassionate, with that sensitivity comes results that are sometimes brutally perceptive, even with her own self-portraits. It seems as if the feeling behind many of her paintings is subconscious; they are almost supernatural portrayals. Essentially what is disconcerting and stunning about her work is that it occupies the space between the known and the unknown, hovering between two distinct yet indefinite spheres.

"How to Find a Ghost" will be on view at the **Driscoll Babcock Galleries** through November 23.