

ARTnews

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PRESS RELEASE

Mark Greenwold

DC Moore

Through November 10

This impressive survey, consisting of only 13 paintings and 5 small oil studies, gathers a decade of Mark Greenwold's work. The small size of the show is indicative of the laborious process involved in creating these highly detailed, surrealist-inflected domestic scenes. Greenwold sometimes spends close to a year on a single painting, and he has had exhibitions that featured only a single work.

Viewed together, the paintings here present a cautionary tale about the psychological landscape of family life. Greenwold paints people he knows—himself included—in rooms that range from cozy to coldly modern. But unlikely elements abound. In his world, birdlike creatures with human skulls or heads flit about; a teenager wields a hammer; pets snarl demonically. When Greenwold turns up in *All Joy Gone (for Marvin)*, 2000–1, dressed in shoes and socks, with his robe open and his genitals exposed, he appears far more vulnerable and absurd than if he were entirely nude.

Characters acting out impulses populate *You Must Change Your Life* (2001–2). A teenage boy stretches across what might be his mother's lap while a young girl—his sister?—looks on; above them a woman with stringy hair and blue eye shadow takes a knife to a man's



A Moment of True Feeling, 2004–5. Oil on wood, 21½ x 35 inches

throat. Greenwold, wearing only shoes and socks, stands near a woman in a nightgown, who seems to be pleading with him. A bird and a mouse, with human faces (the mouse resembles Greenwold), observe.

In some of the less violent works, like *The Need to Understand* (2002–3), colorful, abstract forms shoot forth from characters' heads like thought balloons. The shapes, alluding to the work of artists like James Siena and Chuck Close, have a mazelike quality and evoke the brain, seemingly reproducing tangled and inescapable thoughts.

Overall, these bizarre, richly symbolic works illustrate with wit and insight the persistence and adaptability of the dysfunctional family. —Rachel Somerstein