

# LewAllenGalleries

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## *Real World:* Recent Paintings by Kurt Solmssen

**Exhibition Dates:** September 30 – November 6

**Artist Reception:** Friday, September 30th, 2016, 5 – 7 PM

**Gallery Hours:** Mon - Fri, 10 - 6; Sat, 10 - 5

**LewAllen Galleries**

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[www.lewallengalleries.com](http://www.lewallengalleries.com)



*Reflection*, 2016, Oil on linen, 50" x 70"



*Boat Houses*, 2016, Oil on linen, 24" x 36"

**Santa Fe, NM** – Kurt Solmssen is a painterly imagist who portrays a gentle and idyllic universe. His landscapes are self-confident and natural – infused with an elegant simplicity. Solmssen’s paintings are a paean to the preciousness of life’s ordinary moments. The work is generally characterized as realism but is generously enhanced by abstraction in a somewhat impressionistic manner.

Lewallen Galleries opens an exhibition of Solmssen’s most recent paintings on September 30

that will run through November 6. It includes signature works by this Pacific Northwest artist known for lush atmospheric paintings that are evocative and captivating, intimate and accessible, and that woo the viewer into a rich realm of memory and nostalgia.

Solmssen’s work is regarded for creating a uniquely poetic sense of personal connection: he also often incorporates people and simple architectural elements in and around his home on the Puget Sound in Washington State. His work presents a world of reality that is personal to him and yet is resonant too of a broader reality shared by many who view his art. Viewers can interject themselves into the paintings with ease.

Solmssen is particularly sensitive to the complex qualities of hue and his paintings are often saturated with a rich luminous palette. He demonstrates a use of the nuances of atmospheric tonalities and the subtleties of his works are often likened to those of James Abbot McNeill Whistler and Fairfield Porter.

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*The Cherry Tree, 2016, Oil on linen (diptych), 50" x 118"*

In all his works, Solmssen juxtaposes lights and darks in a palette that includes both earthy and more intense and robust colors. Very importantly, Solmssen consciously uses his facility with color to consistently convey both a mood and a deeply felt personal sense of place.

Solmssen's paintings seemingly resonate treasured memories and intimate moments. His light-filled landscapes are replete with quiet symbols of peaceful domesticity: a verandah overlooking a placid waterfront, a young woman reading a book while nestled in a wicker chair, an exuberant clutch of bright yellow springtime forsythia, a young mother holding her newborn child in early morning light, or an iconic yellow boat that perhaps touches on fond, treasured childhood memories. Solmssen's world is infused with a subtle magic, yet it's a credible world that one, on a deeper level, believes to be the "real world." In the works of Kurt Solmssen, the emotion of mythic "place" and sense of memory elegantly supersede physical geography.

Solmssen's deft imagery suggests a reality above and beyond the observed world. He continually reduces the imagery to essential aspects – creating a nuanced portrayal that incorporates both realism and abstraction – all with a finely tuned color sense that is at once bold and complex and yet nurturing and soothing. Like Porter, Solmssen uses imagery as a key to enter the paintings. The narratives communicate with expressive brushwork calculatedly using both sharp, crisp lines and brushy, more impressionistic strokes – to continually explore the rich capabilities and qualities of paint.

The artist has a strong interest in the very particular light of the Pacific Northwest, and accordingly, it is an important actor in each of his scenes. "There is a kind of abstract, minimalist beauty to the Northwest landscape," Solmssen says, "and I try to capture that." Despite Solmssen's proclivity for working in close study with his subjects, his paintings succeed on an edge between the real, the imagined, and the felt. This usage of light is an assured vehicle for metaphor;



*Marsha and Forsythia, 2016, Oil on linen, 46" x 50"*

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grassy lawns or the waters of the Puget Sound alternately glow with throbbing, ebullient light and then submerge in cloaked, yawning darkness.

Solmssen works primarily out-of-doors – *en plein air*. He has devised an unusual technique that actually makes his large canvases perform as outdoor easels to enable him to directly create his paintings in the natural environments that he prefers. Working even when the weather proves challenging, Solmssen paints rapidly to capture both time and light and the essence of the moment. The brevity of the fleeting light energizes the moment and helps him to fully focus, engage, and paint with intensity and passion.

Solmssen studied at the University of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and his early influences were the great realist and landscape painters of the region such as Thomas Eakins, Willis Redfield, and Fairfield Porter. He describes himself as a painterly realist, he also identifies with the Intimists, the school of Bonnard and Vuillard. His semi-narrative paintings also conjure something of Diebenkorn's expressionistic painterly quality, and Edward Hopper's composition and light. His paintings have been exhibited in numerous galleries from New York to California, and are included in important private and museum collections.

**Exhibition catalog can be sent upon request, and online version will be available at [www.lewallengalleries.com](http://www.lewallengalleries.com). Contact [agill@lewallengalleries.com](mailto:agill@lewallengalleries.com) or 505.988.3250.**



*Low Tide, Carr Inlet, 2016, Oil on linen, 48" x 70"*

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*Yellow Boat, Evening*, 2016, Oil on linen, 24" x 28"



*Bayside*, 2016, Oil on linen, 50" x 70"



*The Davis House*, 2015, Oil on linen, 50" x 118"