

## **Robin F. Williams**

### *Watch Yourself*

September 20 - November 4, 2023

Morán Morán is pleased to present Robin F. Williams' solo exhibition, titled *Watch Yourself*, which features a new series of paintings. This marks her first show at the gallery and her first exhibition in México City. Emphatically figurative and technically driven, Williams' practice involves imaging women performing their most culturally valuable attributes. Breaking many stylistic categories, Williams is celebrated for her blunt depictions of self-aware female individuals, entirely in command of their sex appeal, youth, style, and sense of humor. Her use of various painterly applications achieving graphic and illusionistic effects, and her manipulation of craft-based techniques, suggests a willful refusal of convention and a dismissal of decorum, operating between material surface and visual content.

*Watch Yourself* presents a group of seven paintings that depict female horror movie archetypes: the virgin, the prom queen, and the heretic, in familiar scenes, like "the slumber party" or "the locker room." Rigorously sourced from stills captured from C-list slasher films and psychological thrillers, Williams uses the painted medium to probe the cultural trope of the "Final Girl," coined by film theorist Carol J. Clover<sup>1</sup>. Throughout these depictions, the works on view identify transformative moments within a character's vivid inner world and attest to the artist's commitment to capturing paradigmatic shifts in the representation and perception of women, who have historically been depicted as a thing to be known, rather than as an agent actively gathering her own intelligence. With each subject anchored in critical moments of truth-seeking (such as the flash of awareness and determination to act), Williams' works recall the powerful characters rendered in narrative paintings by Artemisia Gentileschi.

Using technicolor pools of acid-like tones and intricate applications of color, reminiscent of the rainbow waves over a screen's interference, Williams creates the illusion of a figure caught in the static frequencies of the '70s and '80s – enmeshing her figures in the very cinematic and photographic media used to transmit them. Similarly, the appearance of smudged, oily fingerprints patterning the surface implicates the artist's position in the construction of the image, enacting a mode of composition that questions the way we relate to images.

In *Watch Yourself*, the show's title painting, an androgynous figure with smooth sculptural features reclines in swathes of electric greens, glowing yellows, and cobalt blues. Chromatic ripples in the physical presence of the paint mimic the smoke emitted from the cigarette held coolly, if not too long, between fingertips. This intense commingling between realism and surrealism, used here and throughout Williams' representations of the Final Girl, recalls

cinematic approaches to vision and concepts of film spectatorship, such as simulated embodiment, hapticity, synesthesia, and multi-sensoriality. As the only figure in the exhibition directly confronting the viewer, she poses the question: Who is watching whom? As Williams has said, "In horror, the viewer is very much on display."<sup>2</sup>

– Lola Kramer

Robin F. Williams (b. 1984) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, and she received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2006. Williams has shown at Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, MA, and her work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions nationally and internationally, including: Present Generations, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; *Nicolas Party: Pastel*, Flag Art Foundation, New York, NY; *In New York, Thinking of You (Part I)*, Flag Art Foundation, New York, NY, and *Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami's Collection*, ICA Miami, Miami, FL. Her work is currently in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Collection Majudia, Montreal, Canada; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; X Museum, Beijing, China; CC Foundation, Shanghai, China, among others.

Notes:

1 – Carol J. Clover. "Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film." Princeton University Press, 1992. (Regarded for her nuanced readings of the horror genre, Clover has proposed that beyond the production of gendered voyeurism lies the critical theme of female bodies in conflict with--and overcoming their unsanctioned desires. Audiences, she argues, are ultimately forced to identify with the final girl's point of view.)

2 – Robin F. Williams, in an email to the author. (August 30, 2023).