

flash art 50

Dexter Dalwood

Hubert Winter / Vienna



From top, clockwise:
Dexter Dalwood
Saloon Cabin (2017)
Courtesy of the Artist
and Galerie Hubert
Winter, Vienna

Inspired by turn-of-the-century Viennese writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal's novel *The Lord Chandos Letter*, these recent works question the relation between the basic units of language (the word, the sentence) and painting (the brushstroke). Just as protagonist Lord Chandos complains he cannot write because his intense inner experiences refuse verbal articulation, Dalwood's brushstrokes express only their own dislocation from the world's lonely suffering: gloomy atmospheres shroud comingling symbols, troubling dream images just beyond the viewer's comprehension.

Curator Michael Bracewell makes much of Dalwood's use of "symbolic historical traumas whose precise details are never obvious, though the eerie plush interiors of *Imperial Cabin* and *Saloon Cabin* (both 2017) might be reaction-formations against unknown but still communicable fears. Meanwhile the melancholic spaces of *Glenn Gould* and *Isle of the Dead* (both 2016) and *Think with the Heart* and *You Need More than Love* (both 2017) render their fantastic objects mournful, flooding them with lost chaotic energy.

Objects in still life paintings rarely look this lonely. A weightless thin silver line illuminates the otherwise black reverie of *Think with the Heart* like a sliver of light breaking through a barely open door, revealing white and pink flower petals blurring into their own reflections. Flowers reappear in *You Need More than Love*: a rosebush-covered drum kit occupies one part of an otherwise stark gray room with a screen (a hospital TV set, or a tablet repurposed for surveillance) in the top-left corner.

Isle of the Dead's eponymous landmass rises out of a sea of misty silver-gray, populated by stacks of television screens — otherwise blue, untuned, showing a black star like a death's head — and classical columns, the crumbling remnants of a forgotten temple. The silver-gray mist reappears in *Glenn Gould*, where a grand piano stands alone on stage but for a pool of tears, the viewer becoming a ghostly silent audience.

by Max L. Feldman