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Sherie' Franssen at Dolby Chadwick Gallery

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By Kenneth Baker

Southern Californian Sherié Franssen returns to Dolby Chadwick with new work that offers aesthetic experiences analogous to witnessing a dissection or surgery, minus the queasiness.

In titling her exhibition, Franssen borrows from a famous remark of Willem de Kooning: "Flesh was the reason oil paint was invented."

De Kooning seems to have meant both that oil colors answered painters' need to describe flesh as nothing had before and that our embodiment made the medium's invention inevitable. Franssen's work captures both implications.

She says that her recent pictures spring from memories of a film version of "Wuthering Heights." I wish she had kept that to herself because it may set viewers to probing her pictures for referential content that she deliberately dismantles.



Sherie' Franssen, *Love Sick* (2010), 81" x 77"

In place of narrative threads, a canvas such as "Lovesick" (2010) details the process through which Franssen took an image stroke by stroke from descriptive beginnings to a fully alive state of dismemberment.

Viewers who remember painting more vividly than movies will find echoes of the palettes favored by other painters: Philip Guston in "Lovesick," de Kooning in "Dreamball," Goya in "Bumpy Night," Manet in "Heath."

But Franssen's manner guarantees that she cannot hide behind her sources. It leaves her decisions and creative reflexes harshly exposed. Only occasionally does it let her down, as in "Tingler" (2010), where the generative image feels uncomfortably close to reasserting itself.