

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Sherie' Franssen

Flesh Was The Reason

November 4, 2010 – November 27, 2010

Flesh Was The Reason, the show's title, is a nod to Willem de Kooning, who famously declared that oil paints were invented so that the artist might capture the voluptuousness of flesh, a venture heretofore unattained by less sensual media. As a potent symbol of life and its many contingencies (including love, sex and death), flesh is also the reason Franssen paints. For if painting is primarily concerned with evoking a visceral response within the viewer, as it is for Franssen, then flesh's carnal qualities help elicit that physical engagement.

Inspired by the film version of *Wuthering Heights*, Franssen's newest cycle of paintings approaches corporeality from the perspective of forbidden love gone bad. The dynamism of her gestures – manifested across the canvas as currents of energy that either expend quickly or detonate as small bursts – echo the film's gothic, windswept quality, while a rawness of form suggests the longing of thwarted love. An unorthodox interweaving of blacks, grays and plums with brighter greens, blues and rusts creates an effect paralleling the atmosphere of mystery that infuses Brontë's canonical tale. Franssen notes, however, that her paintings will often open themselves up to influences beyond her initial point of departure, thereby allowing them to absorb new meanings throughout the creative process.

In her earlier works, summarily rendered human figures are unmistakably evident against abstracted, though identifiable, natural and domestic settings. Although she still begins her paintings by laying down anatomical forms, these forms are now worked up to such a degree that the heavily layered final product embraces an advanced state of abstraction – one, however, that gently pulsates, as if alive, with an undercurrent of oblique representation. This move beyond a mere flirtation with abstraction is rooted in Franssen's desire to engage her limitations as a means of overcoming them. "[In order] to expand my painting language," Franssen explains, "it has become necessary to do things I don't understand on the canvas and see where it leads." Despite not knowing where her paintings will end up, there is always an underlying intent behind the unfolding of their formal elements.

Sherie' Franssen was born in 1952 in Torrance, California. In 1999, she earned her B.F.A. in Drawing and Painting from California State University at Long Beach. Throughout her artistic career, Franssen has consistently received positive critical attention from respected publications such as *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Art Ltd.*, and *New American Paintings*. Franssen's work will also be exhibited in our upcoming March 2011 group show "Heads," co-curated by Peter Selz and Lisa Chadwick. This will be Franssen's third solo show at Dolby Chadwick Gallery.