

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Tom Lieber

FURBISH

September 3–26, 2020

Dolby Chadwick Gallery is pleased to announce *FURBISH*, an exhibition of recent work by Tom Lieber. Created over the past two years, this group of paintings expands upon the artist's four-decade-long exploration of abstraction's limitless possibilities.

Lieber often begins with a single splattering of paint across the canvas. "It's freeing to start with a spontaneous, organic line," he says. He follows this line, building up and around it, sensing its gesture and inherent dynamic, feeding off its energy and moving it forward. Lieber then steps back and begins to take away anything that is external to the original gesture. The process of erasure, of eliminating anything non-essential, creates the space from which his compositions arise. As a result, the bodies in his works often seem to be pulsating in space, ephemeral conglomerations that may soon morph or disappear again. It's as if his particular way of painting—adding elements and then erasing them, adding more and erasing more—were still echoing through the finished works.

The internal balance evident in the paintings is not merely a function of their composition but also of the relationship between the objects and the often muted, meditative color palettes. Just as a sound depends on the relative silence around it, the elements of Lieber's compositions depend on the colors that surround them. They define the space within which the compositions unfold.

Lieber takes much of his inspiration from his natural environment: twisted tree trunks, the spray of breaking waves, the distant grumbling of a storm. When Bay Area figurative painter Elmer Bischoff visited Lieber in his Marin studio in the late 1980s, the two stood on Lieber's porch overlooking a grove of 150-year-old redwood trees and firs. "You're simply painting the trees, aren't you?" Bischoff asked. "Shhh," Lieber replied. "Don't tell anyone. That is so uncool in the world of abstraction."

The paintings, however, are neither representations nor abstractions of nature itself. Rather, they are visual renderings of how Lieber is affected by nature; they show his states of mind and heart as they are influenced by natural forces. Rather than a barrel wave, they capture the experience of a barrel wave. And just as these states of mind are subjective and deeply personal, so, too, are the paintings. However, there is also an underlying universality to them. The view of the ocean, say, tends to evoke a certain longing mixed with awe; a tree with songbirds provides a feeling of ease and safety, etc. Thus, as personal as Lieber's painting are, they also tap into archetypal states of

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mind and body. It is thus that so many evoke a strange sense of familiarity even though we may not be sure of what it is that strikes us as familiar.

Tom Lieber was born in 1949 in St. Louis, Missouri. He earned his BFA and MFA from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, in 1971 and 1974, respectively. Lieber has exhibited extensively across North America and Europe and was previously the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts award. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Tate Gallery, London. This will be his fifth solo show at the gallery.