

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Sherie' Franssen

Undertow

Some writers on painting and sculpture can trace their fascination with the subject to an encounter with a specific artwork. My epiphany came when I first saw Willem de Kooning's "Excavation" (1950) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (loaned by the Art Institute of Chicago) in the late 1960s.

It felt then as if the painting spoke specifically to me. So it startled me as the years passed each time in conversation an art world luminary—Robert Hughes, John Chamberlain, Jasper Johns, Bruce Nauman—unprompted, mentioned "Excavation" as a work of decisive impact.

"Excavation's" dishevelment and superabundance of detail, its refusal to settle down even under the most persistent scrutiny dramatized for me the feeling—as I imagined painters must experience it—of a work in progress pushing back, almost adversarially, against creative discipline. "I paint this way," de Kooning said of his process at the time, "because I can keep putting more and more things in—drama, anger, pain, love, a figure, a horse, my ideas about space."

The sense of an artwork pressing demands—unforeseeable, unbidden, possibly unnameable—on its maker, as he piled on his own, became for me a mark of painterly ambition, irrespective of style.

Harold Rosenberg and other art writers almost immediately projected a kind of heroism onto the agonistic quality that de Kooning's "Excavation" laid bare to me, a rhetoric caricatured easily, frequently and dismissively since.

But more than improvisational extravagance, it is the struggle with freedom exposed in "Excavation"—struggle with opening and closing the question of what to do next—that I see as connecting the work of Sherie' Franssen with that of de Kooning, whose example she embraces.

Fluency of marking, color unstinting to the point of overuse and a deferral of figuration appear to be the cardinal qualities of his work that hers shares. But these qualities appear most her own when they serve to communicate—like a nervous pathology—the creative disquiet that the silence of her art form can readily conceal.

Looking at Franssen's work, I think often of James Elkins' advice that really to understand a painting's formation we ought to re-enact bodily as many of the gestures and touches that we can discern on its surface. Circumstances, including our own inhibitions, make such a performance

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unfeasible more often than not. But we can try to execute it in imagination, an exercise surprisingly hard to sustain, and one possible only in the presence of the physical object. Even attempting it reminds me of Stanley Burnshaw's definition of poetry as "notations for an internal dance."

Franssen often finds spurs to painting much farther back in art history than de Kooning. "I like to have a map for a sense of where I'm going, Where the painting ends up is inevitably completely different" she has said, mentioning as points of departure works by Rubens, Goya, Michelangelo and, recently, Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece.

Jasper Johns has famously incorporated fragments traced from a reproduction of the Isenheim Altarpiece into his paintings and works on paper, fitting them more or less recognizably into puzzle-like compositions.

The spirit and style of Franssens' borrowings from art history could not be more different, yet she and Johns and countless other 21st century practitioners face a common problem: how to give their anachronistic medium contemporary immediacy by summoning the irreproducible truth of its history. Only painting (and drawing) make this possible because, unlike automatic media—digital or analog—but like dance, paintings have to be lived into being.

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Sherie' Franssen

b. Long Beach, CA 1952

EDUCATION

1999 BFA, Drawing and Painting, California State University Long Beach,
Long Beach, CA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019 Undertow, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2017 Tempest, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Undertow, Von Lintel Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2014 The Gorgeous Nothings, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2012 Flesh and Blood, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2010 Flesh Was the Reason, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2008 Driving Into the Ocean, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2007 Just An Inch of Ocean, Huntington Beach Art Center, Huntington Beach, CA
Sherie' Franssen, Claustrophobia, Jancar Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2006 Satisfaction Is Nothing, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2004 Subversive Acts, The Office-An Art Space, Huntington Beach, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 AFFLATUS, 5-50 Gallery, Long Island City, NY
2018 Here and Now, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2015 Lightning Strikes: 18 poets. 18 artists. Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2011 Entering Abstraction, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, CA
Heads, curated by Peter Selz, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Pet Project, Huntington Beach Art Center, CA
2009 Group Show, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA
2008 The Glittering Prize, Outdoor installation collaboration with Mark Dutcher,
Huntington Beach Art Center, HB, CA
2006 Carl Berg Gallery Group Show, Carl Berg Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Impressionism, Brea City Gallery, Brea, CA
2005 Fresh, Silent Art Auction, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
Venice Art Walk Auction, Venice, CA
Emerging Artist's 2005, Gallery C, Hermosa Beach, CA
American Gothic – New Talent for the Dark Ages, Gallery C, Hermosa Beach, CA
The OsCene in Contemporary Art and Culture, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA
artLA The New LA Art Fair, The Office-An Art Space, Huntington Beach, CA
2004 American Gothic – New Talent for the Dark Ages, Gallery C, Hermosa Beach, CA
The OsCene in Contemporary Art and Culture, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA

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- San Diego Art Institute International Exhibit, San Diego Art Institute, San Diego, CA
- 2004 Muckenthaler Biennial Exhibition, Muckenthaler Cultural Center, Fullerton, CA
Woman Made Exhibit, Long Beach Arts Gallery, Long Beach, CA
- 2003 San Diego Art Institute International Exhibit, San Diego Art Institute
Projekt 30 Gallery Group Show, Projekt30.com
Square Blue Gallery Group Show, Square Blue Gallery, Costa Mesa, CA
- 2002 Muckenthaler Biennial Exhibition, Muckenthaler Cultural Center Fullerton, CA
- 1998 Insights '98, University Art Museum, California State University Long Beach
Group Show, Long Beach, CA
- 1997 Open Studio, New Paintings, 7th Street Produce Market, Los Angeles, CA
Long Beach Arts All Southern California Group Show, Long Beach, CA
Broken Jaw of Lost Kingdoms, California State University Long Beach, Long Beach, CA
- 1996 The Gallery Downstairs Group Show, The Gallery Downstairs, Pasadena, CA
- 1995 Group Show, University Art Museum, California State University Long Beach Group Show,
Long Beach

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2015 Gonzalez, Matt. "Sherie Franssen: The Gorgeous Nothings". SFAQ, January 21, 2015.
Katz, Anita. "Sherie Franssen Abstracts Evoke Emotion". San Francisco Examiner, January 1, 2015.
- 2014 Baker, Kenneth. "Sherie Franssen, Debra Bloomfield Search for Ways Out". San Francisco Examiner, December 24, 2014.
- 2012 Baker, Kenneth. "Art Review, Flesh & Blood". San Francisco Chronicle, October 19, 2012.
- 2011 Baker, Kenneth. "Art Review, Heads curated by Peter Selz". San Francisco Chronicle, April 1, 2011.
- 2010 Baker, Kenneth. "Sherié Franssen Amplify Bold Ideas". San Francisco Chronicle, November 13, 2010.
- 2009 Beil, Kim. "Sherié Franssen, Artist Profile". Art Ltd., May 1, 2009.
Baker, Kenneth. "Top 5 Art Picks for 2008". San Francisco Chronicle, January 3, 2009.
- 2008 Baker, Kenneth. "Abstractions from Paintbrush and Camera". San Francisco Chronicle, December 13, 2008.
- 2007 "Big, Bold Paintings In Small Places". Los Angeles Times, Calendar, Around the Galleries, September 14, 2007.
"Just An Inch of Ocean' has depth". The Orange County Register, Calendar of Events, April 12, 2007.
"Art Imitates Strife". OC Squeeze, Page 2, March 15, 2007.
"Springtime Trio". Coast Magazine, Art Access, Page 179, April 1, 2007.
- 2006 Baker, Kenneth. "Visceral Art That Pushes Out of the Comfort Zone". San Francisco Chronicle, Datebook, Page E10, November 4, 2006.
- 2005 New American Paintings Pacific Coast Edition, Volume 55.

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- 2004 "American Gothic: Talent for the Dark Ages". Easy Reader, December 16, 2004.
"Orange County Artists Set the Scene in 'Oscene'". Laguna News Post, November, 2004.
"By and About Women". San Bernardino County Sun, March, 2004.
- 2003 "New Faces". San Diego Union Tribune, June, 2003.

LECTURES

- 2004 "Sex Behind the Curtain," Panel Discussion, Laguna Art Museum, moderated by Tyler Stallings, Laguna Beach, CA
- 1999-02 "Drawing and Painting the Figure," Long Beach City College, Long Beach, CA