



Christine Frerichs, *Warm Winter Kiss (for Constantine Brancusi)*, 2015, oil and acrylic on two canvases, 36" x 60." Courtesy of Klwoden Mann Gallery.

CHRISTINE FRERICHS: SERENADE

Klwoden Mann – Culver City

By Megan Abrahams

The metaphor of music permeates this series of paintings by Christine Frerichs—characterized as they are by mood, the gradation of color building towards crescendo, composition approached with almost mathematical deliberation and flowing lyricism of line. The artist connected this series to music, in particular, music as a statement of romantic love. Fittingly, the exhibit is named “Serenade,” in reference to one of the largest paintings. “This body of work touched on how abstraction can stem from emotive states,” the artist said, in a one-on-one conversation at the gallery during the run of her show.

Riveting for their layered complexity, richness of texture and dramatic color, the paintings are also infused with narrative significance, like painted memoir. For Frerichs, the larger canvases—those approaching the size of a human body—are symbolic portraits, abstract embodiments of a person or people. In them, the artist delves into the feelings evoked by relationships, and the building of personal identity.

The genesis of this recent work is a previous series of ten paintings, in which Frerichs created allegorical motifs to describe what she calls, “the stages individuals go through to become who we are through vulnerability.” Under each canvas, she articulated a figure 8, an abstracted rendition of the human form. In the new series, Frerichs re-contextualized the figure 8 further, breaking it down into subtle repeated lines. Beginning with a thick layer of acrylic modeling paste, she carved grooves, creating a figure 8 pattern based on the scale of her own body. The curved lines repeat like ripples. Partly derived from the artist’s observations of how ocean tides meet, creating cross-cur-

rents that may be gentle or full of friction, the paintings are also meant to represent the dynamic between partners in a relationship.

The underlying concept was also inspired by Brancusi’s sculpture, *The Kiss*, in which two integrated figures are carved from a single stone. In each painting, the artist joined two canvases to construct one composition, dividing the symbolic figure in half. The half figures represent two beings coming together, forming a whole. Alluding to the inherent paradox in the way the halves reflect, Frerichs said, “The meeting point is the place they split.”

Beyond the abstract reference to figures, the works evoke landscape, water and sky, connoting the light and atmosphere of New York, Lake Tahoe and Los Angeles—places with special emotional meaning in the artist’s life. Up close, the fine marks across the surface almost appear pointillist in technique. From a distance, the canvases glow with diffused light—a gradation of color and intensity with a palette ranging from modulated light-filled pastels to dark colors with depth and intensity, expressing an emotional spectrum from ecstasy to heartbreak.

A series of smaller paintings, (each 8.5 x 11 inches, oil on canvas) in the gallery’s project room, are like letters Frerichs has written to herself, or, “diagrams to describe relationships I’ve had in my life, or loves or places I’ve been.” Like studies, they are light-hearted steppingstones to the stunning emotionally charged larger works—the profound rendition of the artist’s unbridled introspection. ■

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