

Painting Through Your Obsession About Love

by Allison Meier on August 23, 2011

Kim Dorland's paintings do not shy away from the brutality of love. Seizing on all of love's untamed wildness, Dorland's portraits of his wife are destructively passionate. Globbs of oil paint are heavily dragged and slashed into works that seem made on pure impulse.



Kim Dorland, "Silly Smile" (2008), oil on wood panel, 96 x 96 (image courtesy Mike Weiss Gallery, New York)

When I was first confronted with Kim Dorland's solo show [For Lori](#) at Mike Weiss Gallery in Chelsea, I was overwhelmed with the aggression of the paintings, the way that every brush stroke or paint smear looked lacerated. Boils of paint, defying gravity by cracking off onto the floor, have the mutilated texture of something that's been set on fire. The human form is not carefully studied, but attacked out of the paint. I was shocked that works so savage were apparently of someone the artist loved, but as I spent more time with them I realized the passion in this was a lover's obsession.



Kim Dorland, "Silly Smile" (2008), "Coy Girl" (2008), "For Matisse" (2008) (image courtesy Mike Weiss Gallery, New York)

There's a Rimbaud poem, "Aube," where the author is chasing after dawn, who is a woman and phenomenon of nature at the same time, fleeting and wild. I was reminded of the poem while examining the three huge portraits in the back room of the gallery ("Coy Girl," "Silly Smile" and "For Matisse") that serve as the show's anchor.

Like every work in the exhibit, they are portraits of Dorland's wife Lori Seymour. Yet they are more portraits of a memory than portraits from memory. As if coming out of a dream of her and wanting to capture her fleeing image, Dorland has made flashed impressions of her nude body posed in a flat green landscape. Like Rimbaud running after the dawn, these three portraits are grasping onto something untamed and in the seemingly random drips and pulls of color tangled with nature, Dorland has found Lori. I've never seen the raw, real, imperfect love of a relationship so openly painted.



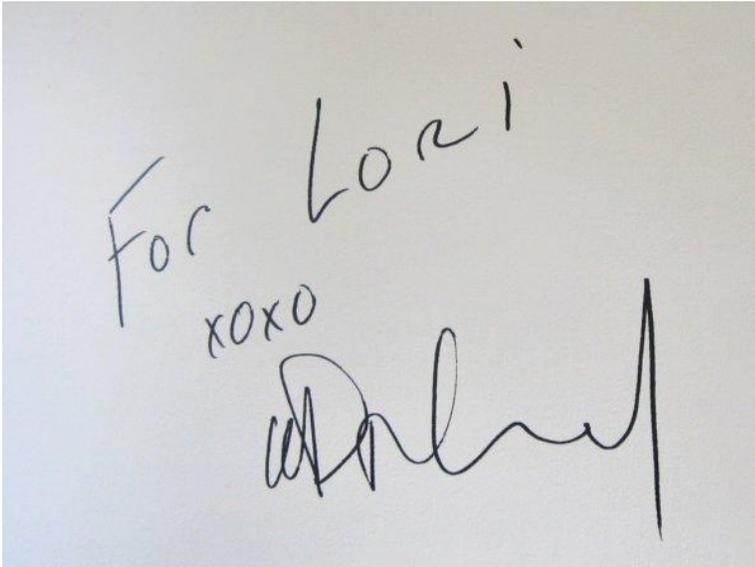
Kim Dorland, "Untitled" (2011), oil on wood panel, 96 x 96; "Silly Smile" (2008), oil on wood panel, 96 x 96 (image courtesy Mike Weiss Gallery, New York)

Alongside these three portraits is a much more serene, and more recent, equally sized "Untitled" painting where Lori is reclining on a grass with yellow flowers. Unlike in the other three portraits in the room, her limbs are carefully formed, her skin realistically shaded. However, even here there is a raging pull of paint scratching diagonally, as if Dorland reached a point where he couldn't contain himself anymore as he imagined his lover's body.



Kim Dorland, "Stargazing" (2010), oil, acrylic, spray-paint and crystals on wood panel, 120 x 96 (image courtesy Mike Weiss Gallery, New York)

This is the Canadian artist's second solo show at Mike Weiss Gallery, the first being *New Material* in 2010. That exhibit was more fixated on phantasmagoria, with skulls and growling animals lurking in dark forests, and a few taxidermy animals splattered in paint. Creeps of that come into *For Lori*, even beyond its animalistic desire. In the front of the gallery are darker portraits, where suggestions of faces appear like skulls on paper with ripped edges. The dominating work is "Stargazing," where a neon Lori is looking up to a night sky made of pasted on gems and a childish shooting star trailing glitter.



In an interview the gallery provided between Dorland and his muse, he responds to her question of why he paints her so much by saying, "I paint you because I adore you." And while the show is definitely "for Lori," an incredibly personal shrine to her image, there's an enticement about it that anyone who's ever been a bit obsessive about love can get absorbed by.

Kim Dorland: *For Lori* is at the Mike Weiss Gallery (524 W. 24th Street) from June 23 to August 27, 2011.