

# ARTFORUM

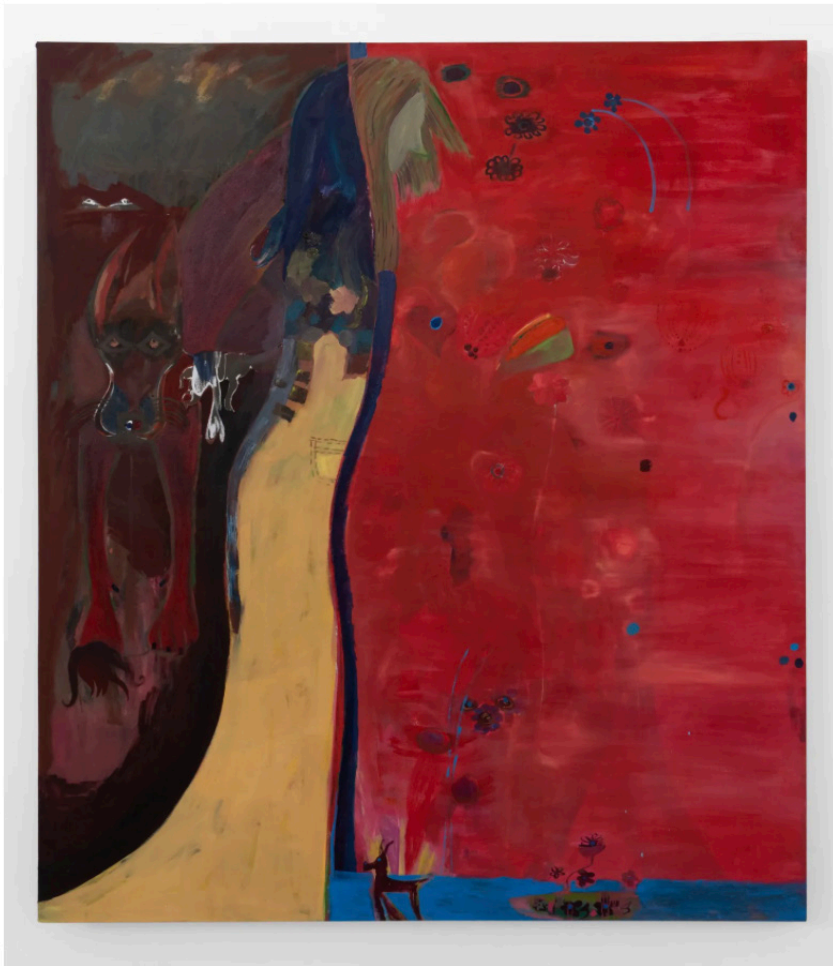
CRITICS' PICKS SAN FRANCISCO

## Daisy May Sheff

Ratio 3 | 2831a Mission Street

January 18, 2022 - March 12, 2022

By Theadora Walsh ☞



Daisy May Sheff, *Double Act*, 2021, oil on canvas, 75 1/4 x 65".

I overheard a visitor to Daisy May Sheff's exhibition "Hid it Well in a Walnut Shell" say, "I'm sure this painter didn't go to art school." This was incorrect: Sheff graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, with a BFA in 2018, but the statement was easily understood as a compliment to those in the gallery. Her paintings seem intuitive, confident, and strange, and are filled with hermetic but loaded symbols: seeds, tails, hands, leg-of-mutton dress sleeves and, more than anything else, dogs.

Walsh, Theadora, "Critics' Picks: Daisy May Sheff," *Artforum*, January 18, 2022 (Online)

A small canine on the edge of *Double Act* (all works cited, 2021), feels almost compulsively added, cropping up into the picture like a budding weed. Its attention is directed at a larger, darker pooch looming out of the canvas with staring, diamond-shaped eyes. Sheff's painterly creatures, rendered with loving obsession, are reminiscent of Niki de Saint Phalle's *Nanas*—buoyant, adoringly portrayed women that appear everywhere in the French-American artist's work.

Yet there is something polluted about Sheff's bucolic tableaux. Animals in repose are disturbed by passages of mottled hues that refuse to settle into familiar, nameable shades. The chroma are telluric and ripe, even vaguely threatening. Painter Amy Sillman, whose work seems an inspiration to Sheff, has described her own use of color as a tool of negation, "an archeologico-dialectic of destruction and reconstruction." One could say the same of Sheff's palette.

In *Sunny Nap (Leave Me Alone)*, smeary greens abut an area of patted-down brown. Sheff's patches of color are animated, unfixed—each one an unsteadied pool. The compositions feel attuned to the animal faculty of the brain and result less in moments of distinct representation than in chance occurrences of apophenia. Take the dog with a darkened brow in this picture, who rises out of the painting's gloaming as if of its own accord—a face sprouting from fecund soil, expertly tilled by the artist.