

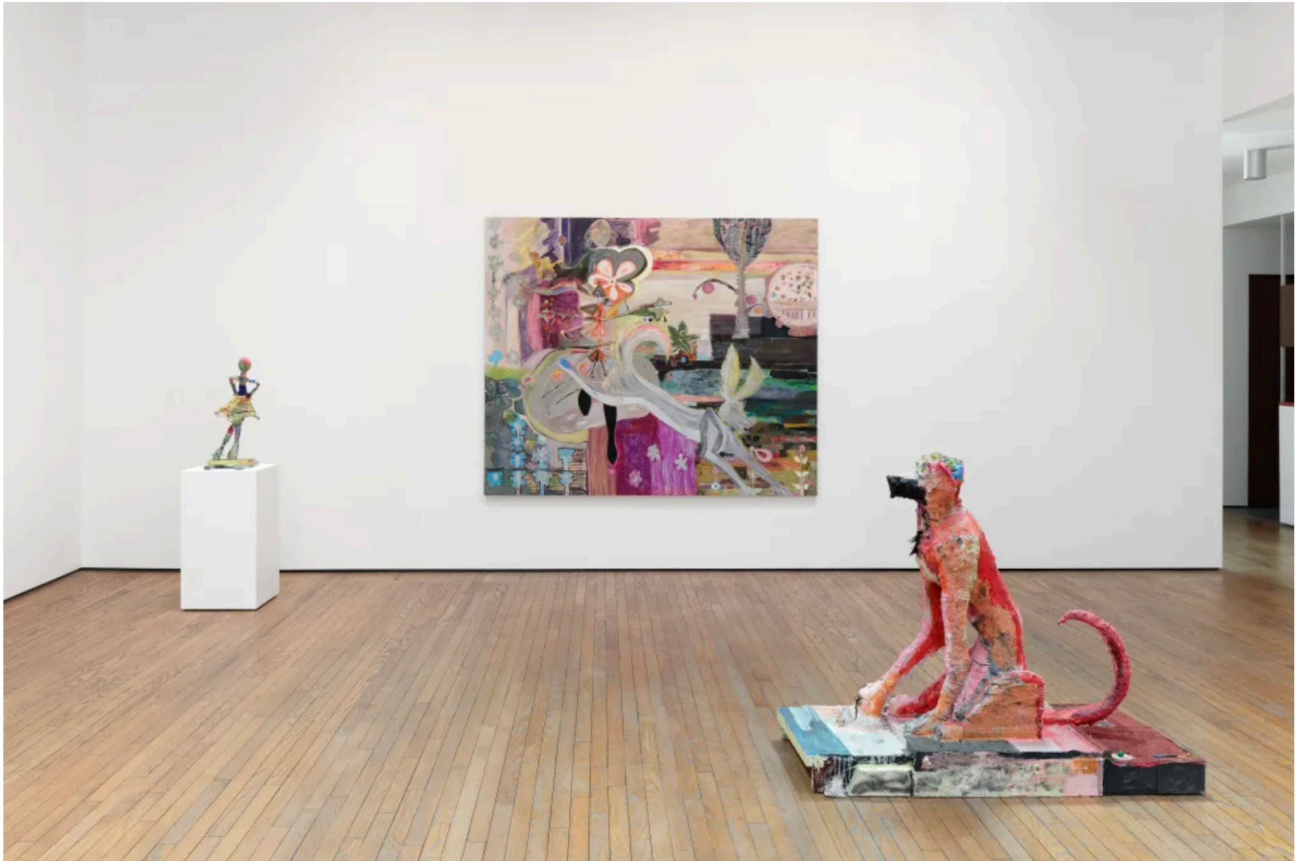
# Two Coats of Paint

An award-winning NYC blogazine, primarily about painting

## SOLO SHOWS

### Daisy Sheff: The anatomy of fairy tales

March 4, 2025 9:26 am



*Parker Gallery, Daisy Sheff, Our Scene Now Changes Rather Abruptly, 2025, installation view*

Contributed by Jason Andrew

Daisy Sheff's exhibition "Begun in the Dazzling Sunshine" at Parker Gallery's new space on Melrose in Los Angeles, intertwines reality with the fantastical. Her paintings employ leaping animals, fussy architectures, and bright flora to explain narratives that tease the peculiar logic of fairy tales. Their uneven surfaces, cleverly devised characters, and woolly layered scenes are busy and unwieldy. To interpret them is like piecing together the plot of a really great dream.

Sheff's work has become wonderfully jumbled since the solo I saw at White Columns in 2021. Like the novels she reads and the films she watches, these paintings are theatrical and at times

Andrew, Jason, "Daisy Sheff: The anatomy of fairy tales,"  
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silly sharing an obvious kinship with the work of eclectic post-war Bay Area figurative artist Roy De Forest. Yet Sheff has discovered her own sense of the absurd as she leans hard into color blocking and simple patterning. Borrowing a bit from the P&D movement, she accessorizes her surfaces with beads, glitter, brocaded fabric, and other embellishing scraps. All this adds to the experience of exploring her surfaces while decoding their overt symbolism. Like the mystical aura and rich layered compositions of Gustave Moreau, Sheff embraces a vivid, otherworldly gestural aesthetic, though without the spiritual transcendence baggage.



Daisy Sheff, *Our Scene Now Changes Rather Abruptly*, 2025, oil and glitter on canvas, 70 x 84 inches

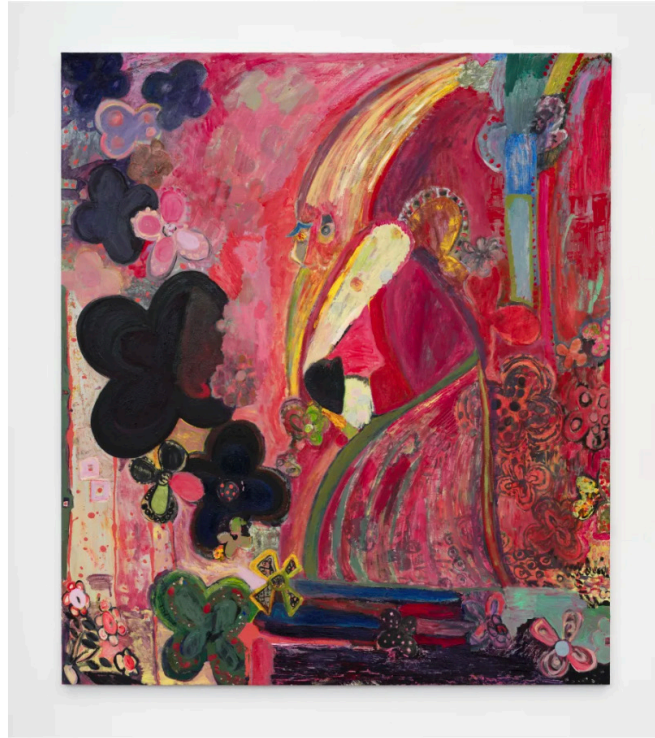
In *Our Scene Now Changes Rather Abruptly*, a long-limbed, pink-tailed dog leaps to the foreground while a spoon-shaped figure in black stockings stands amid swirling madness. The piece immediately brought to mind Elizabeth Murray's nine-foot painting *Bounding Dog*. Murray pushed her visual narratives to the point where it would take a team of carpenters to build out heavily shaped canvases to manage them. Sheff, in her own way, does the same with her extravagant layering of disjunctive scenes and obsessive brushed-in details. And like Murray, whom the funky De Forest also influenced, Sheff relishes the realness of the goofy and the frolicsome.



Detail: *Our Scene Now Changes Rather Abruptly*, 2025, 70 x 84 inches. Photo: Jason Andrew



Sheff told me in an Instagram DM that the title is a snippet from a P.G. Wodehouse novel. She likes it – so much she’s used it at least once before – because “it reveals the narrator’s facetious present and draws attention to the narrative/stage like aspect of the painting.” Sheff’s fascination with theatrics is her bridge to the fantastical.



*Daisy Sheff, The King of the Mountain Cometh, 2025, oil and sequins on panel, 46 x 40 inches*

*The King of the Mountain Cometh* possessed a raw instinctual energy is reminiscent of The Brothers Grimm. Built around a regal red robed gnome-like figure – a treacherous usurper likely plotting something evil – the painting pulses with expressive mark making resolving into black clover-shapes that rise like inflated balloons up the left side.



*Daisy Sheff, Earthy Nostrils, 2025, oil, enamel, leather, acrylic, rope, glitter, sand, flocking, and beads on run mounted on wood panel, 36 1/2 x 36 1/2 inches*

Sheff likes it “when the world becomes magical through human eyes,” and though not hyper-specific to her, domestic settings can trigger her imagination. In *Earthy Nostrils*, she up-cycles a floor rug into a sweet yet haunting interior, depicting a room star-lit through an open window with oddly illuminated things left randomly on a table. Several other smaller paintings reflect the allure of domesticity.



*Daisy Sheff, Sprouting Stone, 2024, oil and glitter on canvas, 9 x 12 inches*

I am not one for puritanical painting, but I fell in love with a small still life featuring flowers sprouting from a stone. Its crude surface imparts the fleeting nature of life and the ultimate futility of worldly desires. Look closely and the artist has written her name across the top of the piece. This and a few other paintings so inscribed invite us to explore the difference between seeing and reading.



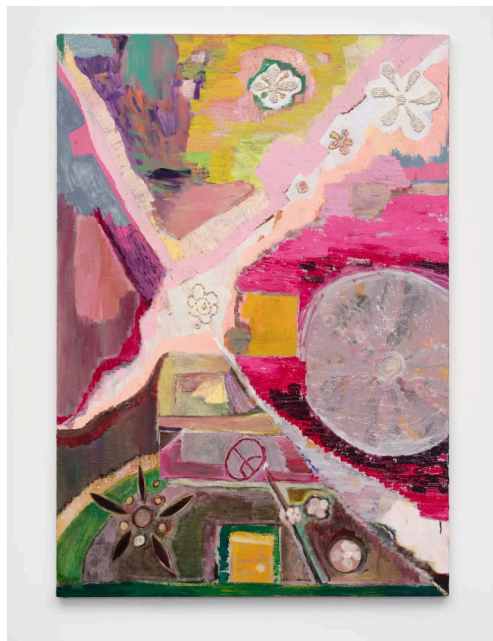
*Daisy Sheff, Toy Store Window, 2025, oil, spray paint, and enamel on sewn canvas, 46 x 32 inches*

Like a grand movable stage design for a four-hour opera, *Toy Store Window* presents a narrative stacked sequentially, one shelf on top of another. In the foreground, a big bright sunflower is set to the side of faceless figure. They seem to constitute the audience for a lively group of five stick-figure dancers, one with toe shoes. A long grey curtain hangs heavy stage right. Sheff clearly favors the naïve, unassuming stick figures. One such protagonist solos in a free-standing sculpture nearby.



Daisy Sheff, *Dog (1)*, 2025, wood, suede, burlap, string, wire, pipe cleaners, felt, glitter, fur, flocking, enamel, plaster, acrylic, fabric, and beads, 41 x 30 x 49 inches

Like the late Joan Brown, whom Sheff evidently admires, Sheff loves her dog. In *Dog (1)*, a mess of found materials forms a life-size portrait of her pooch. Giacometti made something similar in 1951, reacting to a memory of a wandering dog. Its skinny silhouette is said to have captured both the “dogginess” of a dog and the fact that Giacometti himself felt like one while walking in the rain. If Sheff’s dog embodies any misery, though, it’s buried under bright smiles of brilliant paint.



Daisy Sheff, *Broken Hippy*, 2025, oil, glitter, and Styrofoam beads on canvas, 46 x 32 inches

Ultimately, Sheff modernizes the Symbolist impulse, transforming it into a fluid, contemporary language of emotions, myths, and subconscious narratives. Moreau said, "I believe neither in what I touch nor in what I see and only in what I feel." There is a lot of feeling in Sheff's story-telling paintings. My only request is that she make them bigger and heavier.

"Daisy Sheff: Begun in the Dazzling Sunshine," Parker Gallery, 6700 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, CA. Through March 29, 2025.