

Sandy Robson

by
Joey Robert Parks

With the ashes of her earliest days as a painter now dispersed, Sandy Robson has made the giant leap into American abstract expressionism. Robson's 2005 series, *In Search of the Feminine*, expresses an undercurrent that is calm, sensual and emotionally satisfying. Her subjects are revealed through the context of representational abstractions: a single flower unfolded in an intense and intimate pose or through a pair of softly colored curves, hovering closely, nurturing and serene.

Sensual. Exquisite. Bold. Beautiful.

With Robson's strong sense of color and gifted abilities in oil, such impressions are strong and immediate. There is a grounded power at work here, as gentle as it is powerful - as if Robson were revealing the truth of who she is as a woman.

She works in a sketchbook initially, allowing images to emerge through a range of emotions that are sometimes painful, sometimes pleasant, knowing instinctively when something's right, sensing clearly when it's wrong. Inner layers of self are uncovered with a more honest intention than years past, lines that previously trapped images are noticeably absent and she expertly builds her discoveries into the physical layers of oil and canvas.

At the age of twenty-six, with no prior training and not a single adolescent yearning to express herself artistically, Sandy Robson attended the Byam Shaw School of Art in London - at the behest of a friend. "I knew I had talent, but didn't assume this meant anything as grandiose as painting. I expected to be a sculptor, but mid-way through my first year, I knew painting was my thing."

Her early career was characterized by faint shapes, frequently drenched in red, obscured by shadows, often visible only through dark outlines that bound the subject in place. Regarding 1996's "Is it safe", Emma Hill (Art Connoisseur, The Eagle Gallery, London) observed:

"Robson does not paint subjects that are easy to look at - one painting shows a woman's body, cruciform. The torso from shoulder to knee is marked out by a dark square. Above, the woman's face is strained, mask-like; huge eyes fix [the viewer]. They are both challenging and full of fear. Below (and perhaps more unsettling) the figure's legs cease to be solid and they form and taper inconsequentially as ribbons. [This] is a profoundly disturbing painting, eliciting conflicting responses: ...Is this an image of an aggressor or a victim? ...It exists disembodied, resistant to too literal an explanation."

Following this seven-year period, her work gradually became more expressive, controlled and enjoyable. Today, Sandy Robson paints in a method that is "like meditating with my eyes open". The result of this expressive meditation is art that feels less like work and more like play; that is an expression of how brave travels through pain lead ultimately to the greatest expressions of truth; that is art worth discovering for both the painter and the viewer - no matter how difficult or beautiful it is to go there.

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