

Mirrors & Tides

Kimberly Whinna, 2005

Shawn Dulaney grew up near the base of the Rocky Mountains, in a house whose western-facing side was entirely glass. This window presented her with a constantly changing, epic canvas. She was captivated by what she saw; the shifts of the light, the blurring of the horizon line as rain streamed down the window panes, the changing quality of the air itself, and the way light moved through it. It is this feeling of cumulative time and sensory experience that distinguishes Dulaney's landscapes. She is not painting a landscape frozen in one moment; instead she is painting the changing spirit of a place.

Dulaney was inspired to paint *In a Body Blue* from an experience she had in a rainstorm: While on a long summer evening's walk, Dulaney found herself in the middle of a sudden downpour just as darkness fell. Making her way home through the woods, she was pulled into a current of senses; the dank smell of the damp grass surrounding a flooded river, the sound of raindrops plip- plopping onto ripening leaves and the taste of earth and life that permeates the air on such stormy nights. "I can absorb the soul of a place and then watch it unfold and take form in my work," says Dulaney. In *In a Body Blue*, we see Dulaney translate the landscape of that night into an abstracted sensory experience.

The top of the painting is drenched in a velvety indigo field, as drips and drizzles of rain bathe its surface. The indigo stream eventually makes its way to the milky pool below, electrifying it with liquefied bolts of lightening. Hints of kelly green remind us of the lush scents of the forest, and the faint ghosts of under-painted trees are visible in the depths of the watery sky above. Shawn Dulaney paints on linen stretched over wooden panels. She begins by applying a plaster-like ground to the linen, a practice that is a nod to the ten years she spent as a fresco painter. Then the layering of paint begins. She starts with a solid color and then begins adding and reducing layers of paint.

In *In Your Sight*, streams of ochre and amber paint trickle down the surface. Some of the drip marks are truncated by swift swipes across the wet surface, while others drizzle undisturbed to the bottom. A broad crimson brushstroke juts in from the lower left-hand corner, assertively and confidently making its mark in the foreground. These many layers of diverse marks create a space for us to enter, as we navigate between the dripping planes.

In paintings like *Buoyant*, Dulaney leaves behind the idea of specific place and paints a purely spiritual landscape. The crystal quality of the gaseous lights evokes thoughts of dusty sunrises or sunsets. The gentle blue forms that poke through this powdery abyss could be mountains or water or clouds. There is a blissful essence to this painting, as rusty red clouds break to reveal this golden, glowing realm.

In *Bottomless*, the landscape evaporates into a puff of smoke. A brilliant explosion of saffron and white creates a euphoric cloud. Ground has been broken, the horizon line has completely disappeared, and we are left floating in this foggy dream of light and color.