

Maternal Body: The Paradox of Desire

2005

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The project, Maternal Body: The Paradox of Desire is the bringing together two separate bodies of work that of a dead mother squirrel and that of my body into one conversation. The paintings were painted over a short time period although not intended to be shown together they seemed to form a dialogue when shown together. They have both been shown as separate bodies of work as well.

*If the gods bring to you a strange and frightening creature accept the gift,  
as if it is the one you had chosen.*

Jane Hirshfield

Maternal Body: One day returning from a walk I came upon a recently hit and dead mother squirrel. Her many breasts were full as if she had been running back to her nest to feed her babies. My first impulse was to move her off the road into the bushes so not to get run over again. As I lifted her body so heavy with milk, I was touched deeply by her and instead listened to the impulse to bring her home. Over the next few weeks I would remove her from my freezer and carry her to my studio to paint. Compelled into this world, the squirrel paintings express my empathy with the mother squirrel and can be seen as the struggle of the generative powers of the maternal and at the same time the fear of maternal submission. This paradox of desire lies at the core of western culture's relationship to motherhood - the primal experiences of longing and awe juxtaposed with those equally primal experiences of fear and estrangement.