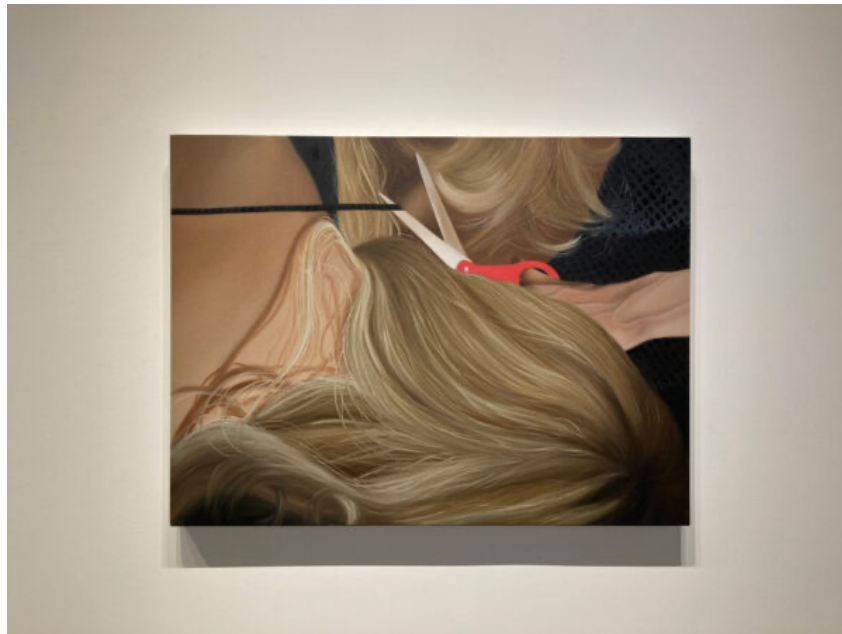


## Abandonment and Oceanic Futures: Beauty and Dread in Dallas

by [William Sarradet](#) June 7, 2024



*Kelli Vance, "A Certain Encounter," 2024, oil on linen, 36 x 48 inches*



*Kelli Vance, "Self Sabotage," 2024, oil on linen, 30 x 40 inches*

***Kelli Vance: We Don't Sleep* at Cris Worley Fine Arts, May 11 – June 15, 2024**

Kelli Vance's exhibition *Don't Abandon Me* offered a captivating and unsettling exploration of female figures in intimate settings. Vance's deceptively realistic and wash-like painting style captures close-up, anonymized figures with a striking lack of detail, even in elements like their hair. The highlights in their jewelry — pearls and other baubles — catch the eye, revealing slight peaks that lift from the painting's surface.

The figures, often topless but usually adorned with lace and jewels, tumble over one another in boudoirs and bathrooms. These women obsess over one another in scenes imbued with a sense of quiet tension and underlying anxiety.

Vance's paintings, described in the press release as taking "Lynchian dread a step further," evoke the eerie atmospheres of films like *Blue Velvet* and *Mulholland Drive*. The women's faces are obscured, reflecting a sense of deprivation of self, while their circumstances are rendered with sharp focus. The narratives within these paintings are rich with decadent detail and photographic refinement, yet the works vibrate with an ineffable anxiety.

The exhibition oscillates between admiration for the subjects' elegance and seductiveness and a deep apprehension about their fates. Vance's women appear in control and poised, waiting for something sublime, pedestrian, or terrifying to arrive. This tension between beauty and dread creates a powerful and layered viewing experience.

*Don't Abandon Me* was a masterful display of Vance's ability to merge high glamor with a pervasive sense of unease. The result is a series of paintings that are as gorgeous as they are unsettling, inviting viewers to navigate the fine line between admiration and apprehension.