

Ryan Sluggett in Galleries West Magazine



Pre-Squish, 2019
Oil, enamel, gouache on aluminum
60" x 96"

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Lissa Robinson

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New paintings from Los Angeles reflect the city's glamour, peril and glaring materialism.

Calgary-born artist Ryan Sluggett's exhibition, *Lifestyle Battles*, makes me think of Ozzy Osbourne's crazy train. But in this case, the rails lead to Sluggett's new life in Los Angeles, with its sharks and shoes and shopping sprees. His wildly over-the-top paintings, both serious and flippant, make his show at the TrépanierBaer Gallery in Calgary, a must see. Just remember to grab your selfie stick.

Sluggett moved to California in 2009 to attend UCLA after graduating from what's now the Alberta University of the Arts in Calgary. His latest works, based on his experiences in L.A., are cleverly crafted and mesmerizingly beautiful.

He combines his characteristic gestural line with a mashup of painting techniques in oil, gouache and enamel on sheets of aluminum, both large and small. Narratively, his work plays on his observations of everyday life in a hectic city that is perilous, glamorous and glaringly materialistic. His paintings are all these things too.

Anyone familiar with painting knows to apply oil over water-based paints, never the reverse. But Sluggett plays with the rules. He begins each work with thick, expressive brushstrokes of oil paint. Once it has dried, he outlines both abstracted and recognizable forms by carving lines into the aluminum. It's brazen and contrarian.



Waterslide Perks, 2019
Oil, enamel, gouache on aluminum
60" x 96"

He then arduously scrapes the oil paint off around these newly articulated forms and adds the rest of the scene in smooth coats of gouache. As if that isn't enough, his final touch is the large enamel line drawing that overlays each painted scene.

It's a triumph of sorts, this audacious painting in collage. His contrasting painterly styles, surface textures and paint viscosity create madly complex and luxuriously vivid paintings. Is this arrogance we see? Or someone with a vision we can't quite comprehend?

Sluggett's work is overtly ostentatious, but also carefully planned and astutely constructed. He gives us the thumbs up, but disrupts any need for harmonic compositions or meaningful associations between images.



Lifestyle Battles, 2019
Oil, enamel, gouache on aluminum
30" x 23.5"

The gallery lighting enriches his varied surfaces, pulling viewers deep into the velvety gouache and bouncing off the glistening aluminum and enamel edges. This work messes with the eye, arouses the senses and boggles the mind.

Sluggett's content is equally engaging. It can take some time before the layered images emerge from what initially reads like abstract paintings overlaid with figurative elements. He preserves relationships between colour and shape while interjecting a dialogue on abstraction with recognizable forms that offer other narrative possibilities.

All the paintings in this show, on view until June 1, are striking. But the stars, for me, are two large works, *Glossy Credit* and *Pre-Squish*.



Glossy Credit, 2019
Oil, enamel, gouache on aluminum
60" x 96"

Pre-Squish uses imagery, colour and texture to play with the fun and treachery of the beach. A foot will squish your sand castle. A shark might bite you. At least, that's what the scattered bandages suggest. The quality of the paint is astounding. It vibrates and glows with contrasting shades of blue and orange.

Glossy Credit has the opposite effect. It also uses contrasting colours, but in muted shades of green and red. While it vibrates with the glitz and glamour of a day spent shopping, it also exposes the consequences. While the colours are calming, the scene is chaotic, sprinkled with clouds and frenzied blue strokes. Each cloud shimmers with etched lines and the dark line drawing is alluring with its glistening strokes.

Sluggett's work is worth the sensory overload and satirical commentary. Don't rely on photographs. Go see the show in person.

***Ryan Sluggett: Lifestyle Battles* is on view at the TrépanierBaer Gallery in Calgary from May 3 to June 1, 2019.**