

RYAN SLUGGETT

JANUARY 21 – FEBRUARY 25, 2012

Opening Reception, Saturday January 21, from 5 to 7 pm.

Richard Telles Fine Art presents new large-scale paintings by Ryan Sluggett, his first solo exhibition with the gallery. Sluggett's new paintings evince his ongoing investigation of the language of painting that blends narrative and abstraction, delaying apprehension while teasing it forward with his lush paint handling, stitched fabrics, and framing. His use of enormous scale further attenuates this process, which ultimately amounts to depictions of daily life gone askew: babies commingle with credit cards as they slice across the picture plane, ketchup packets crumple between maniacal fingers, and smiles are kicked. Sluggett recurs these scenes into other bodies of work as much as he transmogrifies them from one painting to the next. His depictions of the frenzied manipulations by appendages and sensory organs is one common denominator here, mirroring his impetuous and restless relationship with image production itself, one that recalls the bravura of 1980's German Neo-expressionism, the electric color of British figuration from the 1960's to 1970's, and even American artists like Elizabeth Murray and John Altoon for their anxious and quivering forms.

Sluggett's restlessness is self-evident indeed, but it is probing and dynamic. He accelerates the rate of change in his development while wiggling out of his own painterly formulas faster than they can take hold; Sluggett always forcefully makes use of new techniques as each body of work progresses. One exhibition is only a snapshot in motion, but within each of Sluggett's paintings forms literally jostle and compete for attention within the frame. Unsurprisingly, while not featured in this particular exhibition, he also produces animations, whose narratives and forms emerge from the same piles of drawings that bear the paintings. The animations are often multi-tiered, made with stop-motion techniques and video, clashing *mise-en-scènes* and characters to the sound of stomping, slapping, and tongueless speech. The paintings are thus in a sense a series of animated movements solidified and made physical. Sluggett stitches together assorted fabrics, over which he applies various dyes and paints, expanding and contracting the border, sculpting the image as much as it is painted. The impasto passages that commingle alongside paint stains are freely applied yet are often taped off, contouring angular scaffolding contrapuntal to the fugitive nature of Sluggett's forms. All the while, he will add the hard stuff of fact via gel transfer, a photo of a texture or an item related to the painted fiction around it, grounding the absurd in reality. Sluggett's paintings are, after all, satires of everyday rituals and events pushed towards unexpected ambiguity. By force of his painterly and ebullient jabs, the gravity of these rituals are made clear while their intentions remain mysterious. What is left is the emotive and inquisitive energy that coaxes these activities into being, which is Sluggett's compelling argument for going forward with them and in painting itself.

Ryan Sluggett has recently been included in group exhibitions at Fredricks and Freiser, New York in 2010, the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, and the Biennale de Montreal, both in 2007. He has also held solo exhibitions at Trepanier Baer, Calgary, in 2010 and YYZ Artists' Outlet, Toronto in 2007. Sluggett lives and works in Los Angeles.