

Ryan Sluggett at Richard Telles Fine Art

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David Pagel

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Image: Ryan Sluggett, "*Stew*," 2011. Credit: Heather Rasmussen.

Ryan Sluggett's new paintings grab your eyes from the get-go. Their supersaturated colors, rambunctious compositions, crazy scale shifts, jagged shapes and wildly energized lines have all the subtlety of a bull in a china shop: fun while it lasts but a mess to clean up.

And then the eight big paintings in Sluggett's first solo show in Los Angeles, at

Richard Telles Fine Art, do something unexpected. The explosiveness with which they first impressed gives way to a type of refinement that is all the more powerful for being rough-edged. Bare-knuckle ruggedness and exquisite delicacy come together in Sluggett's complex paintings, which marry the immediacy of instant messaging to the slow burn of great novels.

Sluggett works on unstretched expanses of finely woven fabric, using fabric dye, tempera, acrylic and oil paint to create lusciously dense surfaces. He slices irregularly shaped sections out of several sheets and sews them atop and alongside others, often leaving dangling edges. When he is finished stitching, he stretches his Frankenstein-style rectangles taut as drums and adds back-mounted frames. Their pastel loveliness complements the composition's chaos.

Holding everything together is Sluggett's laser-sharp visual intelligence. The Calgary-born, L.A.-based painter's loaded fusions of pattern and patchwork do for painting what Jessica Stockholder's everything-plus-the-kitchen-sink installations do for sculpture: throw it open to endless possibilities while letting you savor the details, right here and right now.

Richard Telles Fine Art, through Feb. 25