

BRIGITTE MULHOLLAND

“Les grands boxeurs ont la rage méthodique. Ou plutôt il ne s’agit pas de rage. La foudre superbe.” (Great boxers have a methodical rage. Or rather it’s not about rage. The sublime thunderbolt.) -Michel Deguy

Brigitte Mulholland is proud to present Sarah Dwyer’s new solo exhibition, *Slugger*. Throughout art history, the boxer has been an important image, subject, and source of inspiration for painters: from George Bellows, to Egon Schiele, to the noted Cubists who were often found at boxing matches and practiced the sport themselves. Dwyer likewise applies the principles of boxing into her method of painting: exploring the notions of strength, dexterity, and lyricism in both her movements around the studio and the paintings themselves.

A *slugger* is a type of boxer who commands the ring with their strength and brute force. They dictate the pace and action of the fight, and are celebrated for their superb ‘ring generalship’. The daughter of an Irish boxer, Dwyer acutely understands how to physically control and command a space. The canvas provides the parameters for her jabbing action, for dancing, for dipping, for swinging, and embracing. Under Dwyer’s ring generalship, surfaces and edges of paintings appear like the ropes of the boxing ring; they swell and constrict with bodily elasticity. Fast gestural marks speak of physicality, endurance, and grit. For Dwyer, painting is a joyful physical performance and she attacks each one with surefooted vitality, creating lush abstractions filled with gesture, bouncing color, and looping, potent energy. In the manner of a prize fighter, every brushstroke balances explosive passion with practiced precision.

Irish-born but with strong ties and history in France and America, Dwyer riffs on CoBrA, Les Nabis, Fauvism, and Abstract Expressionism, her sensibility and knowledge straddling the cultures she has inhabited to lend rich historicity to her intellectual and material approach. Brilliant Vuillard fuschia and Bonnard magenta; grounds of rich purples and burgundy; swooping sloping threads of orange; all raucously populate the paintings. They are begun from life drawings, the teasing figures both conceal and reveal. Out of her rich color grounds pops a stray limb; a Gustonian eye; a breast; a stomach; a foot. A naughty playfulness sits alongside the ancient musicality of her paintings, which are equally bound to folklore, poetry, and the sumptuous Irish landscape. Dwyer delights in channeling all of her inspirations and is fearless in her approach. Knowing that a single stroke can make or break a painting, still she brings the brush or oil stick to that canvas and forges ahead, excited by the possibilities that await in the painting’s transformation.

The exhibition includes paintings, oil drawings, and sculpture, and will also be accompanied by a catalogue, which will be released in November.