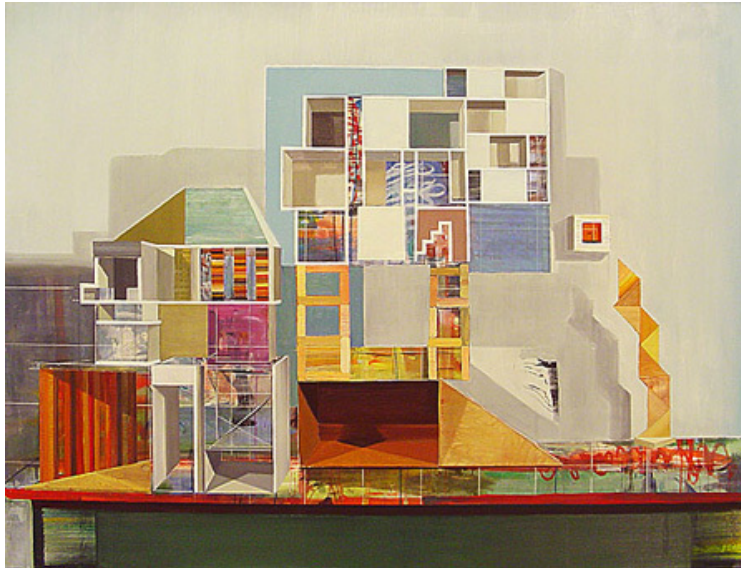


Sky Glabush

DOUGLAS UDELL GALLERY, EDMONTON

by GILBERT A. BOUCHARD



Sky Glabush, living together, 2006, Acrylic and oil on paper mounted on canvas, 1.37 x 1.77 m

Sky Glabush, living together, 2006, Acrylic and oil on paper mounted on canvas, 1.37 x 1.77 m

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That Sky Glabush's exhibition "Living Together" would arise out of Edmonton was a no-brainer. The architecturally inspired, painterly riffs on space, colour and objecthood that graced the walls of Douglas Udell Gallery in February acknowledge a renewed spirit of modernist radicalism in the city. It is a radicalism informed by polar opposites: the idealism of early 20th-century practice and the very real-world failure of modernist urban design in Alberta's capital.

For those who haven't had the joy of driving through the big-box hell that lines Edmonton's airport-to-downtown highway, the aesthetic shortfall of the city has been a matter of national amusement. In 1985, Mordecai Richler described Canada's fifth-largest urban centre as a "jumble of a used-building lot, where the spare office towers and box-shaped apartment buildings and cinder-block motels" are "discarded in the construction of real cities."





Sky Glabush, tunnel, 2006, Acrylic and oil on paper mounted on canvas, 1.32 x 2.1 m

Glabush's response to this ongoing sense of disappointment was to eschew addressing real-world built architecture (unlike an earlier series of paintings, which was based on walk-up apartments) and instead create slightly surreal faux-architectural subject matter by building small dioramas in coloured cardboard and foamcore. Depicted in the paintings more-or-less realistically on the rough tables and appropriated desks that fill Glabush's studio space, these alien-like structures boast truncated slides, oddball flips and spirals and colour schemes plucked from 20th-century modernist heroes like Piet Mondrian.

By first creating fantasy architecture and then transposing it into paintings, Glabush could have his artistic cake and eat it too. The results held a stimulating visual ambiguity. By creating the painterly equivalent of Necker Cubes, Glabush presented images that simultaneously embraced and denied their origins. One moment they stood as highly realistic depictions of his source dioramas, but as you stepped toward the canvases, they flipped identities and suddenly read as geometric-based, abstract work.

www.douglasudellgallery.com

www.skyglabush.com

Image captions:

Sky Glabush, living together, 2006, Acrylic and oil on paper mounted on canvas, 1.37 x 1.77 m

Sky Glabush, tunnel, 2006, Acrylic and oil on paper mounted on canvas, 1.32 x 2.1 m

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