

# LOWELL RYAN PROJECTS

# DAILY BRUIN

ARTS, ARTS COLUMNS, THEATER & FINE ARTS

***Art exhibit review: ‘There’s No Place Like No Place’ encodes language in colorful symbols***



Alumnus and artist Lindsay August-Salazar's exhibit "There's No Place Like No Place" opened at Lowell Ryan Projects on Saturday. (Lauren Man/Daily Bruin senior staff)



**By David Egan**

Nov. 1, 2021 1:12 p.m.

No color is left unused in alumnus Lindsay August-Salazar's latest paintings.

Shown in the exhibit "There's No Place Like No Place" at Lowell Ryan Projects in Mid-City, six large abstract paintings hang in the sunlight-drenched downstairs gallery. Another painting with blue LEDs is tucked in the back beside a small bar and the entrance to the gallery's garden. Upstairs, 47 abstract works on paper span the room. The show turns out to be more conceptually difficult and intriguing than one might expect from the bright, pleasant paintings.

August-Salazar's use of symbols from a language she created is both overwhelming and enthralling. Though the abstract art can be frustrating in its formlessness, August-

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Salazar's zeal in her aesthetic and conceptual goals – along with her struggle to create original, meaningful paintings – is as inspiring as the work is visually stimulating.



**With plenty of sunlight, the windows in the gallery illuminate the six large paintings in the downstairs portion of the gallery. (Lauren Man/Daily Bruin senior staff)**

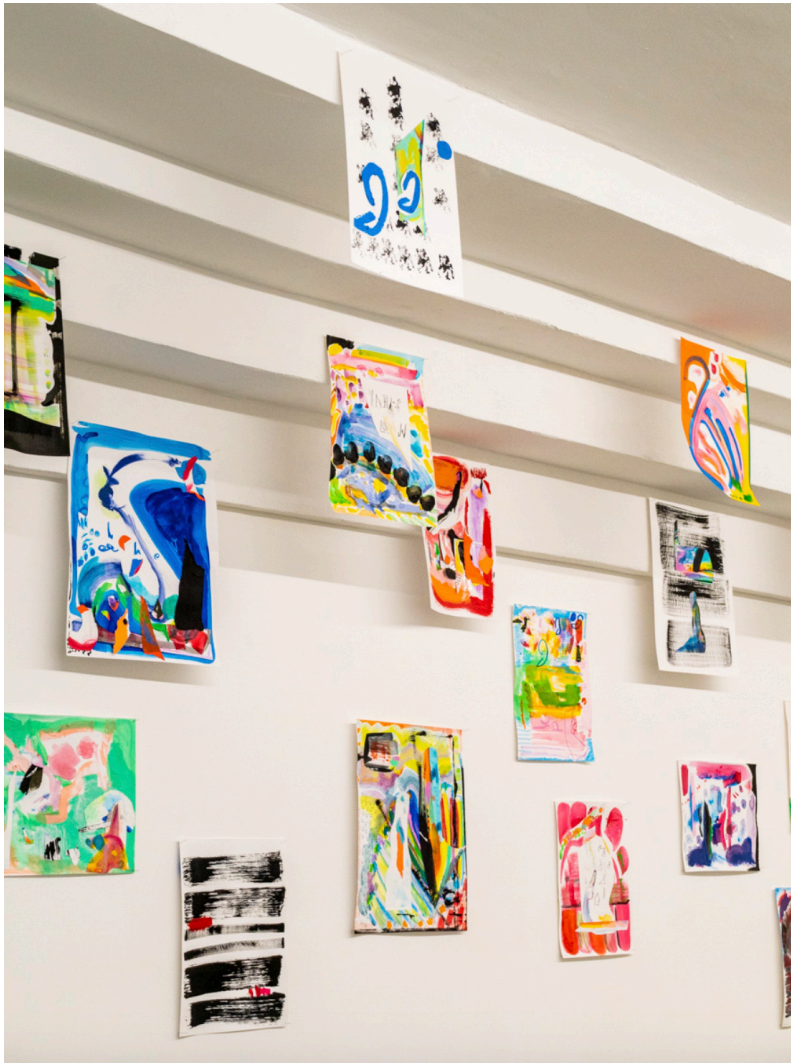
Walking into the gallery, viewers first see six 78-by-60-inch canvases saturated with color. Bright yellow, blue and orange paint is applied thick alongside darker shades of gray and black. The works that feature blank space and two or three subdued hues exhibit more finesse and consideration from August-Salazar and even painful restraint, as if she wanted to continue the spontaneous free application of paint but held back. The monochromatic black paper works and the painting “Mimicry Illusion Progression” exemplify how August-Salazar’s subtler pieces allow for more contemplation. Still, their power likely comes from contrast with the spontaneous multicolored brushstrokes.

But the paintings are not just swaths of color, as August-Salazar includes symbols from the language she calls “Abstract Character Copy.” With background as a hip-hop dancer, she developed this language from bodily movements and employs it in these pieces – first on paper and then on large canvas. Viewers are only exposed to the language through the symbols – figures vaguely indicative of crowns, shoes, etc. – scattered through the works. Each big painting downstairs uses one symbol as its subject, such as the penguin-like figure in “Tangled Narrative Overlays” or a banana-like form in “(Fleeting Contact) Overhead.”

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It can be frustrating knowing the symbols are part of August-Salazar's linguistic system while not knowing that system or what the symbols mean. Abstract art is typically open to interpretation because the works are emotionally expressive, but interpretations of "There's No Place Like No Place" will always be partial because only August-Salazar knows the language. This is less a flaw than it is a challenge for viewers – less negative critique than a forewarning of the paintings' evasive subjects. "What is that?" asked one toddler at the opening Saturday, pointing at the abstract works. "It is art," his mother responded. This may be the best and only answer one can muster.

The barriers between viewer and art are not from any lack of rigor. There is a palpable intensity in August-Salazar's methods as well as the works' conceptual underpinnings and arrangement in the gallery. While a handful of works on paper are striking on their own, the strength of the upstairs gallery is the collection seen altogether as a whole. Any piece alone might seem gleefully whipped together, but the sum of 47 is a startlingly dedicated artistic pursuit.



With a background as a hip-hop dancer, August-Salazar explores communication through symbols, categorized as "Abstract Character Copy." (Lauren Man/Daily Bruin senior staff)

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This intensity is also present in the conceptual influences of Lettrism and Russian Constructivism noted in the press release. The Lettrism influence is insightful, as the French movement of the 1940s did not include writing in art to convey a message but as an object of art itself, much like August-Salazar's comprehension-evading symbols.

The influence of Russian Constructivism – an early 20th-century art movement, which sought to reach the masses and propel Soviet Communism – may be seen in August-Salazar's systematic method. Like the industrial production of Russian Constructivism, August-Salazar explores her body's movements and translates them into her lexicon and onto paper and canvas.

The combination of colorful abstraction – pretty, jubilant works made and displayed in sunny Los Angeles – with these serious historical, conceptual and communicative efforts is as intimidating as it is enticing. There is melancholy in the 94 childlike pictures formed from a language understood by one but also an inspiring artistic vision and method. August-Salazar's repeated, compulsive gestures seek what the press release calls enlightenment and exploration of utopia. It is unclear whether enlightenment and utopia are reached by August-Salazar, or any viewer, in "There's No Place Like No Place."

But there is pleasure in witnessing the pursuit, the artistic discipline and the bright colors in the gallery's natural light.

## **"There's No Place Like No Place"**

**Lindsay August-Salazar**

Lowell Ryan Projects

4619 W. Washington Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90016

Oct. 30 to Dec. 11

