



ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

# Review: Sayre Gomez paintings of L.A. are a sensational shambles



Sayre Gomez, "Palm Tower," 2019, acrylic on canvas. (François Ghebaly Gallery)

By CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT  
ART CRITIC

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In a pitch-perfect new exhibition of paintings by Sayre Gomez, an exquisitely rendered cellphone tower does a correspondingly poor job of masquerading as a palm tree. The vivid friction between his paintings' flawless precision and their subjects' utter disaster is the show's bracing leitmotif.

At François Ghebaly Gallery, the 10-foot-tall "Palm Tower" is one of 12 canvases, eight painted sculptures and two videos shown on monitors painted with smiley faces and patriotic stickers. The tower picture is dominated by a cloudy, Tiepolo-worthy sky washed in frothy pastel colors of pink, blue and violet.

The sun, just peeking over a distant urban horizon at the lower right, is a blare of pure white light. Follow the adjacent silvery line of a guardrail along an elevated highway toward the left, and your eye arrives at the top of a chunky antenna tucked in among ludicrous, spiky artificial palm fronds.

Circuits suddenly jam. Badly camouflaged social infrastructure is exquisitely rendered within beautifully fabricated scenography. (Gomez is a whiz with a spray gun.) Slowly, the whole landscape begins to radiate a toxic glow. A creepy feeling of impending, inescapable doom arises.

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Gomez repeats that grinding tension — call it a sensational shambles — throughout the show.





Sayre Gomez, "Glendale Door," 2019, acrylic on canvas. (François Ghebaly Gallery)

A tattered flag is snagged on a fence, airplane condensation-trails crisscrossing the azure sky. Fluffy bedroom comforters are on sale in a broken-down store window. A filthy strip of pigeon spikes runs across the top of a soot-covered car rental sign, while forked lightning strikes an urban skyline next to mini-mall signage exhorting passersby to find fast-food solace within.

One painting in the shape of a door and installed flush with the floor is covered with beauty-parlor photos of a carefully coifed, high-style man and woman. The seductive Adam and Eve beckon through a bland doorway to promissory paradise, tagged with a credit card sticker.

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Gallery rooms are dotted with eight shabby yellow parking-lot stanchions, from which hefty chains dangle. These tubular vertical sculptures are utterly strange.



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TO EXIT

Sayre Gomez, "Senior Regional Manager," 2019, mixed media. (François Ghebaly Gallery)

Convincingly made from painted cardboard, PVC and polyurethane foam, they're blunt, dumb-as-a-post structures meant to corral and contain movement. Sculpture asks to be seen in the round, but these urge vigilance in the process.

Gomez slyly labels the traffic-control stanchions with bureaucratic titles — "Department Head," "CEO," "Senior Regional Manager," etc. There's something of a military-postindustrial-complex feel to this disconcerting show, which seems spot-on for the anxieties of life today.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

Sayre Gomez

**Where:** François Ghebaly Gallery, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., L.A.

**When:** Through Nov. 3, closed Mondays

**Info:** (323) 282-5187, [ghebaly.com](http://ghebaly.com)

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