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SAYRE GOMEZ | 'TRUE CRIME' AT XAVIER HUFKENS

[BY CONSTANZA FALCO RAEZ \(/CONTENT?AUTHOR=5EFD265AC5F73C40AE90A4DA\)](#)



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Lincoln Plaza, 2021. acrylic on canvas. 213.4 × 152.4 cm, 84 × 60 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels. Photo credit: Robert Wedemeyer.

Xavier Hufkens Gallery is presenting Sayre Gomez's *True Crime* on view through May 15. Taking Los Angeles as the starting point for an exploration of the American social climate, the artist presents a new series of large-format urban landscape paintings and three-dimensional works.

Referencing the popular genre of literature, film, and television, Gomez's works play with fact and fiction, not really giving away whether they are real or constructed. Or rooted in reality but meticulously scripted?

Flaunt talked to the artist to get his realities on the title, the message, and the art.



Installation view. Sayre Gomez "True Crime" at Xavier Hufkens. Courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens.

Why is the name *True Crime*?

It's a bit of a double entendre.



I think you've got this hyper popular subgenre of a specific type of television making, this kind of fictionalized documentary. You've got true stories that are told in very sensational ways, which kind of mirrors my process of navigating the city and taking photographs, and re-contextualizing them. In the exhibition you have some paintings that are kind of composited from the photos that I take or find online, or whatever, and then you have some that are more of a 1:1 copy of some element of a photo. Once the paintings become part of an exhibition, everything is fragmented and re-contextualized by the exhibition, so you end up with this kind of psycho-drama. So the idea of 'true crime' as a genre is a fitting way to think about my new work. Also, the things I tend to focus on, certain aspects of Los Angeles, living here, (really any American city) tend to be things that are overlooked or ignored. The collapse of late capitalism, and the fallout of that collapse, I'm looking at a lot of homelessness, encampments, lots of disenfranchised small businesses, just really looking around at what's happening. So 'True Crime' references a way to think about the works and how they are made but also reflects the present social climate.

What message are you trying to send with this exhibition?

I think that's the difficult part. The issues that I'm addressing are so complex and so compacted. It's hard to say there is some specific message, I am not trying to tell people what or how to think, so I guess you can unpack it and think about it however you want to. I definitely have a critical position in regards to this anarcho-capitalism, that I think has really created so many of the problems that I'm interested in. There are no real checks and balances, on either side of the political aisle. Just a rampant business friendly political system that has really gutted any social welfare or any kind of protective measures for working people, and it can't just keep going, you know? So, I guess that would be my overarching message to try and look more at those things.



Installation view. Sayre Gomez "True Crime" at Xavier Hufkens. Courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens.



You play with the idea of fact and fiction, and constructed realities, how did that start?

Really just sitting in traffic and driving. I think that's part of the culture here, very much part of the collective shared experience. I think there is a lot of imagery and aspects of the city that I was inspired by for a very long time, and I was always trying to figure out how to translate that, so to speak, 'how do I turn this into art?' And I realized that I could just paint it. I don't have to take pieces and translate it into something else, and interpret it somehow, I can just use that, the reference alone is substantial. It's really observational. Just looking around and picking things that I think say something, and cobbling them together in an interesting way.

Do you have a personal connection to Toys R Us and Halloween City? Why those stores?

I think everybody in the US born in the 80s probably has some kind of connection to Toys R Us. A few years ago Toys R Us folded and for whatever reason they never took down their signs. So the signs are all still there, and they are big, and bright, and bulky, and very iconic, and at the same time, you have this huge unused retail space in all these strip malls, the leftover sign transforms it into something like a gaping wound, signaling the demise of the brick and mortar era. Interestingly enough you then have these seasonal retailers like Halloween City that only do 'pop-ups', and they'll just put their sign right over the other, and it creates a kind collapse. A visual merging of these two antithetical systems, this new retail ethos that is very much in alignment with the new economic mode of simply just using a resource when needed, and then moving on after your needs have been met. It punctuates the shift in consumerism. Ironically, how I came about that, was because my wife and I were trying to find Halloween costumes and we just went there, and I was just like 'wow that's so crazy'. They just put the sign on top of the other one like whatever, 'it's just like using a public restroom'. Like they don't care.



Installation view. Sayre Gomez "True Crime" at Xavier Hufkens. Courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens.



How and when did you start making art?

I think the first drawings I made were tracings when I was maybe 5 or 6 or something. My grandfather was a draftsman and my uncle was an architect, so I was around a lot of technical drawings and technical pencils etc. When I was a kid my grandpa gave me a drafting table, and my uncle would

give me tracing paper and stuff like that, so I guess I was exposed to a lot of technical drawing pretty young. Then my other uncle was a painter actually. I mean my family is not a super creative family or anything, but I was exposed to it young, and I always loved drawing. I started with tracing and then I graduated to observational drawing, I would always try to copy things like comic books or whatever as faithfully as possible. Later, when I got to grad school I started making drawings based on film stills. So yeah, I was always interested in realism. I think in 2015 or 2016 I did this residency in Budapest and it was only a month long, but I was supposed to do a show at the end, and that just seemed crazy, and I didn't really know what to do. It was interesting because the space was an old Soviet turbine factory, so it was this huge raw industrial space, and, all the old signage for this old turbine factory was in and around the building, so I just made these paintings of the signs, and I just did different versions of it, but they are really hyper realistic, so that was the first time I was like 'oh I can

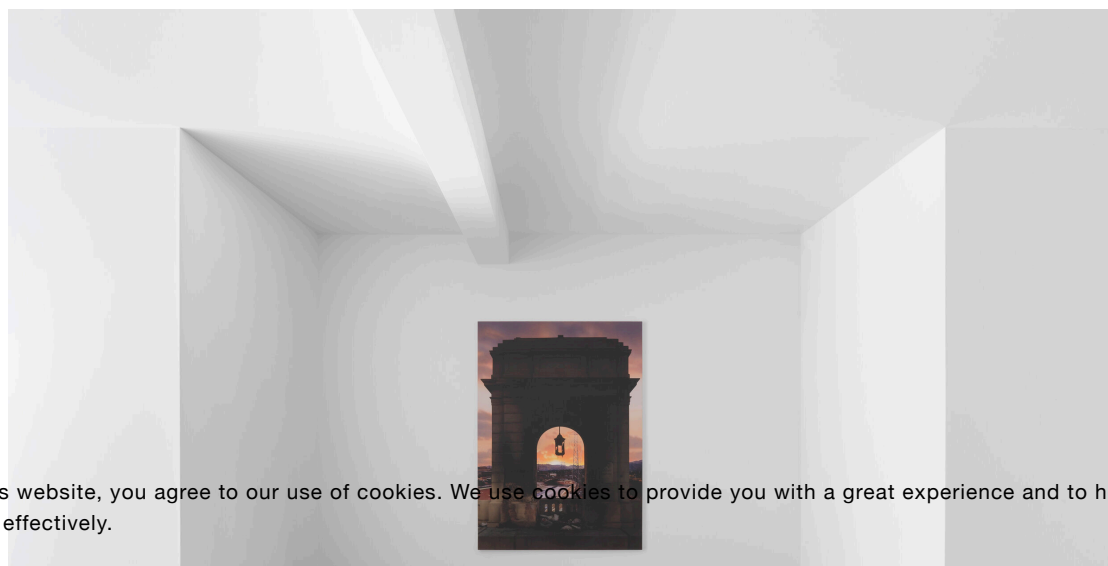
just make paintings of what's around me and that alone could be interesting.'

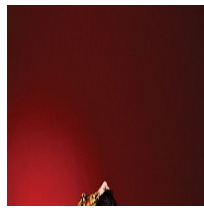
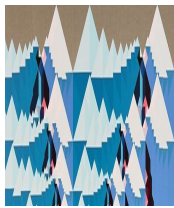
What would you say is your biggest influence or inspiration?

Aesthetically I would just say driving around, going to work and back. Personally, in January of 2020 we had my son, who is now 15 months, so that's been really inspiring, and we are expecting my daughter at the end of this month, so on a personal level, spending more time and really having a family has been really healthy and fun.

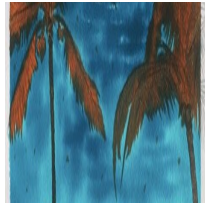
What can we expect from your work in the future?

My dealer here in LA, François Ghebaly, opened a space in New York, so I am going to do something there in September, and then I am going to have a proper big show with him in February of 2022 in LA. I've been making these sculptures that are based on the pylons in parking lots, which I've been thinking more about, so I really want to explore more sculptural stuff. More paintings.





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