

Tanya Slingsby

Goddess of haute peinture

*Rasnah by Tanya Slingsby,
24" x 24", 2008 (Photo by Brady
Dahmer, www.bddphotography.com)*



Tanya Slingsby (Photo by Gordon Dumka)

DUBBED THE “ZAC POSEN of the art world” for her stylish and emotive contemporary paintings, Vancouver artist Tanya Slingsby’s star is rising fast.

Painting since the age of eight and boasting a degree in Liberal Arts and Art History from the University of Victoria as well as a Masters Degree in Aesthetics and History of Art from the University of Sussex, UK, Slingsby had always leaned toward becoming a full-time artist, but needed a push to make it her life. Unfortunately, it was the death of her mother in 2001 to cancer at age 49 that provided that push. “After my mom passed away, it became clear to me that life is too short and if I really want to do this, now is the time,” said the 34-year-old Saltspring Island, BC native. “I put my heart and soul into it.”

She quit her cushy job with a local financial institution and began painting full-time in November 2003. In just five months, Slingsby had enough paintings to hold her debut independent exhibition in Vancouver. The show sparked interest, notably from local décor store Liberty Designs, which began selling her paintings. More respect and recognition arrived when she began working with local charities including Arts Umbrella, but her success really snowballed when the Vancouver Art Gallery’s Art Rental and Sales program knocked on her door. “The VAG has had a significant impact on my career in terms of exposure and clients.”

Slingsby now specializes in ‘haute peinture’—commissioned contemporary paintings for an exclusive clientele. In her case that includes corporate clients, interior designers, architectural firms and international collectors. Her work is featured locally in Chambar and Holt Renfrew and is part of several private collections found in the top 100 homes along the west coast of North America.

Her appetite for risk is apparent when discussing her attraction to abstract painting: “It was the scariest approach for me; it’s so wide open. There’s no reference point for the tangible. Even now, six years into my practice, there’s so much more to explore.” She experiments with a variety of media including marble dust, acrylic polymer

resins, acrylics, wax, and oil pigments to create “ambiguous residues, tonal depth and partially concealed textures”. The tension between light and dark is the hallmark of her art. “My work generally has a lighter area and a darker area with a transition between the two, where those forces interplay and either work with or oppose one another. The human energy works through that. Opposing forces must work together to create life.”

The names of her works derive from ancient languages—mostly Sanskrit, Indian and Arabic. She often changes a few letters of a Sanskrit word “so that viewers can have their own experience of the work and not look to the name for meaning.”

Slingsby developed an expeditious approach to her art through a self-described “nomadic” period in 2005 in which she moved to India, then to London, then New York, back to India and finally to Miami, Florida. In April 2008, she opened her own Vancouver atelier. While this studio/gallery remains her home base, she divides her energies between studios in the UK and the USA, spending an equal amount of time on independent work as she does on commissions. Intent on pursuing sculpture in the future and committed to creating work that is accessible, Tanya Slingsby has the beauty of life down to a fine art. —Belinda Bruce

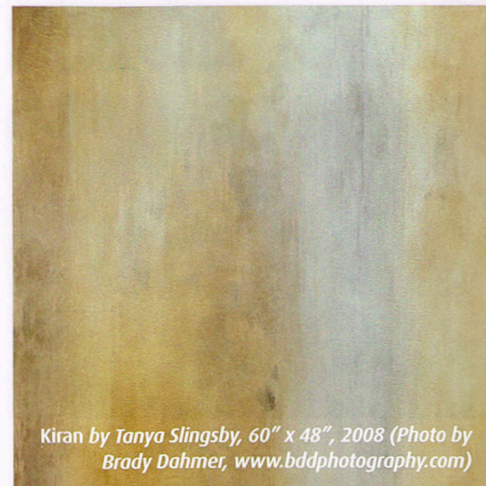
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Kiran by Tanya Slingsby, 60" x 48", 2008 (Photo by Brady Dahmer, www.bddphotography.com)