

David Sloan

FOUR BUSES

David Sloan
BY CHRIS BRAYSHAW

Artist's Statement (1985)
DAVID SLOAN



David Sloan

by Chris Brayshaw, 1999

David Sloan was born in Vancouver in 1947. In 1970, he received his BFA from Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick. Between 1970 and 1981, Sloan lived and worked in Toronto, Ontario. In 1982, he returned to Vancouver, where he currently resides. He has exhibited his work across Canada. Sloan's work has not been exhibited extensively in Vancouver, perhaps owing to the idiosyncrasy of its subject matter and the slow, deliberate pace at which he works. Sloan's work is primarily known and prized by other painters, such as retired University of British Columbia instructor Robert Young, a long

David Sloan
Four Buses, 1984

mixed media drawing on paper
(83 x 105.3cm)
SAG 1985.05.01

Photograph by Cameron Heryet

time champion of Sloan's work, and Young's former student, Ben Reeves.

Sloan's working methodology has changed little since the mid-1980s. His subjects are urban landscapes, selected on the basis of their visually interesting forms. On location, Sloan makes detailed working drawings in graphite and coloured pencil. These studies are then transferred to canvas, and a finished painting is executed in oil or acrylic. Though Sloan describes his drawings as studies for paintings, they are remarkable artworks in their own right. Primarily created in graphite, they are occasionally highlighted

with coloured pencil. Sometimes these coloured lines refer to colours present in the landscape; a kind of visual shorthand for the colours, which will later "fill in" the side of a building or a billboard. On other occasions, these coloured lines bear no relation to the colours actually present in nature; instead, these colours are employed to draw out correspondences between shapes, which Sloan employs to unify his compositions on the flat surface of their canvas or paper supports. Similarly, Sloan's works oscillate back and forth between a flat, "graphic" look, and more naturalistic three-dimensional rendering. Often, these



David Sloan, *Four Buses*, 1984, mixed media drawing on paper (83 x 105.3cm) SAG 1985.05.01 Photograph by Cameron Heryet

stylistic extremes are present in the same image, with no attempt made to mediate or smooth out the differences between stylistically distinct parts of the composition. This effect, startling at first, is rooted in Sloan's psychological explorations of the landscapes before him. Thus, his paintings and drawings are not only studies of the urban landscape, but are also psychological portraits of the artist himself.

Coloured line plays an important role in *Four Buses* (1984, Surrey Art Gallery Permanent Collection). The eye is led from the yellow street marker in the left foreground to the red billboard on the side of the bus closest to the viewer, then back through space to each other bus in turn. The trolley wires overhead form a net, or spider's web, which prevents the eye from sliding up off the top of the image. The eye is held down at street level, directed from bus to bus until it reaches the brightly coloured vehicle in the deep space at the rear of the picture. In this way, the viewer's eye traces the same path as the artist's, led through the picture in a kind of temporal sequence. Sloan further emphasizes the content of the left side of the drawing by providing more visual detail in the left side than the right side, thereby causing the eye to slide across the page and "fix" on the tightly rendered telephone pole and the yellow pavement marker.

Artist's Statement (1985)

My recent intent is not to record the topography of a specific section of a city, but rather to build a credible urban space out of elements essential to the initial idea. The settings are public spaces, the people are people I know well, and the works themselves are intended to represent my own anxieties and observations about contemporary urban life.

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13750-88 Avenue
 Surrey, BC V3W 3L1
 Phone: 604-501-5566
 artgallery@surrey.ca
 www.arts.surrey.ca
 www.surreytechlab.ca



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