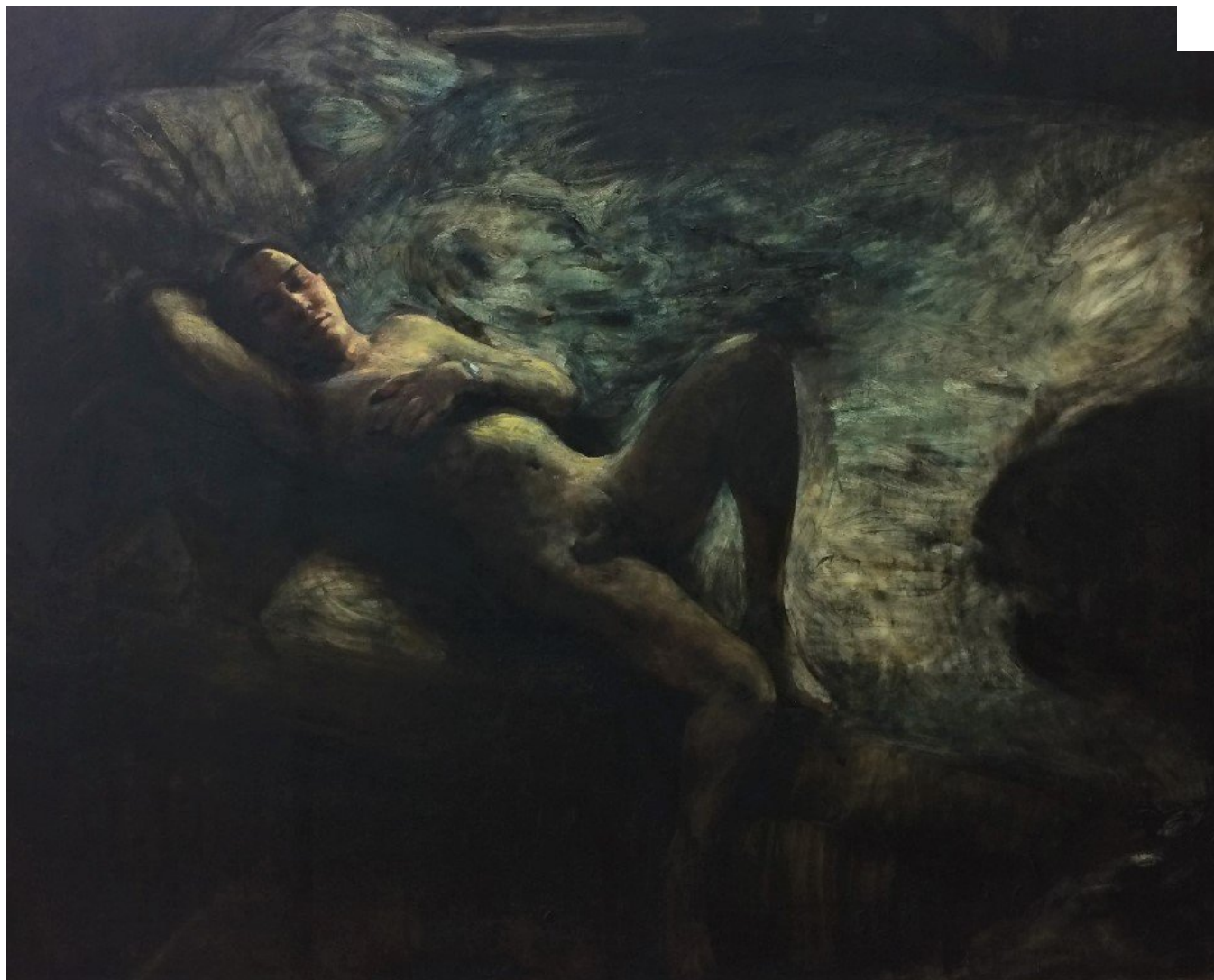


Black

A group show at the Herringer Kiss Gallery in Calgary embraces winter's short days with a focus on darkness.

by Dick Averbs

February 19, 2019 11:18 AM



Attila Richard Lukacs, "Voyager," 1998-2000, oil on canvas, 79" x 94"

With winter being a time when some commercial galleries package cheery group shows with splashes of colour and easy-to-digest content, it's a revelation to find a venue embracing the season's short days with a focus on darkness. *Black* is one such foray, a major group exhibition on view until March 16 at the recently expanded and relocated Herringer Kiss Gallery in Calgary.

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Inky hues and the weight of spectral implosion may sound overly sombre, but of course black is invariably counterbalanced with white, and with it a pathway to shedding light on mood, reflection and contemplation. A sterling example comes via the recent addition of Vancouver-based international star Attila Richard Lukacs to the gallery's stable.

His *Voyager*, from 1998-2000, is the largest work in the show, and also one of the most illuminating and meditative. Embodying the precarity of life and a shadowy reclining male nude, seemingly floating or hinged in a world of mortal epiphany, the painting offers a journey towards either a netherworld, or an otherworld of endless liminality.



Shelley Adler, "Faraway," 2018, ink on paper, 80" x 45"

Monochromatic tendencies are often tied to reduction and abstraction (think Bridget Riley, Mark Rothko, Mona Hatoum or Anish Kapoor). But *Black* offers a balance of notable figurative work, particularly by Toronto's Shelley Adler and Montreal's Dennis Ekstedt. Both have a trio of paintings and ably demonstrate how to break the schoolteacher's rule to never apply pure black paint.

In Adler's 2018 *Faraway*, a larger-than-life girl holds your gaze with her captivating black pupils, pigtails and lips, offset by clothes of pale grey and light blue. Smaller portraits command equally

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Dennis Ekstedt, "Cluster 2," 2007, oil on wood, 35" x 29.5"

Meanwhile, Ekstedt's elevated nocturnal cityscapes oscillate with myriad twinkling lamplights, filtered through evocations of windows or, in one instance, perhaps a car's windshield. There's a sense of ubiquity, yet distilled moments of suspended animation offer transport beyond one's conscious self.

Michael Davidson, "Distant Shore," 2008, oil on canvas, 84" x 96"

Sculptures and abstract art build out the show, with Calgary-based artist Curtis Cutshaw's *Horizon* and Toronto artist Michael Davidson's *Distant Shore* providing two examples of hypnotic planes comprising well-balanced and rhythmic tableaus. Notably, *Black* includes a healthy roster of non-Calgary artists, indicating the breadth, depth and all-round success of the gallery's program.

Naysayers may opine that black is a hackneyed calling card for art chic. Or that large-scale conceptual endeavours function effectively only in the confines of a white-cube gallery. On the first point, black functions credibly in many settings, so I won't get enticed into debating a

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space offering a transformational experience: something that should be an aspiration for everyone. ■

Black is on view at the Herringer Kiss Gallery in Calgary from Jan. 12 to March 16, 2019.

Herringer Kiss Gallery
 101-1615 10 Ave SW, Calgary, Alberta T3C 0J7 [View Map](#)
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HOURS Tues to Fri 11 am - 6 pm, Sat 11 am - 5 pm

- Herringer Kiss Gallery
- 26 February 2019
- Curtis Cutshaw
- Shelley Adler
- Attila Richard Lukacs
- Dennis Ekstedt
- Michael Davidson

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