

An abstract, textured background featuring a mix of vibrant colors including deep reds, purples, pinks, and greens, with visible brushstrokes and a fine, woven fabric-like texture. The colors are layered and blended, creating a sense of depth and movement.

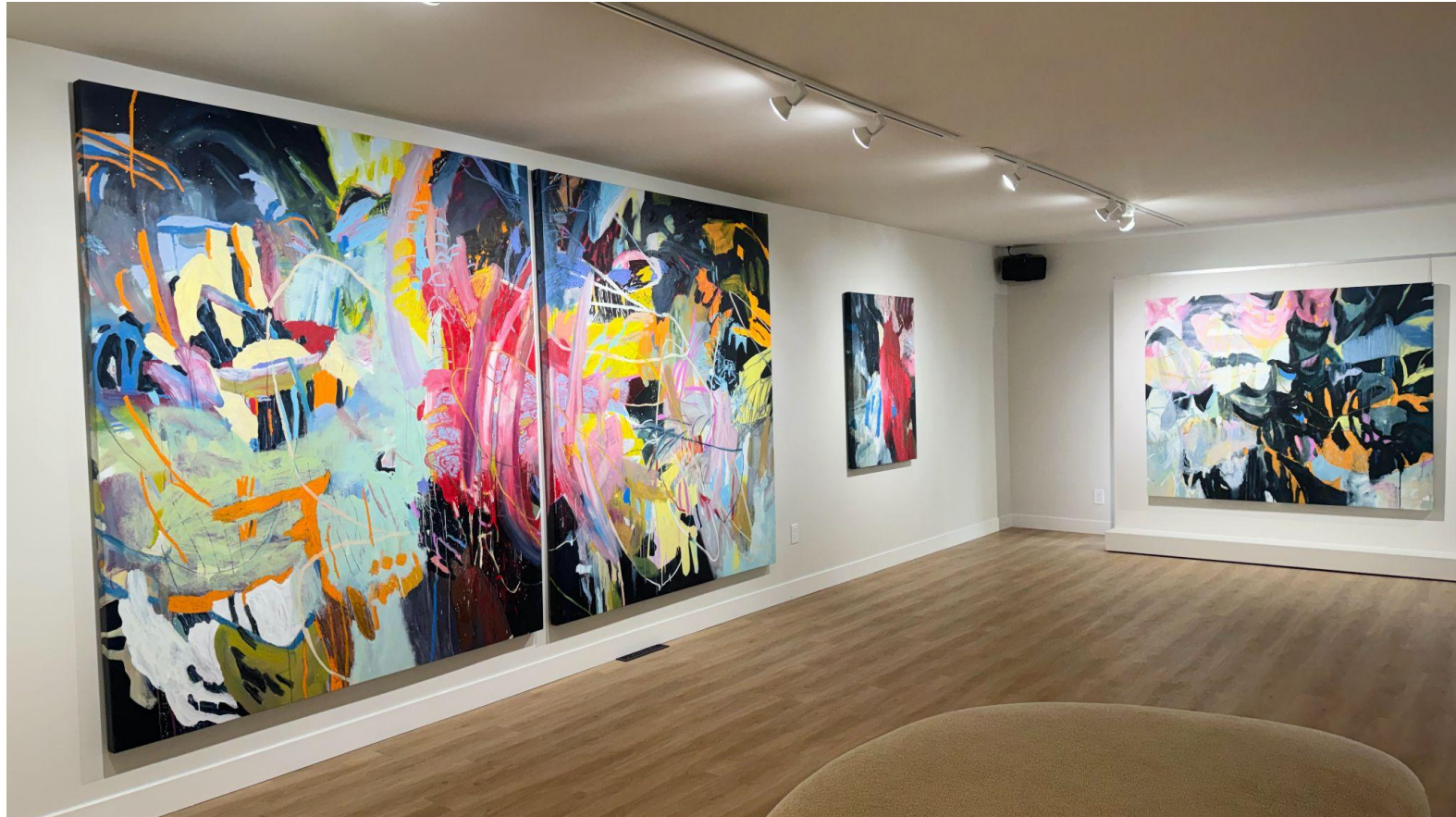
April 10 - May 2, 2026

Chanel
DesRoches
Slow Burn

Essay by Agnieszka Matejko



Slipping, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 48" x 60"





Stop, wait, never mind, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 60" x 72"

Portholes in Time: The Ephemeral Made Visible in Chanel DesRoches's Paintings

By: Agnieszka Matejko

Can anyone hold a fleeting feeling long enough to see it? Chanel DesRoches's expressive, dance-like paintings suggest that the answer is yes. They reveal transient moments—joy, loss, frustration—suspended on the canvas. But these images are not frozen or static. DesRoches works and reworks her surfaces so that what we see is never a single emotion, but many, glimpsed through layers of paint, with openings that function like portholes in time.

Perhaps that's what makes her artworks so vibrant: they never settle into a single emotional register. She works on each painting for weeks or months, and every return brings a shift in mood or intensity. At times, DesRoches revisits her works in bursts of fury, as though negotiating with a resistant partner.

That's what happened when she completed one of her largest pieces, a diptych titled *Collide*, which required a ladder to reach. The painting hung in her studio for a year, increasingly becoming a gnawing, charged presence. She fought with it for months, and lived with it in her mind—seeing it behind closed eyes. Eventually, exhausted and busy with a new sessional teaching position at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, DesRoches left the work untouched for six months.



Collide, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 84" x 144", 2 Panels

When she returned to the canvas, she was ready for a fight. Her struggle was not to gain control over this work but to break free from repetitive habits and, in her words, “reignite” the surface at any cost, even at the risk of ruining it. To achieve this end, DesRoches mixed a colour she rarely used: a blazing red pigment. Then, in a flash of resolve, she broke from compositional restraint, scraping and sweeping paint across the very centre of the canvas—even leaping to reach its full height. The final finishing touches were flowing, unbroken lines of oil pastel, her body moving in a near dance-like rhythm from one end of the canvas to the other.

The expressive content in this work, as in all of DesRoches’s paintings, is impossible to pin down. It is a kaleidoscope of emotion that mirrors the events of her days—events that even she can’t always trace. Yet certain themes recur, giving the work its power and energy. One such theme draws on a rebellious period in her life, when, at sixteen, DesRoches ran away from home, leaving behind her beloved competitive and acrobatic dance—along with shelves of trophies—and coming close to dropping out of high school. She felt suspended, falling, uncertain whether she would ever reach the ground.



Digging my heels in, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 48" x 76"

Though never fully disclosed, these experiences linger beneath the surface of her work. To hint at this grounding in lived emotion—rather than the self-referential concerns of modernist formalism—DesRoches often turns to evocative, sometimes wry titles such as *Lip Biting*, *Digging My Heels In*, or *Stop, Wait, Never Mind*.

The ambiguity offers DesRoches a degree of privacy while simultaneously opening the door to her most intimate moments. This tension unsettles those closest to her, who are struck by the exuberant, feisty, and boldly expressive nature of her work—so unlike the person they know. Outside the studio, she avoids crowds, remaining shy, anxious, and reticent in conversation.

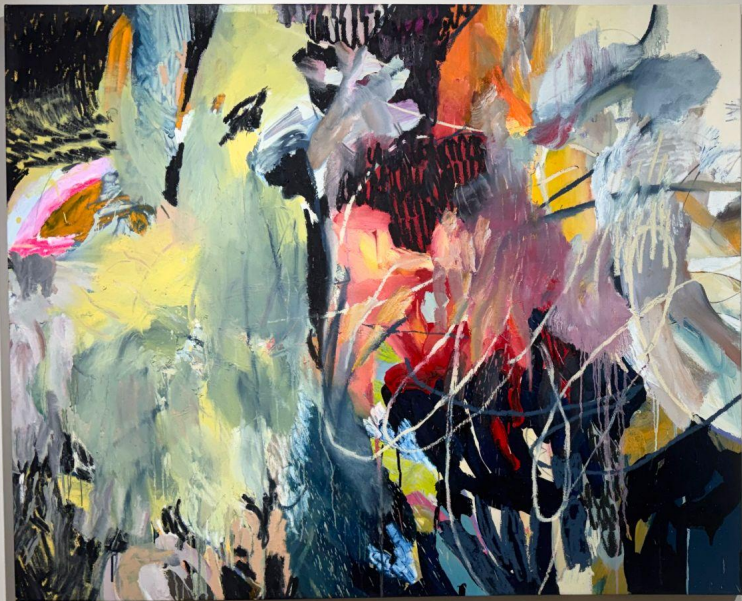


Lip Biting, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 36" x 76"

Ultimately, the sense of intimacy we experience as viewers of DesRoches's work lies not in what it reveals outright, but in what it allows us to feel: raw energy, vulnerability, and moments held—if only briefly—long enough to be seen.

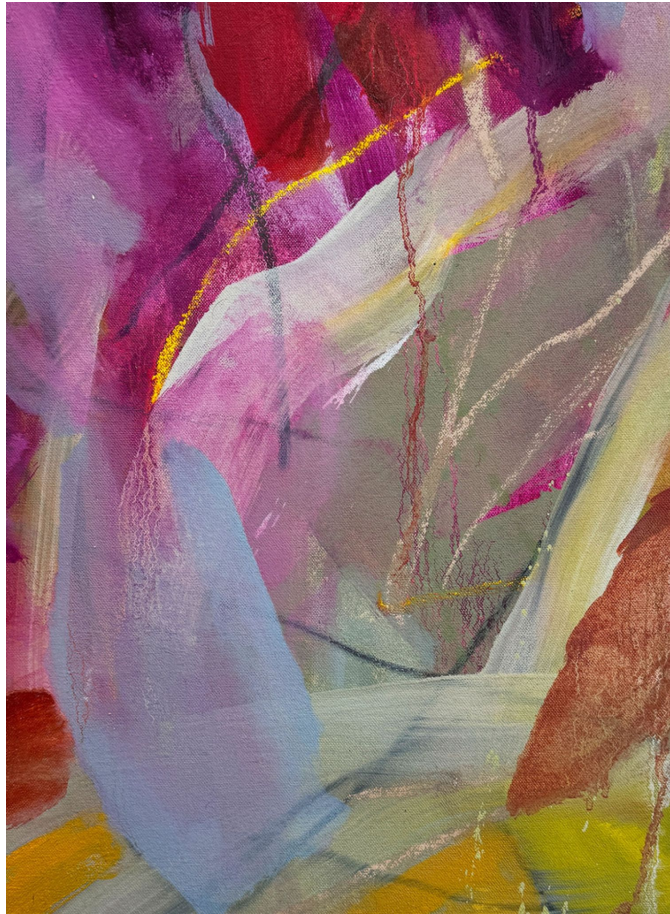


Lack Thereof, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 16" x 12"





Flicker, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 26" x 22"



Turn to dust, 2025. Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 16" x 12"

Publication in conjunction with the Chanel DesRoches: *Slow Burn* exhibition by Peter Robertson Gallery from April 10th to May 2nd, 2026.

Essay written by Agnieszka Matejko.

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Front cover:

Chanel DesRoches

Turn to dust, 2025.

Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas,
16" x 12"

Chanel DesRoches is an artist based in Guelph, Ontario. Her practice involves large-scale painting and drawing, investigating themes around muscle memory, distraction, tactics, identity, and materiality. Expressed in her painting, she often leans on deflection tactics as an easy escape and avoidance strategy in social interactions or conversations that provoke dialogue and reflection from her younger self.

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robertson
gallery**



Chanel DesRoches