

Los Angeles Times

AMANDA VALDEZ

"Amanda Valdez's art: part painting, part quilt, 100%"

by David Pagel

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Amanda Valdez, "Grace III," 2019. Embroidery, hand-dyed fabric, acrylic, and canvas, 32 by 36 inches. (Charles White / JWPictures.com / From Amanda Valdez and the Landing)

Like painters everywhere, Amanda Valdez applies paint to canvases that have been stretched over sturdy supports.

But that's just the start. She adds hand-dyed and commercially printed fabrics to her works — sometimes stitching blob-shaped sections to canvas, other times cutting holes in the canvas and patching them with precisely measured sections of fabric, as if repairing torn trousers without wasting an inch of cloth.

She includes embroidery and quilting, using the first to "draw" lines with shimmering, reflective threads and the second to create right-angled patterns within her wonderfully lumpy compositions. Valdez also makes loose, gestural drawings, in oil stick on paper, and then glues them to her increasingly complex canvases.



Amanda Valdez, "Our Favorite Rapture," 2019. Embroidery, gouache, oil stick on mounted paper, acrylic, fabric and canvas, 32 by 36 inches (Charles White / JWPictures.com / From Amanda Valdez and the Landing)

Despite the expanding inventory of materials (and rising number of techniques) that can be seen in "Wild Child," each of the exhibition's 15 canvases is taut and resolved, as blunt and vigorous as any Minimalist abstraction — and a whole lot more fun. At the Landing gallery, Valdez's L.A. debut marries the visual sophistication of abstract painting with the virtuosity of handcrafted textiles and the irrepressible enthusiasm of a kid. It's a knockout combo.

Valdez's compositions are primitive: a bowl-like shape that cradles one or two smaller shapes; a single blob decorated with mismatched patterns; or a headless figure that might be the love child of the Venus of Willendorf and a pine cone — or the mongrel offspring of Max Ernst's "The Elephant Celebes" and a misshapen Christmas tree. Seven small studies, in a rear nook, show Valdez developing her compositions.

Nearly all of Valdez's works recall textbook diagrams of mitosis — single cells dividing into a pair of identical cells — but with a difference: No component in any of her cartoon-style abstractions is the same as any other. Large ones nestle small ones; bright ones nudge dark ones; plump ones abut pointy ones; messy ones neighbor tidy ones. All are related. But no two are identical.

The same goes for the materials each piece is made of: Valdez uses each one only once. Whether pouring on a puddle of drippy acrylic, quilting a neatly geometric section, collaging an oil-stick scribble, sewing in a hand-dyed fabric or embroidering an expanse of luminous thread, the Brooklyn-based artist never repeats herself.

“Once is enough,” each part of each piece seems to say. That chorus resonates throughout the exhibition, giving Valdez’s freewheeling mixtures of media and pleasure-seeking compositions a jolt of control that intensifies their impact.

The Landing, 5118 W. Jefferson Blvd., L.A. Wednesdays-Saturdays, through June 15. (323) 272-3194, thelandinggallery.com



Amanda Valdez, “Wild Child 5,” 2019. Embroidery, hand-dyed fabric, gouache, and canvas, 36 inches by 32 inches.(Charles White / JWPictures.com / From Amanda Valdez and the Landing)



Amanda Valdez, “Eight Point Dreams,” 2019. Embroidery, hand-dyed fabric, gouache, oil stick on mounted paper, acrylic and canvas, 70 inches by 60 inches (Charles White / JWPictures.com / From Amanda Valdez and the Landing)