

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICK *Los Angeles*



View of "Amanda Valdez: The Deep Way," 2021–22.
From left: *The Deep Way*, 2021; *A Sure Thing*, 2021.

LOS ANGELES

Amanda Valdez

THE LANDING

5118 West Jefferson Boulevard

November 13, 2021–January 8, 2022

Amanda Valdez's new works here—abstract canvases that incorporate paint, embroidery, sourced fabrics, and handwoven or hand-dyed textiles—recall the coastal sea stacks in the Pacific Northwest, where the artist grew up.

Geomorphic shapes rise from the bottom edge of each picture but scarcely touch the surrounding borders. Some of these masses contain imagery of hills and fields, as in *Autumn Flight* and *Dusk Remembrance*, both 2021. Others are more biomorphic, including *Sugar Bowl 2* and *4*, both 2021—each one resembles a crotch and thighs in contraposto.

Two larger works take a different tack: roughly six feet square, they depict one object enveloping another, like a womb sheltering a fetus (*The Deep Way*, 2021), or a figure settled deeply into a plush seat (*A Sure Thing*, 2021). Enlivened by fabric designs, the two canvases exemplify Valdez's engagement in the legacy of the Pattern and Decoration movement. (The artist's signature patterns also suffuse her 2018 collaboration with ceramics duo Guy Michael Davis and Katie Parker, aka Future Retrieval, in this show—eleven vessels on display suggest that these urns may have become a motif in the paintings.) But in counterpoint to these more orderly arrangements, Valdez inserts freewheeling elements: Collaged paper appears alongside passages of sewn thread or yarn; oil stick is applied in crudely discordant impasto and juxtaposed with loosely brushed gouache and areas of monochromatic thread whose tones vary, depending on the direction of the sewing and how the light hits it. These material collisions make the work unsettling and compelling in equal measure.

The exhibition's title, "The Deep Way," comes directly from the lips of the artist's two-year-old. It signals the absorption of parenthood into her practice and advances Pattern and Decoration's historical argument that domestic (or "feminine") subject matter is important artistic content. Her son's words referred to a lake in Maine, but in Valdez's painting (the show's namesake), the water becomes the amniotic fluid where we all began—inside our own mothers, of course, but even earlier, from the seas of Mother Earth herself.

—Daniel Gerwin

[Link to full article](#)