

art and cake

Review: Brenda Goodman at The Landing
“The Impact of an Intuitive Painter”

by Lorraine Heitzman
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Brenda Goodman, “Fresh Start”, On a New Coast, The Landing; Image courtesy of the gallery

In her first solo exhibit in Los Angeles, Brenda Goodman shows us how it’s done. Her impressive body of work at the Landing reveals a prodigious talent at the top of her game, wielding paint and carving tools with confidence and a quiet swagger. Included are almost a dozen large paintings completed in 2019 along with smaller paintings on wood panels and paper, plus a few early sculptures. At seventy-six, the artist proves the benefits of playing the long game. Despite a respected career with an extensive body of work and accomplishments, she is less familiar here than in New York where she lives, but with Brenda Goodman: On a New Coast, that will undoubtedly and rightfully change.

Goodman’s simple abstract compositions on wood panels feature complex textural surfaces that are alternately feverish and calm, while her miniature sculptures can be as moody and minimal as any modern stage set. In painting, her modus operandi is to build up and destroy in equal measure. Gobs of oil paint vie for real estate with distress marks gouged into the surfaces. Some passages appear consumed by fire or look like crackled glazes on antique porcelains. This shift between techniques, from the crude impasto application of paint to delicately drawn lines, is evident in each of her paintings, yet ironically, despite Goodman’s vocabulary of aging and destruction, her paintings are brimming with a vital intensity. She maximizes the tension between shapes using contrasting colors and textures that emphasize the different densities of the forms. Lines play a role, too, able to create a weathered character or a refined pattern, adding a counterpoint when needed.

Most of all, Goodman's paintings recall the adage "art for art's sake" that ushered in the path towards non-representational art in the early twentieth century. Like her forebears, one senses her sheer delight in abstraction and the fundamentals of image-making without an underlying narrative or message. And like those mavericks, she invents her own language. Her paintings are neither emotionally neutral nor excessively psychological, though; they just exist. The resulting work is grounded in their physicality, not borne from an idea. Goodman acknowledges her intuitive process, and this makes sense, as every choice seems appropriate and contributes to the whole, without anything coming between her eye and her hand. Her paintings are like beautiful facts that revel in the process of their creation. See them while you can.

Brenda Goodman: On a New Coast will be on view at the Landing through Saturday, March 14th. If you miss the show, her work will be included in a group show at Anat Ebgi in Los Angeles called Kick Ass Painting: New York Women between April 4 – May 9.