

How Yevgeniya Baras' pictographs carry a language all their own

Sometimes painters make paintings to communicate with others. Sometimes they make paintings to carry on conversations with themselves — internal dialogues that clarify what they are doing in the studio.

Neither describes what it's like to visit “Towards Something Standing Open,” Yevgeniya Baras' terrifically enigmatic exhibition at the Landing. The 21 paintings (all untitled) that make up the New York painter's first solo show in Los Angeles seem to be talking to one another — while mumbling to themselves.

Occasionally, two or three of Baras' roughly hewn pictographs on burlap, wood and canvas appear to be shouting across the gallery. That happens when scattered letters from the Roman and Cyrillic alphabets are present in each composition. The visual volley is complemented by similar rhythms among biomorphic blobs whose shapes echo one another's and simple patterns that look as if they have been cut from the same cloth.



Yevgeniya Baras, "Untitled," 2017. Oil on burlap, 20 by 16 inches. The Landing



Yevgeniya Baras, "Untitled," 2017. Oil on canvas, 16.75 by 20 inches. The Landing

These recurring elements make for paintings that resemble rudimentary

landscapes or primitive diagrams that chart passages of time, both seasonal and celestial. Whether landscape or diagram, Baras' primitive symbols stand in for features that might mean the difference between life and death, meaning and nothingness.

More often, individual paintings look as if they are talking to themselves, so intimately and intensely that nothing else matters — neither the artist who made them nor visitors to the exhibition.

These are Baras' most captivating works. Compositionally, they consist of two halves that nearly match. The left-and-right or top-and-bottom format suggests either-or, before-and-after, yin-and-yang dramas. All are enacted by a pair of characters whose similarities are matched by significant differences.

Never pretending that everything will fall into place — or that the world would be better if it did — Baras makes a virtue of inconsistency. Make-do adaptability is her bread and butter. And it's never looked better than it does in paintings whose internal murmurs draw you into worlds you can only imagine.

The Landing, 5118 W. Jefferson Blvd., L.A. Through March 10; closed Sunday-Tuesday. (323) 272-3194, www.thelandinggALLERY.com

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Yevgeniya Baras, "Untitled," 2016. Oil and wood on canvas, 16 by 20 inches. The Landing

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