

Los Angeles Times

Review: Call it Cave Painting Modern.
“How Brenda Goodman taps into a primal beauty”
by David Pagel
26 February 2020.



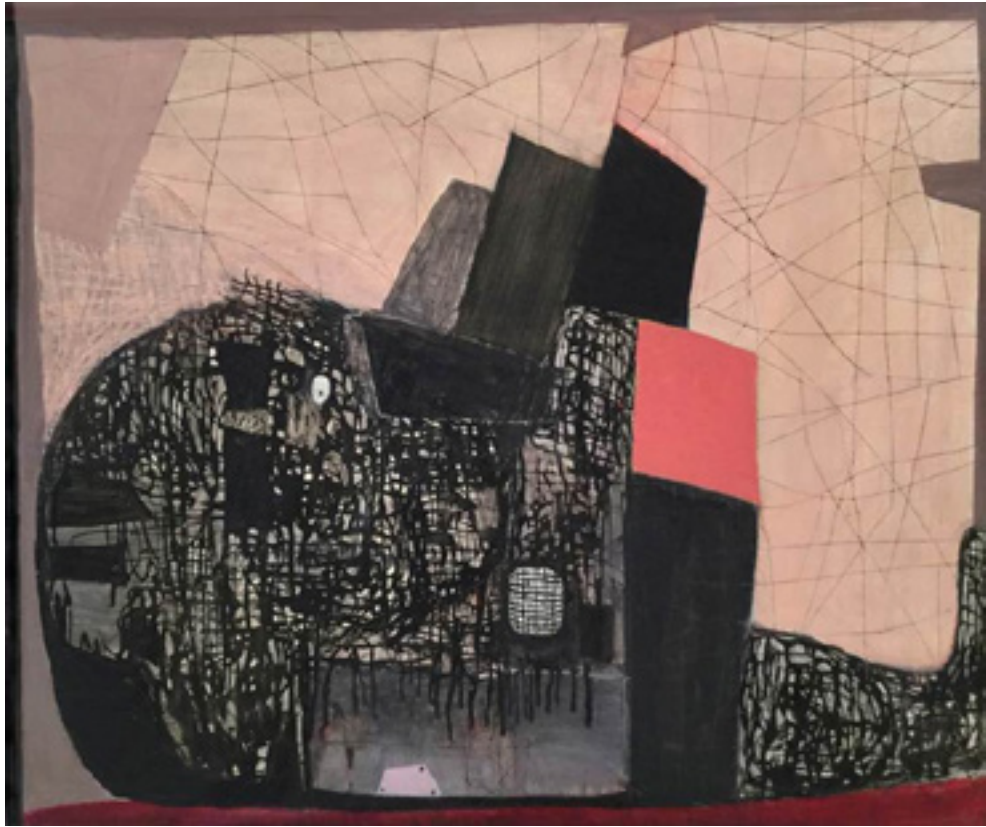
Brenda Goodman, “Surrender’s Surprise,” 2019. Oil on paper, 6 inches by 8 inches(The Landing)

Brenda Goodman paints like a cavewoman.

Using crude tools on rugged surfaces and gritty pigments applied with loads of elbow grease, she muscles her chiseled pictographs into existence. There’s nothing fussy about Goodman’s rudimentary compositions.

Nor is there anything precious, persnickety or so delicate that you feel you have to speak in hushed tones. The artist, 76, makes paintings that are rough around the edges and all the way through.

Goodman’s works are also sophisticated, just like the best cave paintings, which still make magic with no-frills bluntness and against very long odds. To look at a cave painting today, say at Altamira in Spain or Chauvet in France, is to imagine what it might have been like to be a painter 14,000 or 32,000 years ago — long before art fairs and cellphones affected the ways we see and think.



Brenda Goodman, "Facing the Day," 2019. Oil on wood, 30 inches by 36 inches(The Landing)

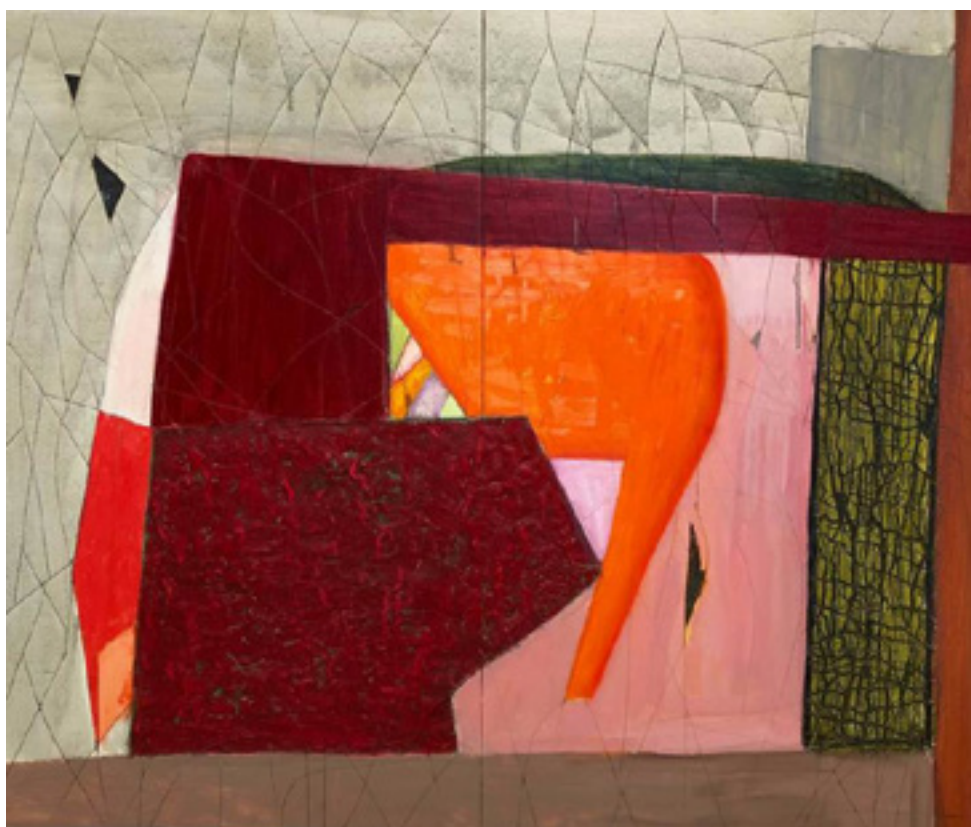


Brenda Goodman, "Fresh Start," 2019. Oil on wood, 12 inches by 16 inches(The Landing)

Something similar happens when you stand before the 29 paintings on panel and paper and five sculptures that make up “Brenda Goodman: On a New Coast,” the New York painter’s first solo show in Los Angeles. At the Landing gallery, your imagination leaps and bounds as it traverses the world Goodman has envisioned and delivered: a place not outside of time so much as beneath it — where life throbs and burbles below the threshold of consciousness, in experiences that are gripping but impossible to capture in words.

In the language of today, Goodman’s art is a deep dive: a fearless leap into the primordial soup, which she stirs masterfully, ladling out the murky stew in portions satisfying and mind-blowing.

The cavernous main gallery has 19 paintings on panel and paper that Goodman made in 2019. Each is solid, its surface cut, carved, drilled and gouged. Oil paint, in various colors and viscosities, has been brushed and rubbed, poured and puddled, sponged and squeegeed. Then it has been scraped and sanded and scrubbed with solvent-soaked rags. And put through more twists and turns with additional tools.



Brenda Goodman, “Unfinished Memory,” 2019. Oil on wood, 40 inches by 48 inches(The Landing)



Brenda Goodman, "I Wonder Why," 2019. Oil on wood, 60 inches by 64 inches(The Landing)



Brenda Goodman, "Green Ice," 2019. Oil and mixed media on wood, 50 inches by 60 inches(The Landing)

The vigorous labors that go into Goodman's paintings give them a sculptural presence. Some feel geological, as if formed under great pressure and upheaval. Paint never seems to have been applied atop surfaces, as a coat or a new layer. On the contrary, it feels as if it has seeped, bled or oozed from fissures, incisions or pores in the surface — like lava, blood or oil.

Calling her a texturalist doesn't have the same ring as calling her a colorist, but it gets at the originality — and eccentricity — of her work.

Her imagery is hard to pin down. Shapes don't allow you to name them. Some look architectural. Others like insects. There's a sci-fi feeling to some of the shapes. Many could be cartoons drawn by aliens — or wickedly inventive children.

Scale is wildly indeterminate. So is orientation. What takes shape is a world of shape-shifting possibility in which nothing sits still. A whiff of menace sometimes drifts through.



Brenda Goodman, "Construction (Untitled)," 1979. Mixed media,
10 inches by 10 inches by 8 inches
(The Landing)



Brenda Goodman, "Self Portrait 59," 2006. Oil on wood, 36 inches by 30 inches (The Landing)

If that weren't enough, 13 other works in an adjoining alcove and office give visitors a glimpse of what Goodman was up to in the 1970s, '80s, '90s and '00s: paintings and sculptures and tiny tableaux that would be a show on their own but here add yet another dimension to her extravaganza. Primal, not primitive, all of Goodman's works speak silent volumes.

Brenda Goodman

Where: The Landing, 5118 W. Jefferson Blvd., L.A.

When: Tuesdays-Saturdays, through March 14

Info: (323) 272-3194, www.thelandinggalleries.com