

# ART AND CAKE

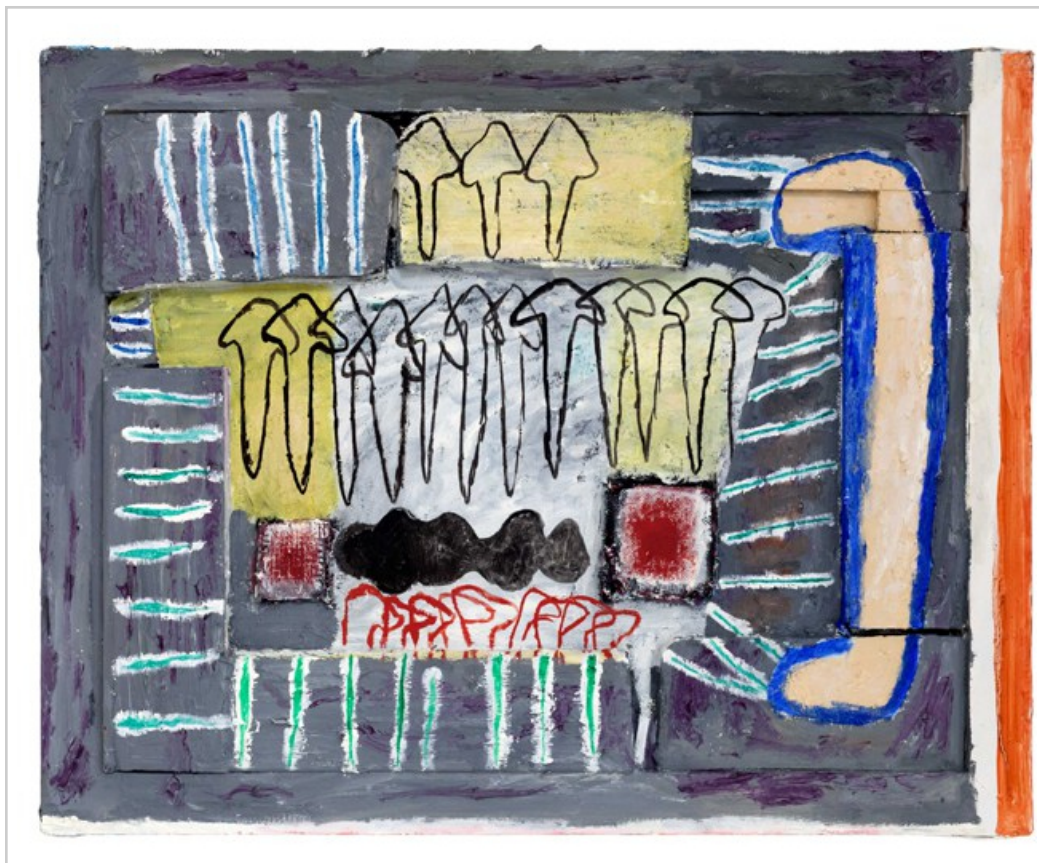
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## Yevgeniya Baras at the Landing

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Yevgeniya Baras, "Towards Something Standing Open" at the Landing ; Photo by Maggie Shannon, courtesy of the gallery

## Yevgeniya Baras, Towards Something Standing Open

through March 10  
the Landing, Los Angeles

**By Lorraine Heitzman**

Where to begin with this pleasurable, satisfying show? In Yevegeniya Baras's first solo show in Los Angeles she presents a body of work that is deliciously tactile and fully realized. The series of small paintings is so self-assured that it is hard to believe these are new paintings at all; they look like they might have been discovered in a museum vault, perhaps overlooked in between some Paul Klees and Arthur Doves. But an encounter with Baras's work is to discover an imaginative voice that is distinctly her own.

Viewers may look at the work and wonder how she accomplishes so much with such humble materials. These are, after all, crude oil paintings constructed and built out over panels, often with frayed burlap that extends beyond the frames. The paint is applied in sloppy coats onto the fabric and over shapes that have been adhered to the surface, yet everything congeals. It seems counter-intuitive that paintings this rustic could feel so controlled and even precious, like reliquaries, but when all the elements conspire together, the results are extraordinary and the contradictions work in Baras's favor.

The strongest aspects of these works rely on the materiality and paint themselves.





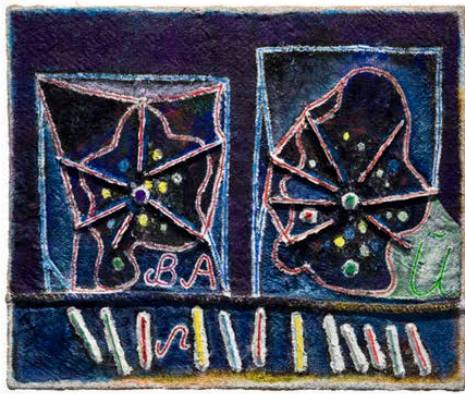
Baras's sensitivity towards colors and textures is key and her representational imagery, while engaging, is secondary. Many paintings include shapes that appear to be Cyrillic letterforms, although these are invented forms. In some instances they lend a diary-like quality, reading like handwriting at the bottom of the page in an open book, but at other times they look simply decorative or diagrammatic. A veneer of history is present in most of the works, especially in images that call to mind dusty, ancient texts and archeological artifacts. But it is unlikely that Baras is looting treasures from any single culture in order to mimic them. Instead, she borrows from many artists and civilizations to create her work. Though her influences may be multi-cultural, her work is in her own language.

In her most effective paintings, Baras achieves a balance between the weight and shape of the organic forms and the geometric structure. The rectangular panels are often divided horizontally or vertically by painted linear forms or by structural elements superimposed onto the surface. This grid then serves as a template to organize the organic, more freewheeling, elements. Painted amoebic shapes sit perched atop bits of wood moldings or float above cloud-like forms. Delicate letterforms are read both vertically and horizontally, but like the rest of the work, the purpose resides in the balancing. The specific meanings are obscure and lack a literal interpretation, yet the careful organization of elements urges the viewer to experience the play of balance between the many contradictions: organic versus inorganic, refined versus crude, organized versus random. This curious amalgam of opposites, of richly painted materials and of mysterious symbols results in a show that is both deeply personal and completely engaging.

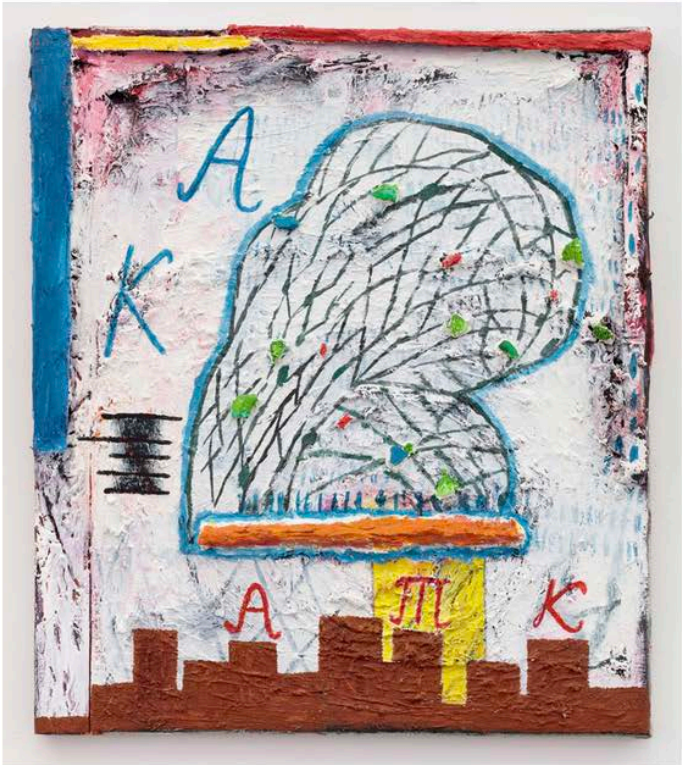
Yevgeniya Baras currently lives in New York City where she co-founded the Regina Rex Gallery. This is her first show at the Landing.















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