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What to see in L.A. galleries: street-art ethos, a mesmerizing digital canvas, wild tapestries



Allison Miller's rock-solid paintings in "Screen Jaw Door Arch Prism Corner Bed" greet visitors to the Pit and the Pit II with the kind of confidence — natural and unpretentious — that makes you want to get to know them and perhaps become friends.

There's a rugged loveliness to the L.A. painter's seven abstract compositions, each of which is made up of simple shapes, unfussy smudges and wayward doodles. All come in colors that can be plucked from any midsize box of crayons.

The sense that Miller's canvases have a past — with a fair share of hardship, frustration and failure — is palpable. You can glimpse it in the ghostly shadows that haunt the laboriously reworked surfaces of her abstractions, where stray textures roam and partially painted-over sections bespeak decisions that didn't work.

But more vital are the pleasures her compositions take — and give — in the present.

Those pleasures are multiform. Some come in the form of single drips, which Miller had covered with tape to protect them from subsequent applications of spray paint, oil sticks and acrylic. Others are fastidiously eccentric, like patterns disrupted just for the fun of it or drips of paint dripped atop other drips, forming rainbow rivulets.

Heightening a visitor's attentiveness to otherwise incidental details, Miller reveals a capacity to transform the nooks and crannies of a composition into unexpected wonders. Seeming to come out of nowhere, these wild delights are all the more potent for it.

Such disruptive magic wallops your body the moment you open the door of the Pit II and see "Bed," a two-panel painting that covers all but a sliver of the back wall. In one fell swoop, Miller tips the scales to favor not only painting, but all that is possible in art's nooks and crannies. With her as a guide, that's a great place to be.