

## Beyond the rules

art presents young artists in the series “Starter.” This time: Sarah Cain remakes painting anew.

// CLAUDIA BODIN



In search of freedom, Sarah Cain: “Jill,” 201 [sic], mixed media, variable dimensions (Courtesy Sarah Cain)

This art knows no rules: colors crawl up the walls, stretch across the floor, function like installations, demolish borders, seem to lacerate canvases and extend themselves to the backsides of the painting.

Strange things like chains, feathers, marbles, wedding rings or cut-off braids likewise belong to the unorthodox repertoire of Sarah Cain, who didn't tarry long with rules: at 15, Cain, who grew up in a small town in New York's Hudson Valley, dropped out of school. She went to the south of France to study, speaking no French. “I was at that time already painting,” says Cain. “To be unable to communicate for a year, to be mute, strengthened my resolve to be an artist.”

Cain subsequently spent a year at the Parson School of Design in Paris. After returning to the United States, she went to California, to study at the San Francisco Art Institute and later at the University of California, Berkeley. For a few years she kept her distance from the art market. She worked in and around San Francisco and Upstate New York on installations in abandoned buildings. Her interest was in the immediate, the improvised, and the speed of her work. “I wanted to free painting from all limitations and sought ways to free myself.” She worked without financial support and in risk, since she had no formal permission to take over these buildings. What's more, she was producing works that evinced no value that could be measured in money.

“Either one avoids the commercial side of art or one finds a way. The world is so corrupt. There are so many careerists who pass themselves off as artists and become renowned for their bad work,” says Cain, who had her first gallery exhibition in 2006 at Anthony Meier Fine Arts in San Francisco. Shortly after that, she settled in Los Angeles. She began to work on canvas with acrylic, gouache, and latex paints and treated the traditional format no differently from her works on site: she cut into the canvas, in order to deconstruct and reassemble it anew. She integrated found and collected objects, which sometimes recalled a place or event or brought along a life of their own. “I'm interested in the collision between different spaces: physical, emotional, and psychic,” she says. “It's a translation of my life.”

## Personal profile

Born: Albany, New York in 1979, star sign: double Aquarius.

Place of residence: Los Angeles.

Education: 35 years of my life.

Gallery: Honor Fraser in LA, Anthony Meier Fine Arts in San Francisco, Galerie Lelong in New York.

Initial spark: I was already occupied with art as a teenager. I knew that it would become the rest of my life.

High point: To have the pleasure of seeing my work alongside the work of unbelievably good artists. It feels as though the work has found friends.

Low point: Nothing that I would like to remember.

Heroes: I don't like the word hero, nearly all definitions ascribe it to the masculine gender. Admittedly I think a lot about the later work of Philip Guston, how he had to leave New York to live in the country and that he quit reading his critics.

Credo: Never compromise in matters of integrity.

Advice that's helped you: Rejection comes with the territory of being an artist and a person.

Why artist, not banker?: It's what I am.