



FABRIK

ICA LA (Institute of Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles) Sarah Cain: Now I'm going
to tell you everything



BY MEGAN ABRAHAMS

OCTOBER 8, 2017

ICA LA (Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles)
Sarah Cain: Now I'm going to tell you everything
(September 9—December 31, 2017)

To describe the paintings of Los Angeles artist Sarah Cain as visual poetry is not merely contriving a trite metaphor. A sometime poet herself, Cain consciously references poetry in her work, as in her new thrilling, ambitiously monumental mural, which covers all 800 square feet of the vast ICA LA courtyard wall. Its title, *Now I'm going to tell you everything*, is taken from a poem written for the artist by her friend, the poet Bernadette Mayer. A wooden bench at the base of the mural, seamlessly subsumed into the painted composition, is deliberately connected to Mayer as well. The poet has a matching bench by a creek in upstate New York, where she and Cain have often sat. "I love the idea that somebody could be sitting in the middle of the piece, titled after a line from the poem, at the same time that she's sitting at her creek," Cain said at a preview of the inaugural exhibits.

Although the ICA LA mural might have seemed a daunting project, Cain didn't do much planning. The artist typically works on the fly, her process largely improvised—an approach she refers to as "attack and resolve." As she explained,

“It’s very much about the present tense. I just show up and figure it out with the elements.” In this case, the figuring out involved several elements not all typically associated with painting: Cain incorporated vinyl floor tile, canvases, sequined backpacks and other incongruous objects and material onto the piece, making the work pop with sculptural dimension, texture and inventive—literally off-the-wall—context. Significantly, the canvases serve to define rectangular shapes, which divide the vast (40 x 20 feet) space into interacting sections. More important for Cain, the canvases were a way to demarcate line after encountering how difficult it was to render a straight line while painting on the irregular brick surface.

Complimenting Cain’s infectious instinct for palette is her apparent sense of daring and a refusal to conform to conventional boundaries. Her in situ paintings—or architectural interventions—often continue on to the floors, as if the paint didn’t stop flowing. Indeed, Now I’m going to tell you everything appears like it might continue flowing upwards, into the sky, revealing everything.

ICA LA curator Jamillah James was most deliberate in her decision to engage Cain, as well as Abigail De Ville, whose installation occupies the Project Room, to kick off the first season. “It was important for me to introduce two working, contemporary artists into the inaugural season at ICA LA who reflect some of the themes and formal aspects of the [Martin] Ramírez show, but offer some exciting departures, and are reflective of some of the things to come at the museum,” said James in an email response to Fabrik.

Part of the strategy behind extending the art into the courtyard was to make the new Institute appear to be an inviting, open and accessible public place. “There really are no walls or barriers,” said James at the preview. “We’re really committed to engaging our different publics, from the westside, the eastside and all over town.” While temporary, Cain’s mural will remain on the courtyard wall for quite some time, James said. A good decision, as the piece is a welcoming beacon to the outside world. In its colorful, tangible, visually poetic energy, it projects a sense of the exciting program unfolding inside.

PHOTO 17

A PHOTO AUCTION TO BENEFIT
OCTOBER 5 | MILK STUDIOS LA | 7PM

STORIES
THE AIDS MONUMENT



WRITTEN BY MEGAN ABRAHAMS

MEGAN ABRAHAMS is a Los Angeles based artist, writer, art critic and editor. The editor of Fabrik Magazine, she is also a contributing writer for Art Ltd. and WhiteHot Magazine of Contemporary Art. An artist member of the Los Angeles Art Association, Megan is currently working on a new series of paintings and writing a novel.

4
Palm Springs Art Museum Kinesthesia: Latin
American Kinetic Art, 1954-1969

ICA LA (Institute of Contemporary Art, Los
Angeles) Martin Ramirez: His Life In
Pictures, Another Interpretation

5