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Five Minutes with Sarah Cain in Her Dreamy Studio

November 17, 2017 by *Caitlin Confort*



Aquarius artist [Sarah Cain](#) is an up-and-comer on the art scene and has an amazing live/work space in Los Angeles.

Her works are aesthetic hybrids of sorts, she marries sculpture with painting and installation, often incorporating found objects like jewelry and textiles. Cain's forms are free from meditation and raw with an unconventional playfulness. They tread the line between 2D and 3D, with a vividness in both color and shape, nodding to both Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism.

Cain's craft is almost as magnetic and eccentric as she is — lucky for us, she had two new projects this fall, a massive outdoor site-specific installation at the new [ICA LA](#) and solo exhibition of new works at [Anthony Meier Fine Arts](#) in San Francisco.

Whether it be installation or individual wall works, her forms are unbarred by the frame of a canvas, resisting any formal categorization. Visitors to both ICA LA and Anthony Meier Fine Arts will get to experience her approach first hand – an intimate exploration of the animation of both architectural and emotional spaces.

AZ caught up with Cain to get an inside look at her crafty home studio as well as the rundown on her recent projects.

Art Zealous: Art background?

Sarah Cain: Music, poetry, words, plants. I went to college in Paris and San Francisco.



AZ: Hometown?

SC: Los Angeles.

AZ: Astrological sign?

SC: Double Aquarius.

AZ: Phone background?

SC: I'm on the edge of being too old for this question, it took me a minute to figure out what you meant, like do I remember rotary phones? Yes. Do I remember when people didn't have cell phones? Yes. Was it maybe better when everyone wasn't stuck looking at their phones? Yes. Then I realized I think you mean what is the background photo on my current phone. One is of my cat Grey Beau and the other is my cat Roxy.

AZ: Favorite color?

SC: I don't really have one, but I relate a lot to bright red, orange, and fluorescent yellow.



AZ: How do you decorate your incredible live/work space in Los Angeles to create a studio that is conducive to your creativity?

SC: I have a compound with a separate structure for the studio and the house. The studio is just there for working, there's a balcony that looks onto a mountain range, and I look at that a lot, in a sense that is the studio decoration. The house is also pretty utilitarian, there are a handful of cats lounging, and views onto a wild garden and some artwork mostly gifted from friends. Currently, there's art by Xylor Jane, Amy Sillman, Rema Ghuloum, Regina Bogat, Alicia McCarthy, Beatrice Wood, Colter Jacobsen, and Tam Van Tran.





AZ: How did your new project installation at the new ICA LA come about? How long does it take to complete a huge outdoor project

like that?

SC: I completed the ICA LA work in a nine-day heat wave. Jamillah James invited me to do the project after she came by for a studio visit. The way I paint is to attack and resolve on site, letting the painting come to me during the install period.



AZ: The title is from a poem written for you by celebrated poet Bernadette Mayer. Can you please share the poem, and how did you draw inspiration from those words?

SC: Here's a [recording](#) of Bernadette reading the poem. Bernadette and I are old friends, I draw inspiration from her as a person and relate to the way she creates her work. The line "*Now I'm going to tell you everything*" relates to the present tense way I work and how the boundaries between what is fair game in a painting or poem are challenged.

AZ: We love how you don't need a traditional canvas to create. How do you choose multi-dimensional surfaces as your canvas and what's it like creating art outside?

SC: I built what I do out of a sense of suffocation by the traditions of painting on a canvas. Creating art outside is the hardest working environment for me. The elements are always there either with a heat wave or rain shower, so you have to be super flexible. Though mostly because I don't plan paintings out in a traditional way, I need to remain super open and shed boundaries so I can be ready for the next move. Doing that outside creates a lot of issues so I usually always wear headphones and have someone with me whose job is mostly to keep people away from me so I can stay in the zone.



AZ: Your solo exhibition of new works at [Anthony Meier Fine Arts](#) in San Francisco just opened. Tell us about the gallery and your new works.

SC: I've worked with AMFA for 13 years, it's interesting to come back and do my 4th show in the same gallery especially because the setting is unique and very elegant. It was a nice respite between working outside in LA and way up a mountain in Aspen. The intimacy of that gallery also offers its own challenges as I make big loud paintings, but it all came together so perfectly. It's really the ideal looking experience.

The new works are all from the last year, works on paper and canvas pushing at the boundaries, mixing humor and depth together to make tough beautiful paintings.

AZ: How do you marry sculpture with painting and installation?

SC: I've always been interested in the in-between and not conforming to one genre. That said, I really am a painter at heart, the way I work is old school studio based.



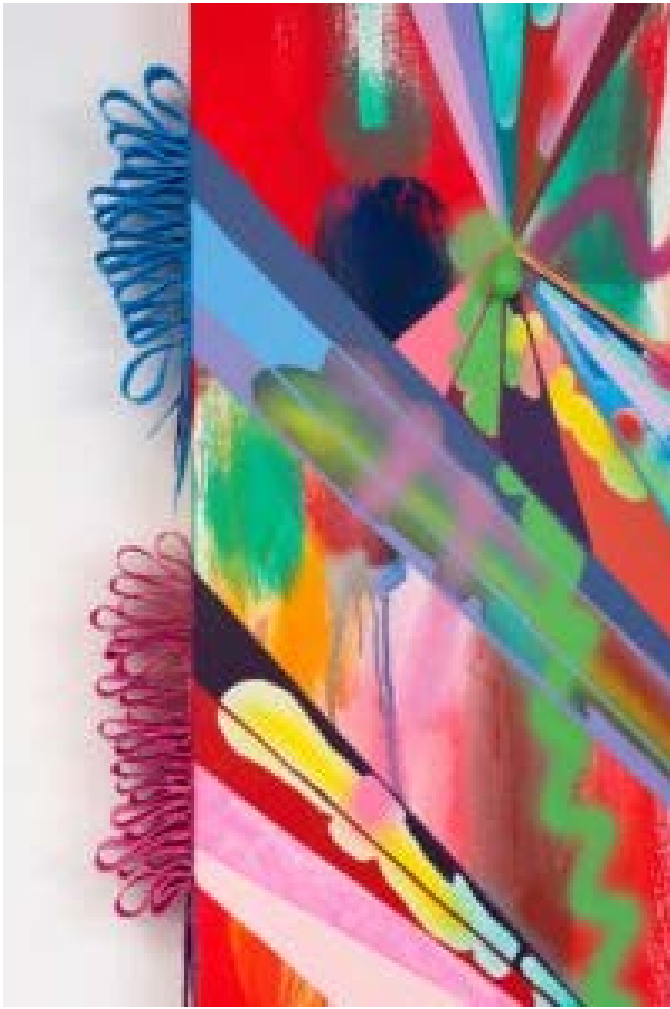
AZ: How do you use color to convey emotion and energy?

SC: I've always related to the concept of synesthesia. My earliest work dealt a lot with that idea. Color comes supernaturally to me, I see it without trying. I exist in a pretty open emotional space, both of these things just happen so I just let it work for me.



AZ: You often incorporate found objects like jewelry and textiles- where are your favorite places to look for these items?

SC: I don't usually look for them, they just show up. Then if something sticks, I'll figure out the best place to source it but usually, the objects come to me.



AZ: Tell us about your upcoming site-responsive work at Elk Camp on Snowmass Mountain. How will you work with and against the space's architecture?

SC: I just completed this work which was possibly one of the strangest locations I've worked in. It is way up a mountain in a ski lodge, so driving there was a real adventure, driving up the trails that people will soon be riding down.

The piece slips down onto a floorboard that is usually there to protect the art, but I made it part of the art, that's probably working against the architecture though I see it as making the work a lot stronger and working with it.

I think the views from the mountaintop influenced the work subconsciously. One of the last moves I did was this big square rainbow block which from further back could be seen as referencing landscape.

AZ: What can we expect to see from you in the future?

SC: I am working on many projects, though one I'm particularly excited about is a new public commission by the [San Francisco Arts Commission](#) which will be inside a new terminal at the San Francisco International Airport.

I'm creating a 10 x 148 ft. stained glass wall with a historic local glass studio, called Judson's Studios. It's been awesome to work

with masters and mind changing to try something out where it's not all my hand in the creating. This work should open in Spring 2019.

all images // courtesy of the artist

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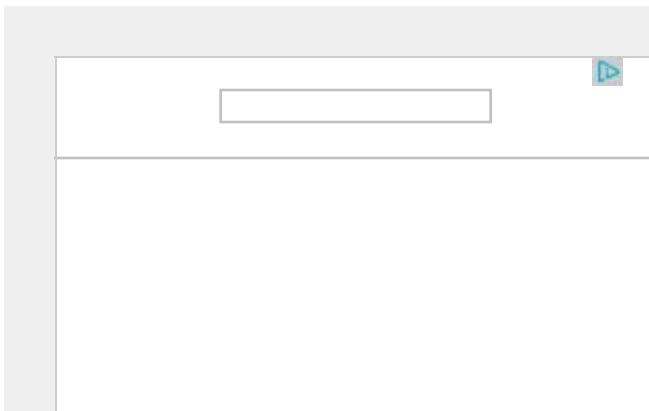


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