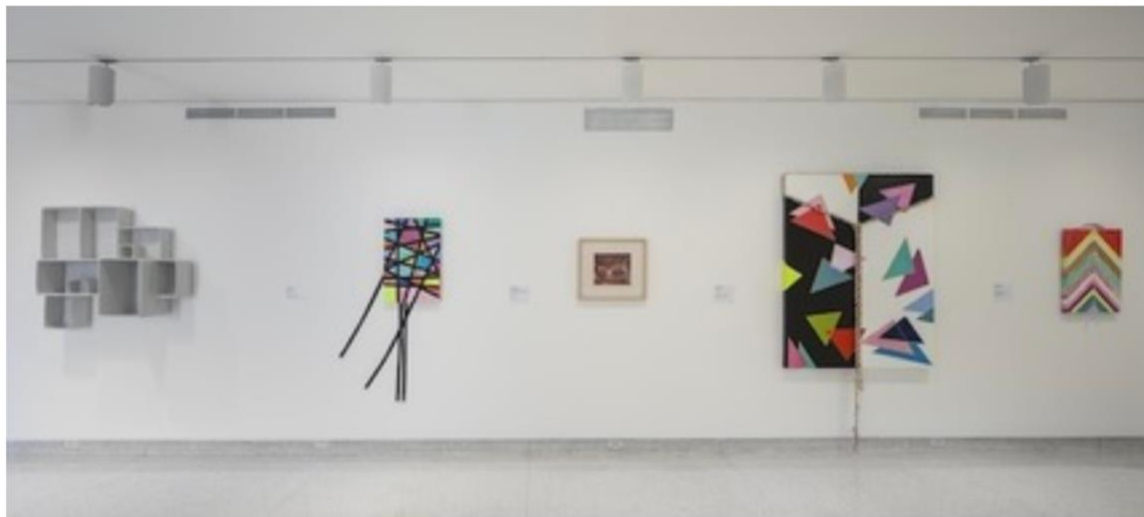


ARTFORUM

INTERVIEWS

SARAH CAIN

June 26, 2015 • Sarah Cain discusses her exhibitions at Honor Fraser Gallery and MCA San Diego



View of “Sarah Cain: blue in your body, red when it hits the air,” 2015.

Sarah Cain is a Los Angeles–based artist whose work explores boundaries between painting, sculpture, and installation. “Bow Down,” her solo exhibition at Honor Fraser Gallery in Los Angeles, is on view through July 11, 2015. In tandem, her first solo museum show runs at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, in La Jolla through July 19, 2015. The latter includes selections from the institution’s permanent collection as well as the artist’s personal collection, which Cain discusses below.

AT THE CORE of my work is a challenge to abstract painting—an attempt to expand it. It comes from a deep love, but also from an unsettled feeling. I never studied painting in school. I studied new genres at the San Francisco Art Institute and ended up painting for myself while at UC Berkeley in 2005–2006. It was very much my secret project. In the meantime, I was producing site-specific works. There is a freedom in the found object—for example, using an old dresser and transforming it, as I do in my current exhibition at Honor Fraser. *Palm Afterlife*, 2015, features a palm frond, which was in “freedom is a prime number,” my last show at the gallery, in 2012. There’s a constant recycling of materials in my work.

BROADWAY

The exhibition in San Diego is the first in a series of new projects at the museum in which the institutions invites artists to produce solo projects and also select works to be shown from the museum's collection. There's *A Pythagorean Notebook Suite*, 1965, a mystic vulva lithograph print by Alfred Jensen, and a gouache on paper work, *Threaded Piece 4*, 1973, from Regina Bogat, his widow. I really wanted a Beatrice Wood ceramic in this show, but the museum didn't have her work in the collection. So I went to her foundation in Ojai, California, where she had lived, and bought an amazing little sculpture she made in 1968 and kept her whole life until she died. Andrea Zittel's *A-Z Aggregated Stack #11*, 2012, was something I first saw in her house and it has always stuck in my brain. She, along with everyone else, is in the show because she relates to a specific point in the trajectory of my own practice. My work is very much my own, but I think it is important to show the context it comes out of. I included a John Divola photograph in the show because before I worked with galleries my studio practice was all in abandoned buildings on either coast—wherever I could find them. Ana Mendieta is also in the show—a photo of her body imprinted into sand. She was one of the first artists who resonated with me. Fred Sandback was a similar early inspiration. He did everything I am trying to do now honed into one gesture.

I put in seven paintings of my own, along with a suite of works on paper. These are important to me so it was great to assemble them. Also, there is a painting that I have always liked but feel like no one else likes it. Its title is the same as the show, "blue in your body, red when it hits the air." It works incredibly with the Robert Irwin window piece in the museum.

— *As told to Paige K. Bradley*