

**BAMPFA Commissions Site-Specific Installation by Sarah Cain**



***On View October 30, 2025 through June 6, 2027***

***Sarah Cain: To—you know—you* Marks Inaugural Installment in BAMPFA's  
New Commissioning Series Atrium Projects**

*(Berkeley, CA) October 9, 2025*—The Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive is preparing to inaugurate a site-specific installation by Sarah Cain, the first installment in a new commissioning series at the museum entitled Atrium Projects. *Sarah Cain: To—you know—you* will transform the museum's Barbara Bakar Atrium with a vibrant large-scale painting and

immersive environment, spanning the interstitial space's soaring height and extending onto the floor. The installation will also include painted canvases, couches, and a stained-glass window incorporated into the museum's architecture.

*Atrium Projects / Sarah Cain: To—you know—you* marks a return to Berkeley for Cain, a Los Angeles-based artist who previously exhibited at BAMPFA in 2006 as a graduate student in UC Berkeley's MFA program. The work's title is inspired by the dedication in Diane Seuss's poetry collection *frank: sonnets* (2021), implying a direct and intimate connection with the reader that reflects the spirit of Cain's own creative practice. Improvised on-site at the museum, *To—you know—you* showcases Cain's characteristically intuitive and playfully irreverent approach to painting, which draws from a panoply of styles spanning art history and popular culture, embracing high and low. Her practice extends painting beyond the physical and affective conventions that have historically defined the medium, offering an unfettered alternative through her bold engagement of kaleidoscopic color and commanding scale. The launch of Atrium Projects advances BAMPFA's commitment to commissioning new work from leading contemporary artists, complementing the museum's Art Wall series as well as the commissioned work on display in the MATRIX program.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with Sarah Cain on BAMPFA's inaugural Atrium Projects commission," said BAMPFA's Chief Curator Margot Norton, who curated *Atrium Projects / Sarah Cain: To—you know—you*. "Sarah's paintings and installations have long defied painterly and patriarchal conventions, calling forth a sense of joy and fearless inventiveness that feels particularly vital in the present moment."

"I look forward to Sarah's project transforming the Bakar Atrium with an art experience that I know will delight and surprise our guests," said BAMPFA's Executive Director, Julie Rodrigues Widholm.

## About Sarah Cain

Los Angeles-based artist Sarah Cain (b. 1979, Albany, NY) paints exuberant abstractions that often extend beyond the canvas into installations, site-specific painting, stained glass, and furniture. Her work plays with and melds referents across visual art, music, and culture at large.

Cain's approach to her medium expands expectations of abstract painting. Her color-soaked palette mixes with a wide range of found objects added to her compositions that in turn complement her titles, which shift in reference from the sweet and mystical (*created out of magic from under a rock*, 2017), to the erotic (*Peacocking*, 2019), to the political (*Keep it Safe and Legal*, 2018). Cain redefines abstraction in feminist terms as an architecture for transformative, embodied, emotive experience. In this regard, her work has an explicit politics that emphatically insists on the value of feminine, queer, and other marginalized aesthetics.

At the beginning of her career, Cain made dozens of site-specific paintings in abandoned buildings. These were ephemeral works. As her practice has evolved, she has continued to create massive site-specific works and preserved this impulse to treat painting seriously, but not preciously. She cuts into her canvases and embellishes their surfaces with found objects as in *Braids and Tassels*, 2018 and installs works on the floor for viewers to walk on, like *Enter The Center*, 2021. In recent years, Cain has garnered wide acclaim for site-specific installations such as *We Will Walk Right up To The Sun*, 2019, a permanent installation of a 150-foot-long stained glass window at the San Francisco International Airport; *My favorite season is the fall of the patriarchy*, a 45-foot long painted canvas that bounced off of the canvas to surrounding structures moving throughout the East Wing Atrium of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 2020, and *Day after day on this beautiful stage*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle WA, 2023 a large-scale site responsive installation moving from wall, floor, and furniture. Cain is a recipient of the 2020 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant; 2011 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant; the 2008 Durfee Grant; the 2007 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant; and the 2006 SECA Art Award, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

## **About BAMPFA**

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) ignites cultural change for a more inclusive and artistic world. BAMPFA has been uniquely dedicated to art and film since 1970, with international programming that is locally connected and globally relevant. It holds more than 25,000 artworks and 18,000 films and videos in its collection, with particular strengths in modern and contemporary art and historical Chinese painting, as well as the world's largest collection of African American quilts. As part of the University of California, Berkeley, BAMPFA is committed to artistic diversity through its robust slate of art exhibitions, film screenings, artist talks, live performances, and educational programs that shed new light on the art of the past and connect our audiences with leading filmmakers and artists of our time. BAMPFA sits on the edge of campus and downtown Berkeley, where it welcomes visitors from across and beyond the Bay Area in a repurposed building designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

## **Sponsorship**

This project is made possible by major funding from Frances Hellman and Warren Breslau.

## **Image credits**

Installation view: *Sarah Cain: Day after day on this beautiful stage*, Henry Art Gallery, April 1, 2023–August 27, 2023. Photo by Jonathan Vanderweit.

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