

Prospectus for a Traveling Exhibition



Hilary Baker

Painting the Corners:
On themes of time and space
in American Baseball

Hilary Baker

Painting the Corners Prospectus

PAINTING THE CORNERS: ON THEMES OF TIME AND SPACE IN AMERICAN BASEBALL

A traveling exhibition, organized by independent curator Kristina Newhouse. With text by Jesse Nathan, poet, UC Berkeley professor, and founding editor of the *McSweeney's Poetry Series*.

From a distance, the baseball field—a ruddy diamond bedded in vivid green grass—inspires associations about centuries of pastoral and sacred spaces in paintings, poetry, and prose poems. For people who follow the game, baseball has its own set of symbols, heroes, and villains. Its rules, the bipartite give-and-take of the inning as its unit of play, as well as the personal and idiosyncratic rituals of each player reinforce a sense of the mythic. Then there is the game's circular rhythm, which echoes life's cycles, and like life, can eke at a bucolic, almost drowsy pace. But stillness gives way to explosive action, followed by outcries from participants and spectators alike: What just happened?

Baseball's visual and emotional impact makes it a rich subject for artists and writers, serving as a metaphor for human triumph and struggle, often with existential and cosmic themes. Artist Hilary Baker has created two



Away Game, 2024
Acrylic on linden
12 x 14 ½ inches

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(CONTINUED)

series of paintings about baseball, separated by 36 years of lived experience. For 1986/1989 paintings rendered in gouache on paper, she delved into themes from ancient Western mythology and 20th century science fiction, treating the players as anonymous characters who enact scenarios of her own devising. Revisiting the subject of baseball beginning in 2022, Baker took a different approach, leaning into the notion of memorabilia, which can be collected by obsessed fans as avidly as any stats. In her hands, the historic Western tradition of vedute—paintings depicting famous landmarks produced for European tourists as souvenirs—goes on a folksy spin through midcentury road trip culture in the form of camp art on rustic wood slices. Initially, Baker's recent renditions in acrylic straightforwardly capture interstitial pauses in the game as players wait for the next action. Over time, however, Baker has permitted that sensibility of imaginative play to re-enter her scenarios. Flying saucers descend onto the ballfield. Players ascend rapturously towards a giant mitt in the sky.

...

In October 2023, Baker read an opinion essay in the *New York Times*, by poet Jesse Nathan about how the pitch clock in Major League Baseball has changed the cadence of the game. In this piece, "Baseball has lost its poetry," Nathan decries the loss of the baseball game as a "place in our subdivided lives in which we get to imagine—to feel, to daydream— something existing outside of time."

Nathan's sentiments resonated to Baker, who began to correspond with the poet, a professor of literature at UC Berkeley and founding editor of the McSweeney's Publishing Poetry Series. Baker invited Nathan to write about existential and durational aspects of baseball, as well as his reactions to her paintings.

Their shared experience culminates in *Painting the Corners: On themes of time and space in American Baseball*, this exhibition of 31 paintings by Hilary Baker presented in juxtaposition with prose by Jesse Nathan, entitled *A Baseball Reality*.

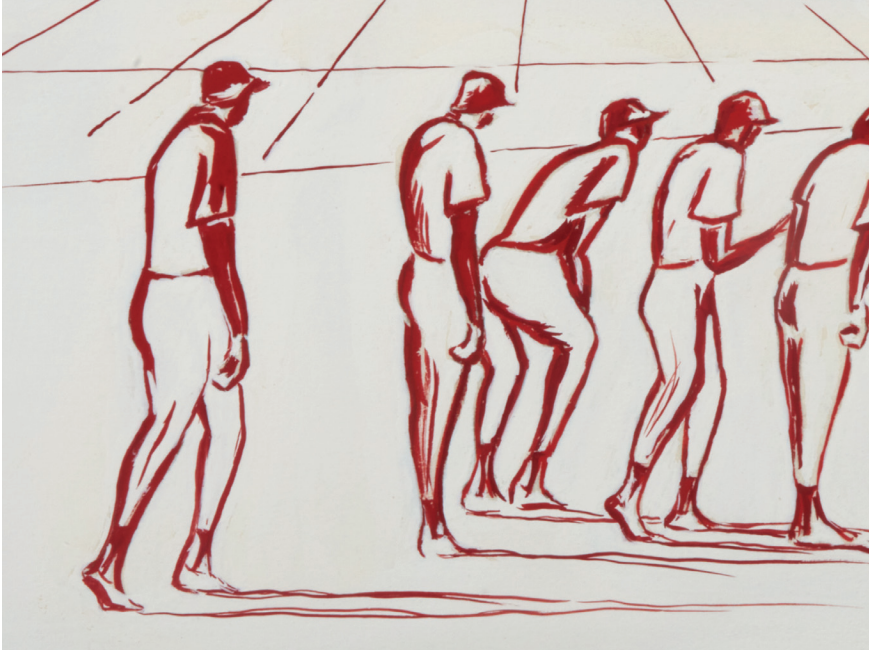


Home of the Braves (detail), 1989
Gouache on paper
14 x 20 inches

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OVERVIEW OF EXHIBITION ARTWORKS



The Reds (detail), 1986
Gouache on paper
9 x 12 1/8 inches

**We invite you to participate in
the tour of this exhibition
Available through 2028**

The exhibition includes 31 paintings, ranging from 5 1/2 x 6 inches to 8 3/4 x 36 inches. PDF diagrams for hanging all artworks and text panels to be provided. All artworks are crated for travel. A sample press release, exhibition labels, introductory text by Kristina Newhouse, artist narrative by Hilary Baker, prose poetry by Jesse Nathan, and a checklist will be provided digitally.

TWENTY GOUACHE PAINTINGS ON PAPER

Framed behind glass

Hang directly on the wall

Running footage: 47 feet, 6 inches

With 10 inch spacing between framed artworks

ELEVEN ACRYLIC PAINTINGS ON WOOD SLICES

Unframed, fixed with D-ring hangers

Hang directly on the wall

Installation wall to be painted, exact color to be determined

Running footage: approximately 8 x 12 feet

With four to six inch spacing between artworks

Grouped per diagram on page 15

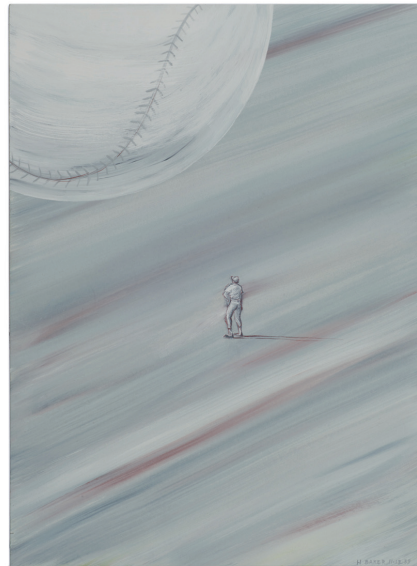
Hilary Baker

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GOUACHE PAINTINGS, 1986-1989



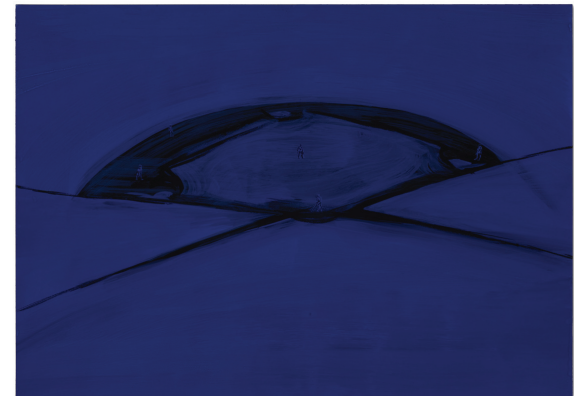
Atlas, 1989
Gouache on paper
12 1/8 x 9 inches



Ad Astra Per Aspera, 1989
Gouache on paper
12 1/8 x 9 inches

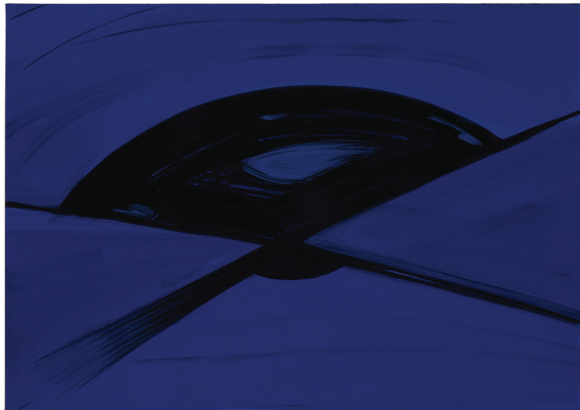


Baseball Players on Mount Parnassus, 1986
Gouache on paper
14 x 20 inches



Night Game, 1989
Gouache on paper
14 x 20 inches

GOUACHE PAINTINGS, 1986-1989



Night Field, 1989
Gouache on paper
14 x 20 inches



Bottom of the Sixth, 1986
Gouache on paper
9 x 12 ½ inches



Three-sixty, Three-seventy, Three-eighty five, 1989
Gouache on paper
14 x 18 inches



Untitled (Pitcher), 1989
Gouache on paper
12 ½ x 9 inches

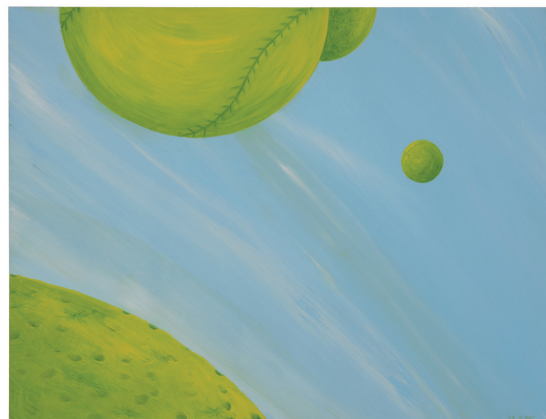
GOUACHE PAINTINGS, 1986-1989



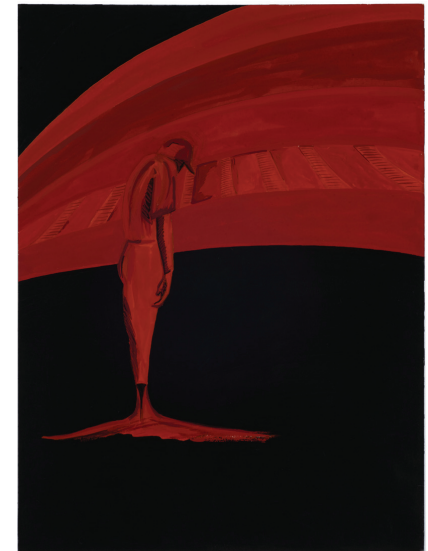
Constellation, The Batter, 1989
Gouache on paper
16 x 12 inches



Baseball Players in Hell, 1986
Gouache on paper
Diptych, 12 1/8 x 18 inches



Untitled, 1989
Gouache on paper
12 x 16 inches



Untitled (Cadmium Red Pitcher), 1989
Gouache on paper
12 1/8 x 9 inches

GOUACHE PAINTINGS, 1986-1989



Baseball Players in Limbo, 1986
Gouache on paper
9 x 12 1/8 inches



The Reds, 1986
Gouache on paper
9 x 12 1/8 inches



Baseball Hell, 1986
Gouache on paper
9 x 12 1/8 inches



Semper Fideles, 1986
Gouache on paper
12 1/8 x 9 inches

GOUACHE PAINTINGS, 1986-1989



The Anabasis, 1989
Gouache on paper
20 x 14 inches



Home of the Braves, 1989
Gouache on paper
14 x 20 inches



Untitled (Ultramarine Field), 1989
Gouache on paper
14 x 20 inches



Baseball Players on Mount Fuji, 1986
Gouache on paper
20 x 14 inches

CLICK TO SEE LARGER VIEWS OF
ARTWORK AT HILARYBAKER.COM

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WOOD SLICES, 2022-2024



Benched, 2024
Acrylic on linden
9 ½ x 13 inches



Watching, 2023
Acrylic on birch
6 inches diameter



Outfield, 2022
Acrylic on birch
5 ¾ inches diameter



Untitled (Seated Player), 2024
Acrylic on linden
12 ½ x 10 inches

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WOOD SLICES, 2022-2024



Inning Over, 2022
Acrylic on birch
15 x 10 inches



The Pitcher, 2022
Acrylic on birch
5 ½ x 6 inches



Conversation, 2022
Acrylic on birch
5 ½ x 6 inches



The Coach, 2022
Acrylic on birch
15 ½ x 10 inches

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ARTWORK AT HILARYBAKER.COM

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WOOD SLICES, 2022-2024



Away Game, 2024
Acrylic on linden
12 x 14 ½ inches



The Cøsmos (Road Trip), 2024
Acrylic on olive
8 ¾ x 36 inches



The Ascension, 2024
Acrylic on olive
35 x 8 ¼ inches

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SAMPLES OF ARTWORK & PROSE

Artworks by Hilary Baker

Conversation, 2022
Acrylic on birch
5 ½ x 6 inches



Excerpts from *A Baseball Reality* (2024) by Jesse Nathan

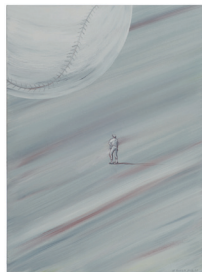
Outfielders with their gloves on their heads during a pitching change. Left and center, maybe, coming together in left centerfield. Glove becomes hat. A mid-inning lull of relief, almost silliness, from the glove's weight and responsibility. A chance to catch up. How are the kids? How was New York?

Baseball Players in Hell, 1986
Gouache on paper
Diptych, 12 ½ x 18 inches



There is a strange elasticity and vertigo to a baseball game. A sudden widening or bewildering of time. Is there another game in which the momentum can swing that wildly from one team to the other? Can go, in seconds, from seeming triumph to searing defeat? From pastoral heaven to disbelieving hell.

Ad Astra Per Aspera, 1989
Gouache on paper
12 ½ x 9 inches



A batter sends a routine fly ball on a sailing, lazy, casual arc into the glove of a fielder who barely moves. Catches it almost sleepily. The unconscious calculating precisely the point where the ball is to land in the glove.

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INSTALLATION VIEW 1



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INSTALLATION VIEW 2



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ARTIST'S ESSAY

Painting the Corners (2024)

by Hilary Baker

Between 1986 and 1989, I made 21 gouache paintings about baseball.

Back then, I lived where so many artists did, in Echo Park near Dodger Stadium. I began attending games with friends—even celebrated a birthday up in the stands. Making a point of arriving early, I would move to the outfield seats overlooking the team's bullpen before the game began. My idea was to get as close to the players as possible so I could make sketches. They were beautiful in their bodies. As they threw over and over, their warmup was that of ballet dancers preparing to go onstage. The repetition, the movement, the limbering up and—above all—the seriousness and focus.

It is surprising that I didn't really follow baseball until I was in my forties—had never been to a game, whether Little League, in high school, or at Dodger Stadium. This lack of interest may be attributed to the fact that our family didn't follow sports. My father, a concert violinist needing to guard his hands, recalled childhood friends yelling up to him to come out and play stickball, but his understandably protective parents wouldn't allow it. So, when pitching great Sandy Koufax became our neighbor in the early sixties, I wasn't yet a fan. As I walked up our street after school, I would be peppered with questions from the men who drove up and down asking where he lived. I knew enough about

Koufax's overwhelming desire for privacy not to divulge his address. Still, I wish I'd had some sort of contact with him beyond the occasional wave as he drove past. He had no children to baby-sit, pets to walk, nor lawns to mow—and I had no stadium tickets or baseballs for him to autograph.

In the gouaches from that era, I pictured the field as a bell jar, with tiny figures trapped under a dome. These were my players to do with as I wished, placing them in whatever scenario I came up with: triumph in Elysium, or defeat in Hell. If I was feeling fanciful, the setting became a landing pad for a spaceship transporting players on their way to the moon or Mars, or perhaps an outlying asteroid for an extended road trip. In other paintings, the field was a stage set or a battleground. In *Home of the Braves* (1989), the players surround a fallen teammate. In *The Anabasis* (1989), a nod to the famous Greek battle described by Xenophon circa 370 BC, the players face off, bats held high as weapons.

I consider the baseball an object of terror, looming, outsized and threatening the batter. Or conversely, as both a weighty burden or an exalted prize perched atop a marble staircase. And over the years, I've imagined myself as a Big-League pitcher—what the power, the violent rush of the ball towards the batter, the drama and the idolatry of the fans would feel like. So, I was delighted to come across Garrison Keillor's short story, *What Did We Do Wrong?*, a fantastical tale about the first female big-league player. The story is set in 1987, the year after I made my first baseball paintings. I relished Keillor's characterization of Angie Szymanski playing for the Sparrows, as a cranky, crass and brilliant hitter who cared not in the least what anyone, from players to fans, thought of her.

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ARTIST'S ESSAY

(CONTINUED)

Major League Baseball is currently calculating ways to accelerate the pace of the game. Distinctly counterpoint to our rapidly shrinking attention span, traditional baseball runs slowly. Time and space are inextricably woven into the game. Each inning—an opportunity for action—consists of two halves of a whole, the top and the bottom. One team assumes the field and then the other, in a cycle of nine. Time unfurls. Baseball is perceived to have no time limits (though sportswriter Jane Leavy references the “temporal imperative” in her bio of the legendary Sandy Koufax) but it does have space limits. It is clearly circular, played within a prescribed setting, each base leading back home; hence the pastoral, grassy setting, bases as touchstones, and elated teammates at the terminus.

Stadium lights, turning night into day, illuminate the pitcher standing on the “hill.” He faces his audience, nods to his catcher and begins his wind-up. If the batter steps away from the plate, time slows down, and we wait. As the pitcher prepares his stance and sets up for the pitch, again we wait, and time accelerates as the ball shoots towards the batter. Welcome to the collision between intention and expectation—baseball’s “cosmic struggle.”

Nearly 36 years later, I began to visit the idea of baseball again. My perspective on the game has remained constant, but my methods and medium have changed. Some of this may have to do with moving to rural Ojai, a place that historically has provided respite to Angelenos from the big city. While running errands locally, I pass by the fields where the hometown high school team practices and think about the potential of the young players.

The current paintings are acrylic on wood slices, a nod to the popularity of both souvenir mementos and baseball cards. The history of wood/camp art dates back at least to the forties and fifties. With the new interstate highway system and the motor courts that sprouted along them, road trips became a favorite American past-time. Travelers collected wood slice paintings as tokens of their adventures. Unlike baseball cards, however, these folk-art souvenirs were not mass produced.

With that in mind, I decided to create my own unique mementos, contemporary versions of the once popular camp objects. My scenarios and portraits are not exercises in fandom. Rather than depicting specific players or teams, I've created an anonymous cast of characters to avoid the distraction of recognition. I approach my subjects from both a psychological and—dare I say?—existential perspective, which I hope is reflected in the imagery.

Major League baseball players start young; on the field they are green and untested, and—if lucky and their talent sustains—they mature on the job. My sense of identification with these young athletes stems from my years of learning how to navigate the art world. The playing field of an artist ranges widely from the studio to the arena of galleries, museums, and critics. Like the pitcher on the mound, the artist stands alone. The audience/spectators are looking on. . . and judging.

Seems like a baseball game to me.

Hilary Baker

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Hilary Baker

A Los Angeles native, Hilary Baker grew up among Hollywood's film and music industry professionals. She spent her childhood roaming the hills around her home in the canyons, hunting for animal bones and avoiding the occasional snake. Her subjects, ranging from baseball, California wildlife and the surrounding landscape, are depicted in her signature graphic style. Known for her dissonant palette, her paintings hint at anxiety and mordant wit with unblinking clarity. In her film short, *Ecce Cat*, circa 1971, she paid homage to the sinister undercurrents of mid-century animation. Baker's world is quarried from the strange, poetic, and darkly humorous with the confidence of a painter who is in the game for the long run.

Baker received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her Master of Fine Arts from the Otis Art Institute (now Otis College of Art & Design).

She has exhibited throughout the United States and internationally, including The Skulptur Projekt Münster and the Institut Franco-Americain, and has been awarded residencies at the Pont-Aven School of Art, the Ucross Foundation, Art Omi, and the Yaddo and MacDowell art colonies. Her paintings have been featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Peripheral Vision*, *Art and Cake*, *Artillery* and *New American Paintings*.



Her work is included in numerous public collections, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, the Crocker Art Museum, the Broad Art Foundation, Temple University, and the University of Southern California.

Baker organized the exhibition *Archaeology* (1997) at Contemporary Arts Collective, Las Vegas. She co-curated *Sexy: Sensual Abstraction in California, 1950's -1990's* (1995) with Julia Couzens at the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena and *Blind Courier: Nine Artists and Their Notions of Place* (2019) with Lauren Kasmer at the Brand Library & Arts Center, Glendale.

She lives in Ojai, California, with her husband, the writer Philip DiGiacomo, in the shadow of the Topatopa Mountains.

[CLICK TO SEE HILARY BAKER'S
FULL BIOGRAPHY AND CV](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jesse Nathan

Jesse Nathan was raised in northern California and rural Kansas. His poems appear in the *New York Review of Books*, the *Paris Review*, *The Nation*, the *Kenyon Review*, *BOMB*, and elsewhere. His debut poetry collection, *Eggtooth*, with a foreword by Robert Hass, was published by Unbound Edition Press in 2023. One poem in the book, “Dame’s Rocket,” was selected for the *Best American Poetry 2024*, published by Scribner, the oldest imprint within Simon & Schuster. In 2024, *Eggtooth* won the GLCA New Writers Award in Poetry and the Housatonic Book Award. The book was also named a finalist for the California Independent Booksellers Alliance’s Golden Poppy Award, the Nossrat Yassini Poetry Prize, and the Medal Provocateur/Eric Hoffer Award.

Nathan’s criticism has been published in the *Threepenny Review* and *Tin House*. He has contributed essays to the *New York Times* and *Alta Journal*. His critical essay “Question, Answer” was published in the anthology *After Identity, Mennonite Writing in North America* (edited by Robert Zacharias, for Penn State University Press, 2016), which historian Felipe Hinojosa called “an important book for anyone interested in the debates around culture, identity, and writing in the United States and Canada.” His translations from the K’iche’ sacred text Popol Vuh, made with Juan Coy and Josué Coy Dick, were published in *Poetry* magazine, and featured on its podcast in 2022.

Nathan was a founding editor of the McSweeney’s Poetry Series. His interviews with—and essays about—contemporary poets appeared in the online series “Short Conversations with Poets,” published by McSweeney’s.

In 2024, Nathan was named a LABA Bay Area Fellow and the 2024 Robert Frost Fellow in Poetry at the Bread Loaf Writer’s Conference in Vermont. His work has been supported by fellowships from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Stanford University, the Arts Research Center at UC Berkeley, Bread Loaf, the Community of Writers, the Ashbery Home School, and the Kansas Arts Commission.

Jesse Nathan has taught literature and writing workshops at Stanford University, Kenyon College, Bread Loaf, Fresno Pacific University, the 92Y, and 826 Valencia. He is at work on a book of critical prose about form and disjunction in modern poetry.

[CLICK FOR MORE ABOUT
JESSE AT HIS WEBSITE](#)

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ABOUT THE CURATOR

Kristina Newhouse

After many years as a contemporary art curator and writer, Kristina Newhouse is now the principal of What The Artist Says. She advises artists and their advocates on strategies for organizing estates and archives, as well as placing artwork in institutional art collections. She also now serves on the board of Converge 45, a non-profit arts organization that presents a contemporary art triennial in Portland, Oregon.

Formerly, Newhouse served as Curator of Exhibitions for the University Art Museum at CSU Long Beach. Her last curatorial project, *Linda Besemer: StrokeRollFoldSheetSlabGlitch*, was presented at the Kleefeld Contemporary in 2022. In 2021, she curated *Uncertain Allies*, a monographic exhibition by Neha Choksi that featured sculptures, painted wall works, and a newly produced video, *Charge* (2021). In 2020, Newhouse worked with Los Angeles architect Doris Sung of TBM Designs to present *sm[ART]box*, a site-specific sustainable structure to test a revolutionary self-shading window system. On the exterior of *sm[ART]box* was an overall visual design by Yaloo Ji Yeon Lim, a South Korean contemporary digital artist. Newhouse's 2017 project, *David Lamelas: A Life of Their Own*, was presented in the Getty Pacific Standard Time LA/LA Initiative and was accompanied by an exhibition catalogue distributed by Getty Publications. Newhouse also served as the executive producer of a short film by Lamelas, *In Our Time*, with grant support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. It premiered at the Getty in May 2018. *A Life of Their Own* traveled to MALBA in Buenos Aires as *Con Vida Propio* in 2018.

From 2001 through 2008, Newhouse was curator of the Torrance Art Museum. In 2011, she presented *She Accepts the Proposition: Women Gallerists and the Redefinition of Art in Los Angeles, 1967-1977* at the Sam Francis Gallery at Crossroads School as part of the Getty's first PST initiative. In 2009, she co-curated *Superficiality and Superexcrescence: Surface and Identity in Recent California Art*, funded by the Fellows of Contemporary Art and presented at the Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design. In 2007, she curated *Fran Siegel: Companion* at the IX Bienal Internacional de Cuenca in Ecuador. This project was presented under the auspices of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US State Department.

Beginning in 1996, Newhouse curated at exhibition sites ranging from local universities and community colleges, Los Angeles World Airports (Ontario), the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, and commercial galleries. Her exhibitions have featured in publications including *Los Angeles Times*, *Apollo*, the *Art Newspaper*, *Artforum.com*, *Art Ltd.*, *LA Weekly*, *CARLA*, *Frieze*, *New York Times*, and *Sculpture*.

From 2003 until 2010, Newhouse was an editor for *X-tra Contemporary Arts Quarterly* and produced many reviews and essays for the magazine. Her most recent writing for X-tra was a 2020 review of influential filmmaker and artist Susan Mogul, entitled "A Feminist's Survival Index." Other arts publications for which she has written include *Variable West*, *Artnet*, *Art+Text*, *Sculpture*, and *New Art Examiner*.

Newhouse has written essays for numerous art institutions including the Hammer Museum, MSU Broad Museum, the Benton Museum at Pomona College, the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, and Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, among others.

[CLICK FOR MORE ABOUT
KRISTINA AT HER WEBSITE](#)

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EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Currently available for booking

ITINERARY: *Painting the Corners: On themes of time and space in American Baseball* by Hilary Baker is available April 2025 through December 2028.

CONTENTS: The exhibition includes 31 paintings ranging from 5 ½ x 6 inches to 8 ¾ x 36 inches. The gouache paintings on paper are framed and the acrylic paintings on wood slices are fixed with picture hanging hardware. PDF diagrams for hanging all artworks and text panels to be provided. All artworks are crated for travel. A sample press release, exhibition labels, an exhibition introductory text panel by Kristina Newhouse, with prose panels by Hilary Baker and Jesse Nathan, and checklist will be provided digitally.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS (IN LINEAR SQUARE FEET):

Framed gouache paintings: 47 feet, 6 inches
With 10 inch spacing between framed artworks

Wood slice paintings installation: approximately 8 x 12 feet
With four to six inch spacing between artworks
Grouped per diagram on page 15

BOOKING PERIOD: Eight weeks minimum / Twelve weeks maximum

ENRICHMENT MATERIALS: Object labels in press-ready digital format; press materials; curriculum guide for students grades 6-12 and undergraduate-level humanities bibliography.

REQUIREMENTS: Borrowing institution agrees to print an invitation card, text panels, and object labels. Moderate security to be provided. Environmental controls, including relative humidity and temperature monitoring; light levels not to exceed 10 footcandles; and placement away from the convection flow of HVAC systems. Incoming and outgoing condition reports to be conducted, with pdf-templates provided.

SHIPPING: Exhibitors are responsible for one-way prorated transportation via fine art shippers to venue, insurance while at institution, exhibition installation, and organizing door-to-door shipping to the next venue, within the contiguous US.

LOAN FEE: Upon request. Venues interested in extending the exhibition may do so on a pro-rated basis.

SPEAKING FEE: A talk by artist Hilary Baker can be organized with a flat rate for a half day (under 4 hours) of \$500, plus travel expenses, including room and board.

CONTACT: To discuss the exhibition and make booking inquiries, please contact curator Kristina Newhouse at kristina@whattheartistsays.com

Kristina Newhouse

What the Artist Says

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