

BROADWAY

LA WEEKLY

MEET AN ARTIST MONDAY: TERESA BAKER

December 23, 2019 By SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Teresa Baker's mixed media work has much in common with gestural abstract painting, creating passages of saturated and gradient color and juxtaposed textures. Her often large-scale works evoke art historical antecedents from Rothko and Klee as well as traditional loom, map-making, and the natural topography of the Northern Plains. Her abstract "landscapes" however are not at all paintings — instead, she works in a collage-like method incorporating textiles and unconventional materials from AstroTurf to buffalo hide, felt to beads and basket-weaving. In this way she honors both her modern aesthetic and the materials and cultural metaphors of her childhood. Baker is the newest recipient of the [Ucross Foundation's Fellowship for Native American Visual Arts](#).

L.A. WEEKLY: When did you first know you were an artist?

TERESA BAKER: I would say the definitive moment was when I learned that art did not just mean realism, but rather there was a whole other language of abstraction and minimalism.

What is your short answer to people who ask what your work is about?

I use material, texture, shape, and color relationships stemming from my Mandan/Hidatsa culture and landscape views to explore our notions of how we look and identify, and the visceral in an object.

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Teresa Baker, Willow, Yarn, Spray Paint and Buffalo Sinew on AstroTurf, Fores 2019

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

It's pretty hard for me to imagine an alternative, I am doing what makes sense to me. But there were some moments where I could have potentially gone into the environmental or political sector.

Did you go to art school? Why/Why not?

Yes, it was the right thing for me. It gave me time and space to begin building, and understanding my art practice. It also introduced me to wonderful colleagues and professors, people that I consider a part of my art community.

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Why do you live and work in L.A., and not elsewhere?

I have a little backyard with a small raised bed garden which I can garden in year round, and my studio is in my backyard. I love my neighborhood, and there is a feeling I get from L.A. which is a little haphazard but also surprisingly tranquil. As an artist who grew up in the Northern Plains, but who also enjoys what urban environments offer, it's a pretty special city in terms of having access to so much nature, art, and culture all in one. I still feel like a visitor here, but, I am very happy to continue to learn about the history of this city that resides on Tongva land and contribute to the community.



Teresa Baker, Out West, exhibition view, Interface, Oakland

When was your first show?

My thesis show when I graduated from college at Fordham University.

When is/was your current/most recent/next show?

I just completed a show with [Interface Gallery in Oakland, CA](#), and as the recipient of the [Ucross Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists](#), I will have a show in 2021 at the Ucross Gallery in Wyoming.

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What artist living or dead would you most like to show with?

There are so many incredible artists I would be honored to show with, the artists I've been thinking about lately are Dyani White Hawk Polk and Elizabeth Murray.



Teresa Baker, Rounded, 2017, Yarn on AstroTurf, 60 x 96 inches

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Teresa Baker (Photo by Erica Elan Ciganek)