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FULL SPECTRUM

Kristin Baker's painting and sculpture are dynamic explorations of light, color, and speed

Capturing speed in a painting may sound quaint in these days of high-definition NASCAR broadcasts on wide-screen plasma monitors, but Kristin Baker has spent a decade churning out explosive work that does just that. Although her output has shifted over the years from realist portrayals of state-of-the-art rides careening around racetracks to keyed-up abstractions that emerge in a flurry of rapid-fire gestures, speed is still a motivating force behind painting and sculpture that appear at once high-tech, tactile, and visually dazzling.

Baker's meticulously ordered Brooklyn studio seems geared toward constant flux. In the center of the cavernous space, a rolling cart holds the signature tools of her trade—freshly sharpened metal spatulas in a variety of widths that she uses for smoothing and scraping. Cacophonous bursts of color and exuberant zigzag



marks trigger alchemical surprises in a fleet of acrylic-on-PVC-panel paintings that evoke her forebears, the Futurists; meanwhile, the disarmingly soft-spoken Baker curls up on a white swivel chair and recounts memories of being an only child whose parents' two enduring obsessions were art and auto racing. She was depicting souped-up race cars at Yale in the spring of 2002 when dealer Jeffrey Deitch discovered her among the graduating class of MFA students and

Clockwise from above: Kristin Baker in her New York City studio. *Spring* (2011). *Matter Fracture* (2010). *Minum #21* (2010). All paintings are acrylic on PVC panel. For details see Sources.

offered to represent her (she is now with Deitch alum Suzanne Geiss).

"I do think Kristin's is one of the most original new voices in abstraction," says arts writer Dodie Kazanjian, another longtime fan. Baker has had solo exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; her paintings have been pursued by the big-gun collectors François Pinault and Charles Saatchi. This spring her audience is likely to increase when a much-anticipated show opens at Geiss's new gallery in SoHo.

The artist is painting overtime to prepare. Individual works take her about a month to complete, coming together far more quickly than they used to, and the reactions between her materials have become her overriding preoccupation. Although auto racing will always be in her blood, she says, in retrospect it was "just an excuse to paint." —DOROTHY SPEARS