

PRESS KIT

BARBARA ROMAIN

Artist · Performer · Educator

PHILADELPHIA-BORN, LOS ANGELES-BASED · 1948–2024

THE ARTIST

SHE REFUSED THE TERMS SHE WAS GIVEN.

A painter did not have to stay inside painting. A disabled artist did not have to make disability her subject. A page of racist propaganda could become material for an argument against hate.

Philadelphia-born, Los Angeles-based artist Barbara Romain (1948–2024) was raised in West Philadelphia, studied at the Philadelphia College of Art, and moved to Los Angeles in 1972. She worked across painting, mixed media, ceramics, monoprints, poetry, performance, public art and teaching.

In 1984 she was diagnosed with a retinal degenerative disease and was legally blind thereafter. She was already a painter. Vision loss forced her to reinvent how she made art: larger, closer, in more intense color, with original stencils and from memory, drawing to music. She called the result “visual music.”



Barbara Romain with Hope & Loss, 2007, at Satsuma Gallery.

THE WORK WAS THE WORK.

430+
paintings documented by the Estate

100+
ceramics, many never exhibited

32
showings of Dialogue: Peace and Dialogue: Star, 2008–2026

1 of 16
artists from nine nations in Art Blind, Cologne, 2013. The only American.

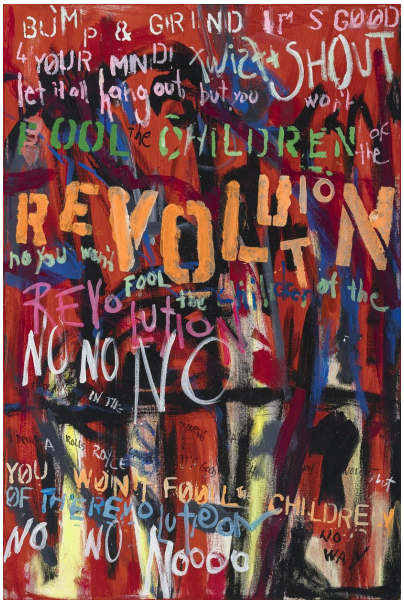
ACROSS THE WORK

FIVE DECADES. ONE MIND.

Her work changed radically, before and after vision loss, through shifts in materials, language, music and subject. What can look like several different artists is one artist renegotiating what seeing, and therefore painting, could mean.



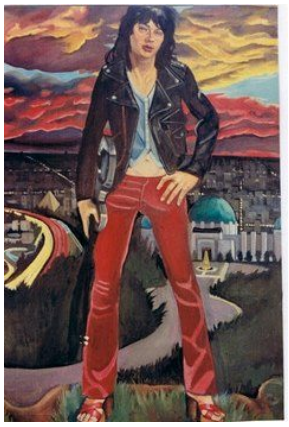
CONFRONTING ORANGE
1998, acrylic on canvas, 30 × 24 in.



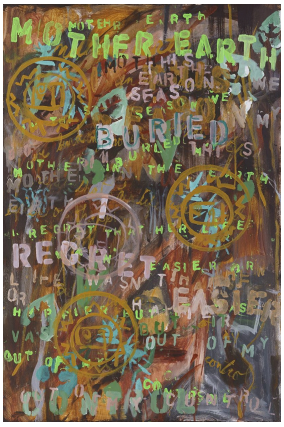
CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION
2005, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 36 × 24 in.



TWEET
2010, acrylic on canvas, 18 × 14 in.



GERHARDT IN HOLLYWOOD
1974, oil on canvas, 50 × 34 in.



MOTHER EARTH
2011, acrylic on canvas, 36 × 24 in.



RIVER REVERIE
2016, acrylic on canvas, 30 × 24 in.



PURPLE HAZE
2016, acrylic on canvas, 72 × 72 in.



IN HER OWN WORDS

HER COLOR GOT LOUDER.

"My color palette grows more vivid as my sight diminishes."

BARBARA ROMAIN, ARTIST STATEMENT, 2009

"For a painter the world is a feast to be devoured by the eyes."

BARBARA ROMAIN, ARTIST STATEMENT, 2009

"It's not about the disability as much as it is about the art."

BARBARA ROMAIN, IN THE SPACE, 2021

"...I would make a layer with the drum and then I would make a layer with the guitar and on top would be the lyrics usually. I call these paintings my visual music."

BARBARA ROMAIN, A BOOK OF, 2019

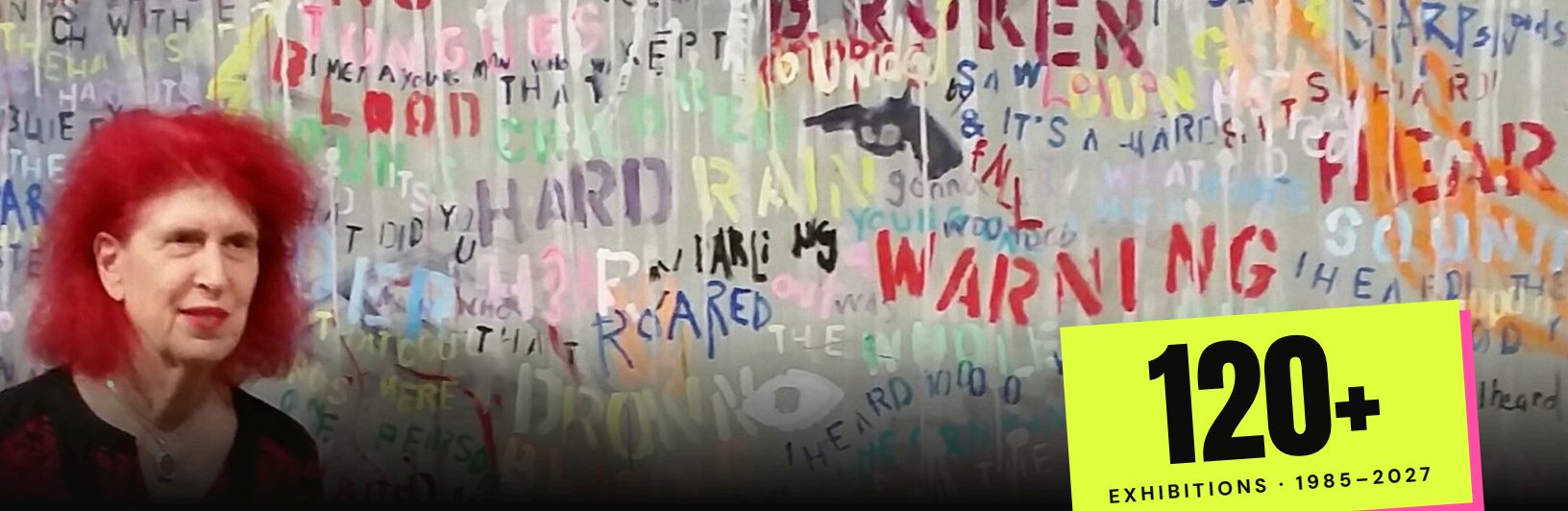
"The viewer is invited to traverse the canvas and create his/her own poetry."

BARBARA ROMAIN, A&U MAGAZINE, 2018

ON HER MISTAKES

"I LET [THE MISTAKES] HAPPEN, AND I THINK IT MAKES IT INTERESTING. IT KIND OF MAKES IT ALIVE."

BARBARA ROMAIN, A BOOK OF, 2019



THE RECORD

SHOWN. AWARDED. HEARD.

EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCE

2027 — OPULENT MOBILITY, Oceanside Museum of Art, Oceanside, CA
Retrospective of California Opulent Mobility artists, February to June. The same three works.

2026 — OPULENT MOBILITY, Thymele Arts, Hollywood
Color Haikus, Confronting Orange and God's Half-Witted Brother, in a show dedicated to Barbara and one other late artist. Her first Opulent Mobility was Bell Arts Factory, Ventura, 2013.

2008–2026 — SPEAKING VOLUMES: TRANSFORMING HATE, Holter Museum of Art, Helena, MT, and national tour
Thirty-two showings across thirty-one venues, including a façade installation at the Fort Collins Museum of Art.

2018 — REMEMBER: AN AIDS MEMORIAL RETROSPECTIVE, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, CA

2017 — VULVACULAR, Ceres Gallery, New York

2015 — (CON)TEXT: RETHINKING LANGUAGE IN ART, San Diego Art Institute

2013 — ART BLIND, Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln, Cologne
Sole U.S. artist among sixteen artists from nine nations.

2009–2015 — ART SLAM, de Young Museum, San Francisco

2008 — DERIVATIVE COMPOSITION, John F. Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.

2005 — BAD EYE ON THE GOOD FOOT, Art Around Gallery, Philadelphia
Solo exhibition.

2004 — ART BEYOND SIGHT, Philadelphia Museum of Art

1991 — AKA GINGER SVERLO, Hollywood
Performance with Shelley Sachs, at right. It became part of the national censorship conversation and led to a Fox television panel.

AWARDS, GRANTS AND HONORS

MARCH 2016 — FEATURED ARTIST OF THE MONTH, National Arts and Disability Center, UCLA

2015 — ARTS AND ACCESSIBILITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT, National Arts and Disability Center, UCLA

2012 — OUTSTANDING ARTIST, Judi Jasek Award, Passionate Focus, Chicago

2009 — THREE SPECIAL RECOGNITION MERIT AWARDS, Upstream People Gallery

2007 — OUTSTANDING TEACHER OF THE YEAR, Columbia College Hollywood

2005–07 — ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, two terms

2006–07 — TEACHING ARTIST FELLOW, VSA arts, one of six nationwide

2003 — FIRST PRIZE, Walter Knott Annual Art Award

1998–2001 — ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, California Arts Council, three terms

1998 — FIRST PRIZE, Artists Beyond Disability, national juried exhibit

1993 — GRANT, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, for Whose Myth Are Youse With?

1993 — JERRY DEAN MEDALLION AWARD, California Continuation Education's highest honor

1990 — WINNER, Gilding the Building competition, Las Angelinas

ON SCREEN AND IN PUBLIC

2014 — CAN YOU SEE ME?, documentary by Linda Janakos, Beyond Baroque

2013 — INTO THE LIGHT, mural, Blind Service Association, Chicago

2002 — ECHO LOVE, permanent artwork, Echo Park

1990 — LAS ANGELINAS, Woman's Building, Los Angeles



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WHAT THEY WROTE

IN OTHER VOICES.

> *Barbara Romain is significant. Her canvases belong in the company of contemporary greats."*
>
> RACHAEL STEELE, "BARBARA ROMAIN — DEPTH PERCEPTION," NEWSLETTER ON THE ARTS, FALL 2003

> *"I feel like I'm in the midst of the busiest city with lights and neon, and everyone wants your attention."*
>
> SCOTT CANTY, CURATOR, ON HER WORK, LOS ANGELES TIMES, 1994

"There is an epic quality to Romain's work."

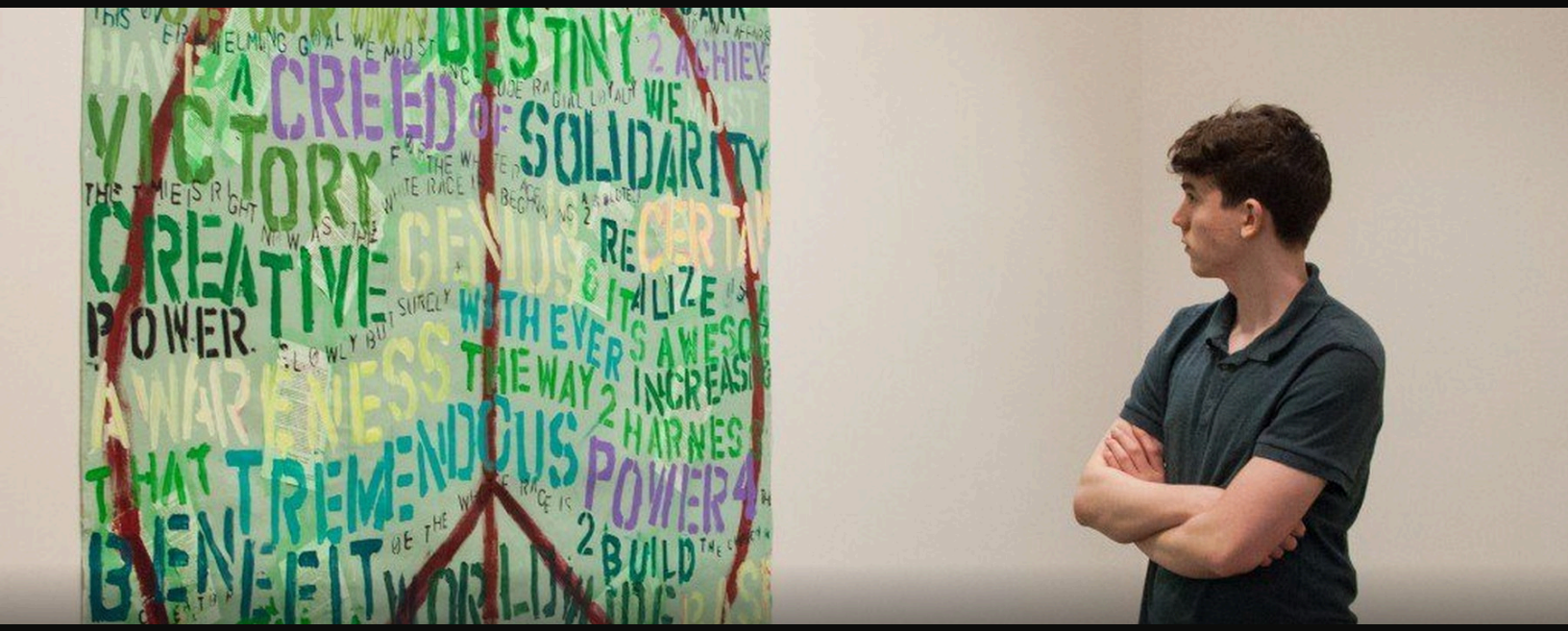
RACHAEL STEELE, 2003

Bill Mohr called her "a visual artist who faced an unexpected challenge to her poetics as a painter at the mid-point of her career."

KOAN KINSHIP, 2014

She "shows what untapped possibilities visual art has beyond mere seeing and the sharp gaze."

KUNSTHOCHSCHULE FÜR MEDIEN KÖLN, 2013



Dialogue: Peace, installed in Speaking Volumes: Transforming Hate, Holter Museum of Art, Helena, Montana, 2008.



OPEN STUDIO · ECHO PARK

THE DOORS OPEN.

THURSDAY. FEBRUARY 11, 2027

4 to 5 pm · Private preview for press and curators, by invitation
5 to 8 pm · Open to everyone

For the first time, Barbara's family opens her longtime Los Angeles home and studio to the public, with roughly 45 works, including a selection of her ceramics. Many have never been seen in person.

PRESS AND CURATORS

Art@BarbaraRomain.com

Write for the 4 pm preview invitation, high-resolution images with captions and reproduction terms, the CV, the exhibition history, interviews and archive research.

RSVP for the location:
barbararomain.com/open-studio

The Estate of Barbara Romain is managed by her custodians, Meghan Romain and Justin Romain, her son.