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## The beauty of auto racing

Kristin Baker's "Ride to Live, Live to Ride" is one of the most spectacular paintings to hang in an L.A. gallery in recent memory. At 10 by 15 feet, it's an immersive bang of color, motion, efflorescence. Petals of color — persimmon, silver, neon green, white, gold — erupt from the center of the panel, some opaque, others translucent and streaked like marbled paper or the sheen of an oil slick. The dominant color of this giant blossom of destruction is soot, leavened by a sprinkling of lipstick red, royal blue, forest green, industrial gray, crimson and white confetti-like patches.

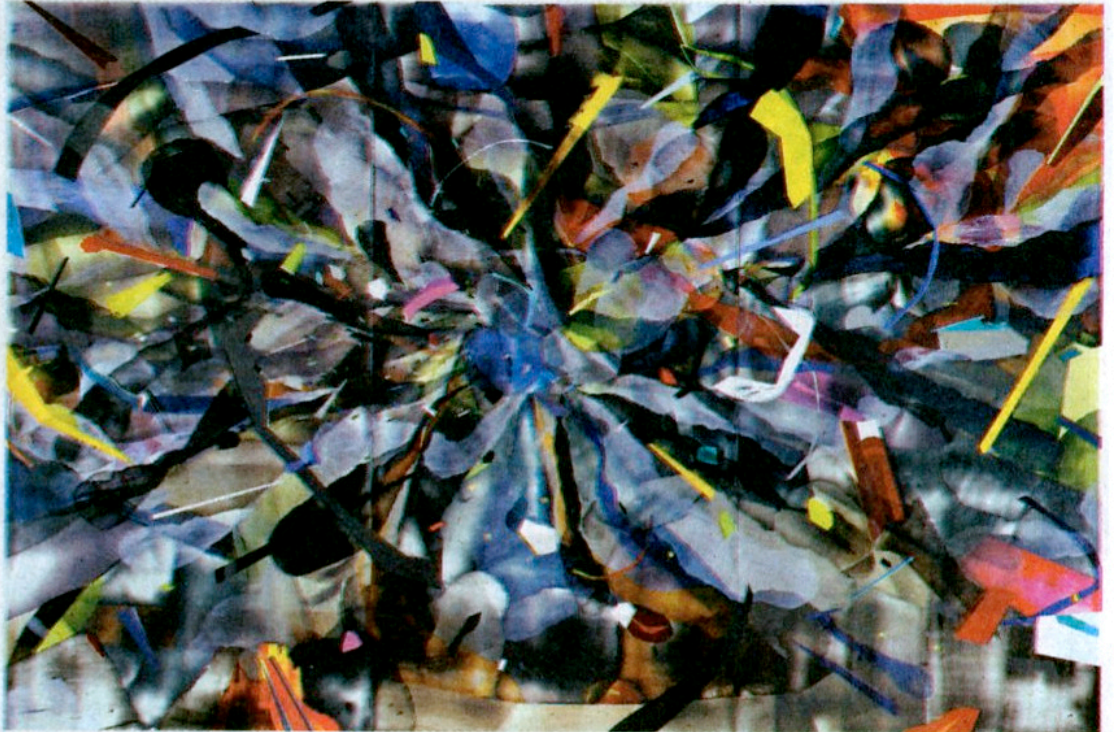
Baker derives her imagery from years of observing and photographing at racetracks. Her father became a driver, and after growing up within racing culture, she made it the subject of her art. "Ride to Live, Live to Ride" sheds all literal reference to the sport in favor of a visceral evocation of speed, impact, beauty and violence.

Each of the other paintings in Baker's show at ACME drop heavier hints about their inspiration. A tire hurls into space in one. In another, ribbons of vibrant color trace the straight-away and curve of the track. A series of paintings of orange traffic cones, stark against blank white Mylar, are inert by comparison. Scraped and crumpled, the cones are petty emblems of aftermath. The rest of the paintings capture the immediacy and speed of the race and the breathless moment of impact.

Painting in acrylic on PVC panels, Baker has developed a style reminiscent of cut-paper collage. Shapes remain hard-edged and discrete, but they layer and interweave with lush intensity. Chaos and control are in exquisite balance.

The surfaces are slick, echoing the sheen of the car bodies and the graphic vibrancy of the logo- and ad-splattered track environment. Even without a single recognizable reference to the racing world, as in the *pièce de résistance* of the show, Baker has captured the thrill and dyna-

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Special to The Times



ACME

**DRIVEN WORK:** Kristin Baker's "Ride to Live, Live to Ride" at ACME evokes the speed and beauty of auto racing. Baker, whose father raced cars, derives her imagery from years spent at tracks.

mism of the sport — and made painting just as exciting.