

ARTFORUM

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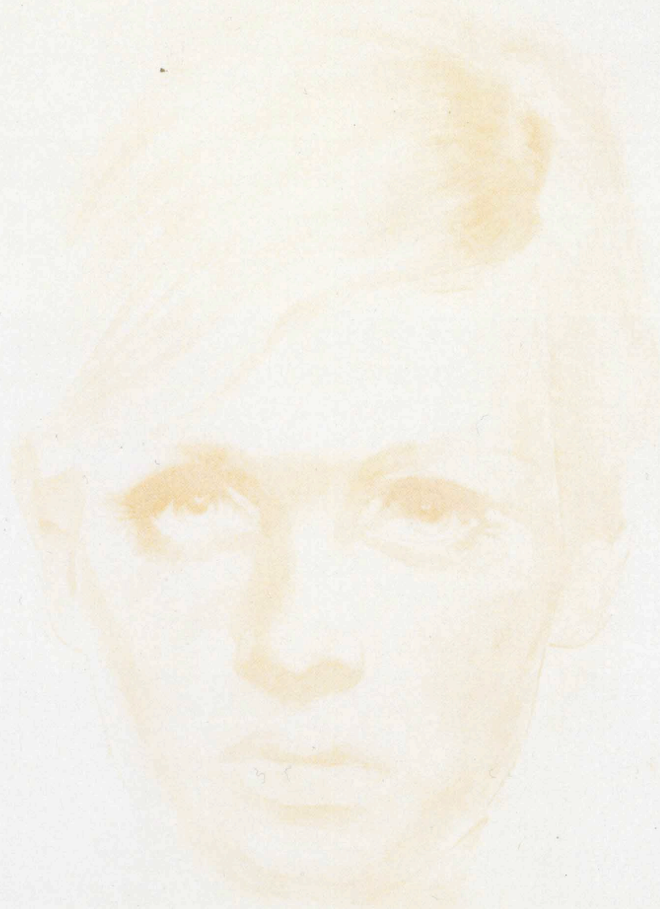
I N T E R N A T I O N A L



FIRST TAKE
10 NEW ARTISTS

WINTER PREVIEW
50 SHOWS WORLDWIDE

Carol Bove



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First Take

At the beginning of each year, *Artforum* asks a seasoned group of critics, curators, and artists to introduce the work of up-and-comers they feel show special promise for the future. The following pages feature their picks for 2005.

Debra Singer on **KRISTIN BAKER**

Jessica Morgan on **ROMAN ONDÁK**

Joe Scanlan on **WALEAD BESHTY**

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev on **MICHAEL RAKOWITZ**

David Rimanelli on **ADAM McEWEN**

Tom Holert on **JULIAN GÖTHE**

Jordan Kantor on **JAN DE COCK**

Philippe Vergne on **ZON ITO & RYOKO AOKI**

Bob Nickas on **MATTHEW DAY JACKSON**

Alison M. Gingeras on **RICHARD HUGHES**

Accident and control, anxiety and euphoria orbit one another in Kristin Baker's current series of paintings, which is inspired by the seductive theatricality of auto racing and fuses the sport's electric colors, industrial materials, and iconic imagery with passages of modernist abstraction. The resulting "dysfunctional panoramas," as the New York-based artist calls them, posit racing—with its combination of mastery, failure, calculation, and chance—as analogous to painting itself, offering an ambivalent reflection on modernity, spectacle, and global consumerist culture in the process. Interpreting the racetrack as a kind of contemporary coliseum, Baker's works conjure both complicit enthusiasm and tenuous concern toward the popular fascination with sensationalist mass entertainment.

Baker's landscapes are steeped in a lifetime of frequenting the track with her father, an amateur race-car driver. But while she has long been shooting photographs and videos of the sport on location, it was only during her final months in Yale's MFA program that the 29-year-old artist began to engage conceptually with the activity of racing, and the imagery found its way into her painting. Baker explains that she started to understand racing as a microcosm of American capitalism, given the sport's inherent ties to technological innovation and corporate sponsorship, the latter evidenced by those omnipresent logos plastered onto car bodies, stadium walls, and drivers' suits. Despite such culturally specific associations, many paintings transform representational details into predominantly formal elements, as in *Ride to Live, Live to Ride*, 2004. The up-close vantage of a moment immediately following an explosive crash, when smoke clouds the view of drivers and spectators alike, is dominated by vibrant, propulsive shards that radiate outward, interlacing with billowing flows of sooty haze. The flurry of edges and forms, reminiscent of the ornamental impulse of the 1970s Pattern and Decoration movement, imbues the scene of destruction with a paradoxical, almost floral delicacy, as translucent and opaque layers of paint overlap like scraps of torn tissue, beautiful despite circumstance.

Baker talks about "building" paintings, an apt term given the works' distinct collage sensibility and almost trompe l'oeil relief. She creates such effects through an elaborate process of first intuitively "drawing" with tape and then, as she begins to paint, ripping up the strips gradually to generate strata of impasto areas beside passages of scraped-down sheerness. Her striking use of high-gloss, metallic, and cementlike pigments suggests a "constructed" industrial aesthetic, which is reinforced by her choice of materials: She applies acrylic paint with spatulas and knives onto outside PVC panels, the kind commonly used for public signage and racetrack walls. Recently, Baker has also erected freestanding paintings; for example, *Kurotoplac Kurve*, 2004, a large, arced



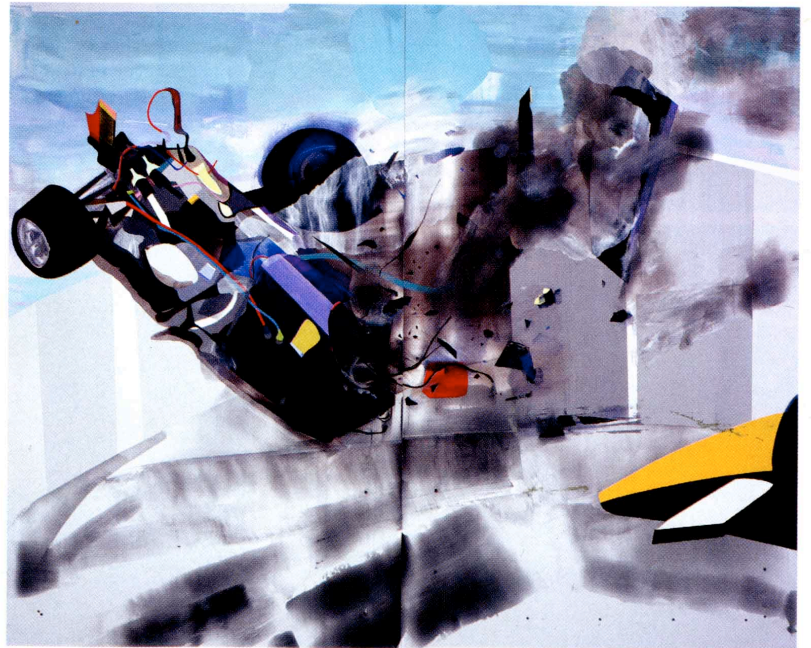
contour of panels supported by an aluminum lattice, evokes both stadium bleachers and winding track.

In this latter work, scattered car fragments blast across the surface in yellows, blues, greens, and blacks, possessing a strangely effervescent lightness. Blurred forms provide a tactile sense of speed, a pulchritude of velocity whose depiction recalls the early-twentieth-century Futurists, while gestural, undulating sweeps of red-and-white stripes lining the track walls around the gray,

muscular whorl of a paved hairpin turn summon Abstract Expressionism. This coy insinuation of a range of stylistic references further indicates how Baker, throughout her work, reflexively addresses its status as painting, focusing in particular on questions of abstraction versus representation in her chosen medium.

The next year will be a big one for Baker. A solo show at ACME in Los Angeles (March 19–April 16) will be followed by an unusual opportunity: beginning in early May, she will exhibit six billboard-size works along the city-wide raceway of the Formula 1 Monaco Grand Prix. The stunning combination of artifice and reality, with Baker's paintings placed in a setting appropriate for what she anticipates will be her last on this theme, promises to lend a new dimension to the term "action painting." □

Debra Singer is director of The Kitchen in New York.



Opposite page: Kristin Baker, *The Unfair Advantage*, 2003, acrylic on PVC, 60 x 108".

This page, top: Kristin Baker, *Kurotoplac Kurve*, 2004, acrylic on PVC, 8'1" x 16' x 6'3". Bottom: Kristin Baker, *Big Bang Vroom*, 2003, acrylic on PVC, 8 x 10'.