

# Meet Sarah Cain, the Artist Taking Aspen by Storm

She's doing her part to make the ski mecca more artful.



COURTESY ASPEN ART MUSEUM. PHOTO: TONY PRIKRYL

by ADAM RATHE DEC 11, 2017

No matter how warm December still feels in certain parts of the world, when the calendar ticks over to the first official month of winter, one thing is for certain: It's ski season. And that means some of the world's greatest skiers—as well as those of us who excel at après-ski activities—will be flocking to Aspen, Colorado, which has long been considered a premier destination for winter sports and various other forms of recreation.

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One of the most compelling non-sporting activities in Aspen this year comes courtesy of California-based artist Sarah Cain. Her large-scale installation “Mountain Song” is on exhibit at Aspen Skiing Company’s Elk Camp on Snowmass Mountain through the fall of 2018, and offers a bright, exciting, and unexpected bit of color as part of the 12th annual season of the **Aspen Art Museum** and Aspen Skiing Company’s Art in Unexpected Places program. But to hear Cain—who had a solo exhibition earlier this year at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles—tell it, making the work wasn’t exactly a day on the bunny slope.

“The space is weird, to be honest,” she says with a laugh. “It’s in a cafeteria of a lodge, but the epic views were pretty far out. I didn’t even realize consciously but when I finished I realized they really made it into the work. There’s like this sunny rainbow section that actually looks like a funny landscape watercolor, which I didn’t see at all when I was making it.”



SARAH CAIN'S "MOUNTAIN SONG" (2017). PRESENTED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ASPEN SKIING COMPANY AT ELK CAMP, SNOWMASS MOUNTAIN.

Cain and her team first visited Aspen in the spring to install the work, and found inspiration and not a little bit of curiosity in the town. “I went up there for two weeks, and it was off season. Normally you would get to the lodge by the gondola, but the gondola wasn’t running, so I had to prepare myself to drive up the actual ski slopes—and that was pretty wild,” she says. “It’s actually why I finished early, because I knew we were going to get snow, and there was no way I would be driving in this—even with four-wheel drive.”

Driving isn’t the only thing Cain doesn’t want to do in the snow. “I grew up snowboarding from age 12 to 16,” she says, “and then when I started painting, I realized, ‘alright, I can’t do this anymore’ Painting became my sanity, and I couldn’t injure my painting arm.”

And while some might consider it a shame for the artist whose work is sure to charm skiers all season not to hit the slopes herself, considering how impactful her work in Aspen—and far beyond—is certain to be, there’s no debating it’s more important she keep her working arm out of harm’s way.



SARAH CAIN.

DAVID BROACH

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