

SUMMER 2007

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the power of positive painting:

BARBARA ROMAIN

by Scott Kassel

Philadelphia-bred artist Barbara Romain brought her unique style and artistic vision to Los Angeles in the early 1970s.

Although her bread and butter was acrylic painting, Barbara's eclectic repertoire over the next decade also included large installations and performance art.

As a 6-year-old child Barbara had a freak encounter with sight loss—an acute spell of blindness—which resolved itself within a few months. It seemed a forgotten memory until 1984, when Barbara again began having trouble with her eyesight and was diagnosed with retinal degenerative disease, a form of retinitis pigmentosa.

By the early 1990s, Barbara realized that this time her sight loss was for real. An avid reader, Barbara described her inability to read print as “a great hole in my life.” She started with Braille Institute's Library Services and soon moved on to classes at the Los Angeles Sight Center—independent living skills, adaptive technology and braille.

“The most important thing I learned was to admit I was blind; to own it, and stop pretending I was sighted,” Barbara said. Rather than moving away from her artistic career, Barbara pushed forward, more determined than ever. In fact, it is her accomplishments since losing her sight that are most incredible.

In 1992 Barbara co-founded ArtOptions, an art-based educational program for inner-city children. The organization's unique teaching methods have yielded wonderful work and inspirational results for a decade and a half now. Over roughly the same time period, Barbara has also been teaching art history and color theory at Columbia College Hollywood.

Remarkably enough with that full schedule,



Barbara has still found time to work on her own projects. From 2005 to 2007 Barbara has been an artist in residence for the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and a teaching artist fellow through Very Special Arts—a prestigious organization featuring talented artists with disabilities.

This August Barbara launches a new show titled “Destruction of the State: Writing on the Wall” in North Hollywood and she continues to be active at Braille Institute through enrichment classes such as piano and ceramics. “I cherish my time at the Center,” Barbara said. “It's so serene and safe. And I am forever indebted to Braille Institute for helping me adapt to sight loss. They gave me the confidence to continue doing what I love.”