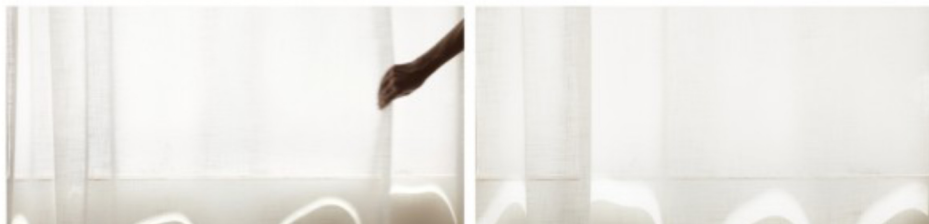


Art Professor Wins MacArthur Fellowship

Uta Barth receives the prestigious “genius” award for her work in abstract photography

By [Bettye Miller](#) On OCTOBER 1, 2012



“...and to draw a bright white line with light (Untitled 11.2, 2012)”

INSTALLATION AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Uta Barth, a professor of art emeritus at the University of California, Riverside who is known internationally for her abstract photography, has won a \$500,000 MacArthur Fellowship, one of the most prestigious awards in the country. She is one of 23 MacArthur Fellows for 2012 named by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The fellowship, colloquially known as a “genius award,” is a no-strings-attached grant to individuals who show exceptional creativity in their work, promise for important future advances, and potential for the fellowship to facilitate new work.

Paid in quarterly installments over five years, the grant is designed to provide recipients with seed money for intellectual, social, and artistic endeavors, as well as the flexibility to pursue their creative activities in the absence of specific obligations or reporting requirements.

“I’m incredibly proud of Uta Barth and her accomplishments and I am delighted to see that she is following in the steps of photographer Ansel Adams in winning this award,” said Chancellor Timothy P. White. “I’m grateful that, this award notwithstanding, this talented woman will continue to teach our students so that they will benefit from the inspiration of a true genius.”

Barth experiments with depth of field, focus and framing in photographs that allude to places rather than describe them exactly.

“My work deals with visual perception, with how we see more than what we see,” she explained. “The images often lack a central subject and capture atmosphere, changing light and the inevitable passage of time.”

Barth said the MacArthur Fellowship will allow for uninterrupted time in her studio.

“I plan to still teach, but on a very part-time basis. I learn much from teaching, I learn from students and I learn what I am thinking when forced to put language to it. I think it is a valuable thing to do,” she said. “The fellowship will also allow me to digitally archive negatives from all previous work. This way I can make stable prints of images originally created when the technology was not available and thereby preserve works that are on the verge of fading.”

The MacArthur Foundation described Barth as “an artist whose evocative, abstract photographs explore the nature of vision and the difference between how a human sees reality and how a camera records it. In contrast to documentary and confessional modes of photography, Barth intentionally depicts mundane or incidental

objects in nondescript surroundings in order to focus attention on the fundamental act of looking and the process of perception.”

In a 2002 work, “white blind (bright red),” “she investigates both literal and metaphorical modes of perception in ghostly compositions that mimic the afterimages that persist in one’s visual memory after turning away from an object,” the selection committee noted.

“Her recent series, ‘...and to draw a bright, white line with light’ (2011), marks the first time Barth has intervened in the staging of her photographs. By manipulating curtains in her home, she created lines and curves of light that expand from a sliver to a wide ribbon across a sequence of large-scale, dramatically cropped images that evoke the subtle passage of time while also highlighting the visceral and intellectual pleasures of seeing. As Barth continues to expand her photographic practice to probe the theme of perception in new and inventive ways, she is encouraging viewers to reconsider the traditional functions and expectations of the photographic image.”

Barth, who was born in Berlin, Germany, received a B.A. from the University of California, Davis and an M.F.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles. She was a professor in the UCR Department of Art from 1990 to 2008. Her photographs have been exhibited at such national and international venues as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Among her awards are a Guggenheim Fellowship and a USA Broad Foundation Fellowship.

“Uta Barth is an internationally renowned artist whose photography can be found in some of the most influential museums and galleries across the world,” said Stephen Cullenberg, dean of the UC Riverside College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. “We are grateful for the many years she taught at UCR, where she impressed students and faculty alike with her stunning photographic imagery.” Amir Zaki, chair of the UCR Department of Art, called Barth “a pivotal member of the department” and “a very influential teacher at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, inspiring students to pursue their own individual observations of the world.”

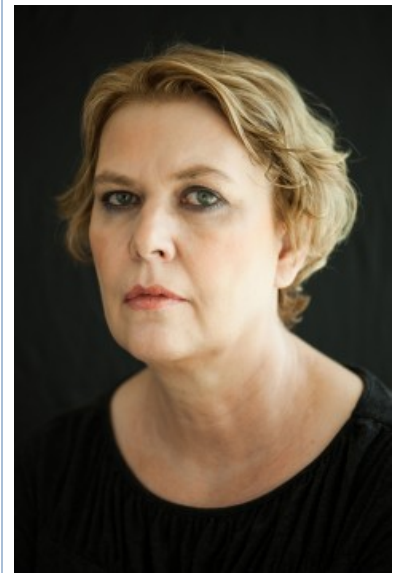
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Barth currently is finishing a three-part project in which she found various ways to literally draw with light. “In one room I draw a curtain in order to make various configurations out of ribbon of light that also grows as the sun sets. In a another room I adjust the window blinds into different configurations in order to make Mondrian-like, geometric abstractions of the light projecting onto a cabinet.”

A book on these projects, titled “to draw with light” —the literal translation of the word “photography,” she said — was published this year by Blind Spot publishing of New York.

The selection process to become a MacArthur Fellow begins with formal nominations. Nominations are accepted only from invited nominators, a list that is constantly renewed throughout the year. They are chosen from many fields and challenged to identify people who demonstrate exceptional creativity and promise. The number of MacArthur Fellows selected each year is not fixed; typically, it varies between 20 and 25.

[The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#) is a private and independent institution dedicated to building a more just and sustainable world. With an endowment over \$6.4 billion, the foundation makes grants totaling approximately \$225 million each year.



Uta Barth

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