

# James Barron Art



## *Christina Nicodema: Extra Special*

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# *Christina Nicodema: Extra Special*

Opens March 26, 2024

“With all of these things—the cakes, the plates, even the tables that they’re placed upon—they’re about moments where as soon as they’ve been observed or captured in a photograph, or as soon as the celebration has been had, it’s gone in an instant. It’s over; it’s yesterday’s news—very much like a sandcastle that will be swept away with the incoming tide.”

Christina Nicodema





CHRISTINA NICODEMA

*The Occasion*, 2024  
oil on canvas  
28 x 28 inches (71.1 x 71.1 cm)











“It’s a moment of peak perfection or celebration. The exhibition title *Extra Special* refers to how we all want to feel this specialness or uniqueness... Everyone wants their moment. An Instagram post is fresh for 24 hours, and then it goes off into the content landfill. I like that high school beauty queen metaphor for a moment that can’t be retained, a type of peak specialness that is so fleeting.”

Christina Nicodema













CHRISTINA NICODEMA

*Ruined Birthday, 2023*  
oil on canvas  
48 x 37 inches (121.9 x 94 cm)

















CHRISTINA NICODEMA

*A Toast, 2024*  
oil on canvas  
28 x 28 inches (71.1 x 71.1 cm)









CHRISTINA NICODEMA

*Celebration, 2024*  
oil on canvas  
28 x 28 inches (71.1 x 71.1 cm)













CHRISTINA NICODEMA

*Day of Days, 2024*  
oil on canvas  
48 x 37 inches (121.9 x 94 cm)











“[The cakes] possess memories of the past, of societal structures or family structures. I’m thinking about how those things fade and degrade and transform over time, just like our memories. All we have to hold onto are our stories and memories of these things. And our memories are imperfect narratives. They’re never what really happened.”

Christina Nicodema



CHRISTINA NICODEMA

*Milestone*, 2024  
oil on canvas  
18 x 14 inches (45.7 x 35.6 cm)







“You can’t quite understand milestones until you have some distance from them.”

Christina Nicodema



CHRISTINA NICODEMA

Valentine, 2024  
oil on canvas  
18 x 14 inches (45.7 x 35.6 cm)









# Interview / Christina Nicodema

March 2024

**James Barron:** Your paintings feel like trophies. Each cake is something we want to hold onto, something we want to embrace, but the second you cut into it, it starts to go away.

**Christina Nicodema:** I do see these cakes as trophies or icons or crumbling architectural structures. They mark fleeting moments that degrade with time. They've been abandoned—no one even ate them. They possess memories of the past and also talk about the transformation of societal structures, or family structures. I'm thinking about how those things fade and degrade and transform over time, like falling empires. They make way for something else to emerge in their place. All we have to hold onto are our stories and memories of these things. And our memories are imperfect and subjective narratives. They're never what really happened.

**JB:** They also make me think of a high school beauty queen, but as David Lynch would depict it, with the insects coming in.

**CN:** Yes. They are over the top, decorated and adorned. It's a moment of peak perfection or celebration. The exhibition title *Extra Special* refers to how we all want to feel this specialness or uniqueness. It certainly plays out on social media. Everyone wants their moment of maximum attention. An Instagram post is fresh for 24 hours, and then it goes off into the content landfill. I like that high school beauty queen metaphor for a moment that can't be retained, a type of peak specialness that is so fleeting.

**JB:** The flowers remind me of a high school prom—the second you put the corsage on, it's already wilting. If you're lucky, maybe you captured the moment with a photograph, and then you have to hold onto that photo. It's meant to be this hyper special thing, a burst into adulthood. But then when you're in adulthood, you can never really recapture what you had.

**CN:** I like that.



**JB:** The way you've painted these, the table becomes a landscape going way off into the distant horizon. Sometimes you have two or three lines with marigold, then russet, then marigold, and a peach sky. In another, there's a strange celeste blue, and then yellow. It's an exalted thing, like in Goya, he has a sandcastle in a landscape that goes off into the horizon, but the sandcastle will be gone.

**CN:** With all of these things—the cakes, the plates, even the tables that they're placed upon—they're about moments where as soon as they've been observed or captured in a photograph, or as soon as the celebration has been had, it's gone in an instant. It's over; it's yesterday's news—very much like a sandcastle that will be swept away with the incoming tide.

**JB:** They feel like vanitas paintings. They're Netherlandish, but then they're also jewel encrusted like Spanish paintings, like the embroidery on a gown or the necklace on a queen.

**CN:** Exactly. The mold, while referencing the decay and transfer of energy, also speaks to the adornment and peak specialness of this very temporary moment. The connection to Spanish painting makes sense with those celebratory items.

**JB:** What was your high school prom like?

**CN:** My high school prom was on a boat. We didn't have a king or queen, because they wanted everyone to be equal. I remember going with a friend. I wore a lacy peach knee-length dress with layers of chiffon, with peach heels that matched. I haven't thought about this in so long, but my date brought an orchid corsage, and I remember thinking he had really good taste. I kept the dress. I still have it today.

I remember we were all on a boat, and it was about these kids and their incredible outfits, and there was an elaborate meal. It was an over the top display of decadence, a show of celebration—special for the sake of being special. A celebration of what, I'm not even sure. Maybe it was meant to mark this imaginary milestone of moving into adulthood with a party. But it was a reason to celebrate something we couldn't even grasp at that age. You can't quite understand milestones or the passage of time until you have some distance from them.



**JB:** In *Ruined Birthday* there are three lemon slices that are still yellow, and then one in the center that has turned a deep purple. You see how sugar becomes corrupted and begins to change.

**CN:** Sugar does change, and it can't stop. We equate sugary things with specialness and celebration and treats. What was once a rare and expensive commodity is now so ubiquitous. We construct these cakes and desserts that are so over the top that we make the food into art itself—meant to also be consumed visually. It talks about a civilization at its peak, and also on the verge of collapse. This aggregation of power is what allows for things like an elaborate cake to exist in abundance. But it also doesn't last. It will rot. It will break down and transform just as quickly.





### Solo & Two Person Exhibitions

- 2024 *Extra Special*, James Barron Art, Kent, CT  
2022 *This is Fine*, Scott Miller Projects, Birmingham, AL  
2020 *Mayfly*, Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art, Houston, TX  
2020 *Of Folly*, Fortune, Glory, Ruin: William Buchina and Christina Nicodema, Hollis Taggart, New York, NY  
2019 *Tower of Babel*, Martha's Contemporary, Austin, TX

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *Dallas Art Fair*, James Barron Art, Dallas, TX  
(forthcoming) *The Ark*, Schloss Goerne, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Berlin, Germany  
(forthcoming) *Expo Chicago*, presented by Kristin Hjellegjerde, Chicago, IL
- 2023 *Beach*, curated by Danny Moynihan, Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY  
*UNTITLED Art Fair*, Platform X David Zwirner in partnership with Scott Miller Projects, Miami Beach, FL  
*Ephemeral Pleasures*, Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
*Intersect Aspen*, James Barron Art, Aspen, CO  
*Eat Me! Trotter and Sholer*, New York, NY  
*Dallas Art Fair*, James Barron Art, Dallas, TX  
*Platform x David Zwirner*, David Zwirner, New York, NY
- 2022 *To Die For*, curated by Laura Sanders, Contemporary Art Matters, Columbus, OH  
*Party For One*, My Pet Ram, New York, NY
- 2021 *UNTITLED Art Fair*, Miami Beach, FL  
*Spiritual Art Advisory: Part Deux*, curated by Caroline Larsen and Sarah Potter,  
Greenpoint Terminal Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
*Intersect Aspen*, Aspen, CO  
*EXPO Chicago*, Chicago, IL
- 2020 *À la carte: A Visual Exploration of Our Relationship with Food*, Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts,  
Birmingham, AL  
*Spallanzani Hospital Benefit Exhibition*, Postmasters Gallery, Rome, Italy  
*New Wave*, Anna Zorina Gallery, New York, NY
- 2019 *Zwang*, curated by Kylie Manning, C.G. Boerner, New York, NY  
*Floral/Fauna*, Josée Bienvenu Gallery, New York, NY  
*Texas Contemporary*, Houston, TX  
*Every Woman Biennial*, La Mama Galleria, New York, NY  
*Yin/Yang*, 0.0.LA, Los Angeles, CA

### Press

- 2022 "Mold(ed) to Perfection," essay by Brett Levin  
"Why Is Cake Everywhere in Art Right Now? An Investigation," by Katie White, *Artnet News*
- 2021 "FAST," *The Harvard Advocate*, Winter 2021
- 2020 "Artist Spotlight: Christina Nicodema," *FADDY Magazine*, Issue 25 October 2020  
"Christina Nicodema: A Life Brushed Away," Tina Ruggieri  
"Here Are 7 Artists You Might Not Know, But Should—With Shows You Can See This February," *Artnet News*



**Education**

2009 Parsons School of Design, New York, NY, BFA

**Awards**

2021 Peter S. Reed Foundation Grant recipient for painting, 2021

**Notable Collections**

Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody, West Palm Beach, FL  
Fidelity Investments Corporate Art Collection, Boston, MA

**Visiting Artist Lectures**

2021 Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
2020 Abrams- Engel Institute for the Visual Arts, Birmingham, AL  
2020 Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA