

[Jo Baer website](#)[Baer at Pace Gallery](#)[Baer at Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin](#)**Artist Resources – Jo Baer (American, b. 1930)**

Baer has published scholarship on [Orchids](#) since the 1970s, writing about the flower's unique visual qualities, which she brought into her paintings.

Critic and art historian, Lucy Lippard, discussed Baer's significance in a [1972 review](#) congratulating her work as a woman in the Whitney Biennial.

"I consider it mandatory to be rude in every painting at certain points. It's important to include some of the less pleasant aspects of life, like death and shit. And also to make sure your work doesn't become kitsch. If I could place a precise definition on my work, it would no longer be very effective and it would certainly go out of style in six months," Baer reflected in a frank [1995 interview with BOMB Magazine](#) about her relationship with the art world and convictions that define her identity as a painter.

The Smithsonian Archives of American Art conducted [an oral history](#) with Baer in Amsterdam in 2010, discussing her family, upbringing, and career.

Baer published a collection of essays and graphic work in the 2010 [Broadsides & Belles Lettres: Selected Writings and Interviews 1965–2010](#). "It has made me think a lot about control, which I've realized is very central to my work," she [commented about the process](#). "I've always asked questions about control and who is controlling whom and so forth. I don't see how you can be a woman and not have to think about control." The collection debuted alongside [an exhibition of work created by Baer and John Wesley](#) when they lived together in the 1960s, which was curated by Baer's son.

[Museum Ludwig](#) presented the first German survey of Baer's work in 2013, focusing on her celebrated minimalist years from 1960-1975. [Join Baer for a tour](#) of the installation.



Baer, 1961

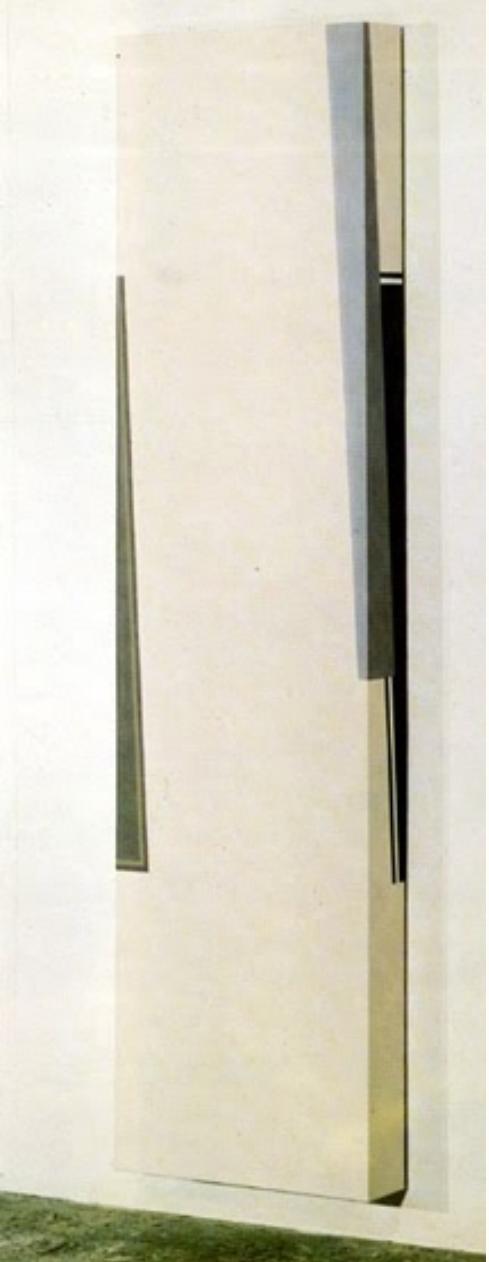
Baer's 2009-13 cycle of paintings, *In the Land of Giants*, explores the artist's life-long interest and continuing education in science and natural history. Inspired by prehistoric sites and Neolithic monuments around the world, the series toured throughout Europe in 2013, presented by the [Stedelijk Museum](#) in Amsterdam and Berlin's [Galerie Barbara Thumm](#), as well as [London's Camden Art Centre](#).

"I seem to feel that a painting is no good unless it's alive. And what I mean by alive is, it moves. How it works. It takes your attention here and there and therefore it makes you move; it activates. And you don't restrict it like this, you must keep it flowing," Baer explained in a 2020 interview with [The Brooklyn Rail](#) about the role of figuration and narrative in her practice, her relationship toward medium and composition, experiences working in Ireland, and [two solo exhibitions at Pace Gallery](#) that bring together re-creations of seminal pieces from 1960-61, which Baer destroyed, and major works after the artist left behind her minimalist abstractions in 1975. "The nature of painting is such that it has no time, it has no tense," Baer reflected in a [video for the gallery](#). "it's the language of dreams. I'm talking to people in painting."

[Galerie Barbara Thumm](#) reopened in spring 2020 with a display of works on paper by Baer, showcasing her practices of drawing, collage, and digital prints that have been an evolving and ever-more central facet of her career.



Baer, 2020  
Photography: Yaël Temminck



Jo Baer (American, b. 1929)

**V. Speculum, 1970**

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:27.1

In the 1970s, American painter Jo (Josephine) Baer broke away from the austere canvases for which she was celebrated as one of the few women within the Minimalist movement in New York during the 1950s and 1960s. Baer moved her practice to Ireland and then Amsterdam (where she is still based) and developed a visual language she terms “radical figuration,” defined by gestures and forms that, without entering abstraction, have “no pre-eminence of image or space.” A suite of works known as the “radiator paintings,” named for their placement near the floor, occupies a transitional space between her early abstract work and mature aesthetic.

**V. Speculum** represents a stunning early example of this series, displaying the characteristic empty interior space framed by deep, painted edges. Baer titled each work using the scientific naming system for animals and plants: “Genus (first initial). Species.” The “Genus” of each work notes horizontal or vertical orientation with the initial of “H.” or “V.” while the “species” honors an orchid variety—in this case, the speculum orchid—a nod to Baer’s hobby of growing, researching, and writing about the rare flowers.

*On view April 28 – August 1, 2021*