

**Unframed: A Critical Introduction, by Paula Birnbaum, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Visual and Performing Arts Department, University of San Francisco.** (Resource Library Magazine, from Thatcher Gallery at the University of San Francisco, 2004)

For centuries images of women living out circumscribed roles have saturated the art world as well as the media. We are all too familiar with such popular images of woman as commodity: slender, sexually available, and defined by her relationship to others. In “Unframed”, four California artists engage in a powerful social critique of modern femininity by telling compelling stories about women’s lives. Whether challenging the beauty myth or confronting painful memories and bodily trauma, each artist uses the narrative structure to explore different pressures placed on women to conform to a culturally specific ideal. Their work makes a vital contribution to the ongoing history of contemporary art that questions societal demands that have dictated the way in which women have been represented in visual culture.

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Lori Markman’s large oils on canvas also engage with pop sensibility—as well as employing realism and abstraction—to tell the story of an automobile accident in which the artist was seriously injured. Her storyboard format effectively confronts the narrative challenge of representing movement and the passage of an intense sequence of events that altered her life and bodily perceptions. Each painting chronicles the artist’s emotional state as the accident transpired, from the visceral shock of *Impact* and its subtle layers of visual collision, to the explicit vulnerability and physical and emotional pain of *Broken*. Reminiscent of Frieda Kahlo’s paintings about female bodily trauma, Markman’s work is invested with a haunting complexity and powerful narrative quality.