

Izzy Barber**Badlands****31.03.2026****11.04.2026**

Izzy Barber paints from life: immediacy and physical presence are at the heart of her practice. Barber's work sits at the intersection of observation, material experimentation, and a distinctly modern sensitivity to colour and space. In a cultural moment saturated with digital images, her commitment to direct looking feels especially relevant.

These new paintings mark a significant expansion in Izzy Barber's practice, both geographically and conceptually. Created for the first time outside of New York City—where she is based—this body of work emerges from a number of cross-country road trips through the Badlands and across the United States. Moving outward, Barber places herself in unfamiliar and often charged environments, allowing direct experience to shape both subject and method.

Working from life, each image operates not simply as a depiction, but as an entry point into a larger, unfolding narrative. The paintings read almost like fragments of a broader story—moments observed firsthand that carry the weight of something beyond the frame. In this sense, they echo the experience of reading the news: immediate, partial, and saturated with context that exceeds what is visible. Yet unlike the speed and flattening effect of digital media, Barber's commitment to painting—its materiality, its insistence on presence—allows for a different kind of attention.

Throughout her journey, Barber deliberately sought out situations marked by political tension and ambiguity. The visible presence of authority and moments of perceived unrest placed her, at times, in the position of a frontline witness. In Washington, D.C., during a period of National Guard deployment, she spent days navigating an atmosphere shaped by confusion, rumour, and the distortions of online representation. What she discovered was a disjunction between circulated images and lived reality—scenes that appeared spontaneous on social media were, in certain instances, partially staged, complicating any clear distinction between documentation and performance.

Rather than resolving these contradictions, Barber leans into them. Her paintings allow space for uncertainty, resisting definitive narratives in favour of sustained observation. There is a palpable tension in the act itself: painting in the presence of armed figures, translating charged encounters into the familiar language of oil on canvas. The works maintain a classic, almost timeless sensibility—rooted in the textures and conventions of figurative painting and the techniques of Impressionism—while engaging directly with the urgencies of contemporary American life. In this way, they recall traditions of social realism, where the everyday and the political are inseparable, yet they remain distinctly her own in their immediacy and openness.

These images are, in part, the crude byproducts of experience—records of what it means to place oneself deliberately within complex and, at times, uncomfortable realities. Barber does not shy away from what she encounters; instead, she allows it to unfold, to be processed through the act of painting. What emerges is not a fixed statement but a series of lived impressions, still unsettled, still in motion—paint often seeming as if it has barely dried.

The works presented at MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique suggest that certain forms of understanding resist language. What cannot be fully articulated finds expression in paint: in gesture, in texture, in the quiet persistence of looking.

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Izzy Barber

Izzy Barber (born in 1990) is originally from Gowanus, Brooklyn, and lives and works in Queens, New York. Barber paints on-site, in public, often at sunset, in the last light of day and into the night—drawing directly from the streets, bridges and scaffolds of the city. Her highly impressionistic, at times three-dimensional brushwork charges her city scenes with the physical and temporal proximity of their making.

Walking through industrial neighbourhoods and pausing under urban scaffolding, Barber immerses herself in the “energetic framework” of city life. These twilight and nocturnal moments become her ultimate subject: moments of attention in a world that keeps moving. In her process, what is clear in daylight gives way after dark to a new search—one guided by intuition more than preconception.

Barber earned her MFA from the New York Studio School in 2017 and her BA in Studio Arts & Human Rights from Bard College in 2011. Her exhibition *There Is No Time* (2024, at James Fuentes, Los Angeles) follows her solo shows *Waiting Game* (2023, Studio d'Arte Raffaelli, Trento) and *Crude Futures* (2022) and *Maspeth Moon* (2021) (both at James Fuentes, New York). Her work has been shown at James Fuentes, New York; Galleria Franco Noero, Turin; David Zwirner Platform; New Orleans Art Center; and in the 2012 Brucennial, among others. Publications include *Waiting Game* (2023) and JFP03: *Izzy Barber* (2021).

Artworks*Badlands*, 2025

Oil on canvas

21.6 × 23 cm / 8 1/2 × 9 inches

Border Wall, 2026

Oil on canvas

17.8 × 23 cm / 7 × 9 inches

Oil Field, Midland TX, 2026

Oil on canvas

15.2 × 15.2 cm / 6 × 6 inches

Protest in DC, 2026

Oil on canvas

7.6 × 7.6 cm / 3 × 3 inches

Highway at Night, 2025

Oil on canvas

10 × 15.2 cm / 4 × 6 inches

Brake Lights (Modoc County), 2025

Oil on canvas

20.3 × 23 cm / 8 × 9 inches

National Guard in DC, 2025

Oil on canvas

20.3 × 15.2 cm / 8 × 6 inches