
I Paint What I Like

Gene Beery

November 14, 2025–January 17, 2026

Parker Gallery is proud to present *I Paint What I Like*, its second solo exhibition with Gene Beery (1937-2023), an iconoclastic artist whose experimental text paintings span more than six decades. Coinciding with the exhibition, the first comprehensive collection of Beery's artist books, co-published by Ligature Press, Parker Gallery and Derosia, with an introduction by Jordan Stein, is set for release in January 2026.

This exhibition features works from across Beery's career that emphasize the authorial voice of the artist, often relating to the act of creation itself. In this selection of paintings, Beery directly addresses the viewer with exclamatory phrases to project proclamations, directives, warnings and revelations. Consistently using the canvas as a fertile ground to pose questions (and occasional answers), other dominant themes include the visualization of the creative process, with works that celebrate uncertainty and doubt.

Beery frequently revisited ideas throughout his practice, making multiple paintings from closely related thoughts, sometimes decades apart. *Art Investigating Art No.4* (1969) addresses the inherent subjectivity in Art. "I Paint What I Like, and I Like This!" is the first instance where these words appear in Beery's work, emblazoned across the canvas in bold lettering outlined with several different colors, emphasizing the message of radical autonomy. This notion of subjectivity is underscored by the grayed out sentence below ("This painting is better than most but not as good as some"). The exhibition includes a related painting from the 1970s/2000s with a similar theme; titled *I Paint What I Like*, it features the phrase "Don't Tell Me What to Paint!" asserting the need for artists to resist outside influence. Whereas Beery's earliest works are filled with color and stylized lettering, the later paintings feel improvisational, almost urgent, done simply with plain text on pre-stretched canvas. As the artist notes, "To paint with a somewhat loose painting style and still getting yourself to accept it as legit. For me, that's a rule. Resist tightening it up! Don't make it sharper than it already is!"

In several paintings from the 1970s, Beery addresses the difficulty of being an artist with deadpan works that declare moments of creative stagnation (*Idea Window*; *Now What Do I Paint? Painting No.10*; *I Haven't Had an Original Idea in My Art in 3 Weeks*). Rather than allowing painter's block to limit productivity, Beery turns the unheroic aspects of failure and uncertainty into a rumination on creativity itself. The decade prior, Beery had spent a few formative years immersed in New York City (1959-1963), becoming friendly with many artists at the start of their careers, including Sol Lewitt, James Rosenquist, Dan Flavin, Robert Ryman and Lucy Lippard. During this time Beery exhibited his work in a group exhibition at MoMA (*Recent Painting USA: The Figure*, 1962) and had his first solo exhibition at Alexander Iolas Gallery in 1963. Despite his early success on the East Coast, Beery decided to move to California shortly thereafter—first to San Francisco, whose dramatic climate influenced his early weather paintings and caught the eye of trailblazing dealer Ruth Braunstein—then to Sutter Creek, where he eventually settled with his family, marking a departure from city life and the professional art world. Working in isolation, he increasingly turned to autobiography, creating works out of self doubt, yes, but also from the paradox of making art without an audience.

In works like *Making Art Feels Good!* and *A Painting Ahead of Its Time!*, Beery celebrates artistic freedom, relishing in the immediacy of language to communicate critical observations about artmaking — why make it, what makes it good? For some paintings, he used only pencil on canvas, leaving behind faint traces that carry big messages. Dashed off with the immediacy of signs, the works are declarative, self-confident and wry. Text was Beery's primary medium, which he used with abandon and complete disregard for formal finesse.

Gene Beery (b. 1937 Racine, WI; d. 2023 Sutter Creek, CA). The artist's first retrospective was organized by the Fri Art Kunsthalle, Fribourg, Switzerland in 2019. Recent solo exhibitions include *Gene Beery Memorial Exhibition*, Cushion Works, San Francisco, CA (2024); *Practice Quotidian Ecstasy*, Derosia, New York, NY (2024) and *Portrait of the Artist as a Spandex Tuxedo*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2022). Recent institutional group exhibitions include *Rules & Repetition*, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT (2023); *AOULIOULE*, curated by Sylvie Fanchon and Camila Oliveira Fairclough, Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie, Serignan, France; *The Drawing Centre Show*, curated by Franck Gautherot, Seungduk Kim, Tobias Pils and Joe Bradley, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2022), and *Stop Painting*, organized by Peter Fischli, Fondazione Prada, Venice, Italy (2021). The artist's work has also been included in historical group presentations, including the 1975 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1975); and *955,000*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (1970) and *557,087*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA (1969), both curated by Lucy Lippard.