

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Jared Bowen, "Art World Favorite Amy Sillman's First-Ever Retrospective At The ICA", *WGBH*, November 7, 2013

The Brooklyn artist Amy Sillman is acclaimed in art circles for her point of view, for her use of the line and for the way she's brought attention and enthusiasm back to painting itself.

But seeing a career's worth of work in her first-ever retrospective at the ICA in the cheekily titled show, "Amy Sillman: one lump or two," Sillman is as nuanced as her work.

"It's weird, I think it's probably like if you were a mother, and you had a hundred children, and then all got in a room," she said. "I said to everyone, it's a combination of a bar mitzvah and menopause. In other words, cold feet and hot flashes."

Sillman is a funny lady—as her work shows. For example, her series of cartoons that depict the utterly relatable everyday horror of just being human. And just as her humor engages our intellect, her painting engages our emotion. Sillman has a very organic way of working, she said.



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Credit Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co.

Untitled Cartoon, 2002. For the publication "Amy Stillman: Visiting Artist." Ink and gouache on paper. 11 1/4 x 15 inches.

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"I have a framework, but I'm actually interested in surprising myself, and in discovering something that I didn't know, and that process is very uncertain," she said. "And it leads to paintings that went in the dumpster, and paintings that worked out. I don't know how else to call it, except kind of a weird negotiation between thinking and feeling."

As the energy on her canvases suggests—it's also very physical.

"There's a lot of deconstruction and reconstruction," she said. "There's a lot of moving it from one state to another. A lot of my paintings go through stages of extreme uncertainty or not-knowingness, and I'm not sure why or when they're done."

One certainty Sillman does have—she does *not* prefer the pretty.

"I don't think the goal is to find out how beautiful things can get, and ugliness is interesting," she said. "It's more anxious. It allows the anxiety to be in the room, so the uncertainty of anxiety could be a valuable state for something to remain in, or be kind of recognized as a state of mind."

It is a nebulous world Sillman creates—as the show points out, the artist doesn't believe in either/or. Her work is rife with realism *and* abstraction. The sweet *and* the acerbic. The silly *and* the wrenching. You can take it however you'd like. One lump or two.

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