

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Ted Loos, "Amy Sillman at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston – Three Takeaways", Sotheby's website, November 7, 2013

**BOSTON** - The excellent painter Amy Sillman is having a show at the [Institute of Contemporary Art](#) in Boston this fall, which will be her first museum show. It's a good excuse to introduce a regular *On the Loos* feature: Three Takeaways, in which you get some nice bullet points to sit with.

I did a feature on Sillman for the [New York Times](#) recently, talking about how this talented New York-based painter occupies an interesting space between figuration and abstraction. She has written her own rules, taking a long time to develop her ideas and gain recognition. Whether it is her drawings that resemble comic book illustrations or slashes of paint that look like off-balance, off-color De Koonings, Sillman makes the viewer think.

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Amy Sillman's *Fatsy*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co. Photo by Bernd Borchardt.

1. **Gender lag.** Women still have a harder time breaking through, career-wise: Sillman is 57. As the Museum of Modern Art's chief painting and sculpture curator, [Ann Temkin](#), told me, "It's not that she suddenly became good. As has been the case for other women artists for the

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last century, there's been a certain lag in when they become recognized – a late-bloomer phenomenon.”

**2. Myth of the solitary garret.** Although Sillman spent many years working away on her own, she credits two particular bursts of social interaction to her development. The first was finding a community of like-minded artists who gathered at the alternative space Four Walls in Williamsburg in the early 1990s.

And secondly, in the middle of her career she got a Master of Fine Arts degree at **Bard College**, where she now teaches. The school integrates video, film and poetry with its fine arts to create an interdisciplinary curriculum that allows Sillman to hone her diverse interests and develop a highly theoretical practice. “These parts of my life came together in an academic setting,” she told me, “which I don't think could have happened in any other school.” Solitary garrets are fine, but they're better when met with outside feedback and genuine social intercourse.

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Amy Sillman's *Ocean 1*, 1997. Collection McKee Gallery, New York. Photo by John Berens.

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**3. Technology is only a means.** The last few years have seen some artists fall in love with technology. The good ones, like Wade Guyton, have found a way to make it work for them, and not the other way around – I'm thinking of the ravishing paintings Guyton has done with the help of inkjet printers.

Sillman, despite a lack of tech-savvy expertise, has done some ingenious things with iPhones and iPads, creating crudely animated pieces that riff on previous paintings. In one case she "imagines thirteen futures" for one of her own works. But she hasn't become too infatuated with this new avenue – she uses it to deepen our understanding of her overall practice, rather than to temporarily wow us with a shiny new toy. It's the sign of a mature artist, one of many such signs you can see in the ICA / Boston show of her work on view until January 5.