

Amy Sillman: *Landline*

28 September 2018 – 6 January 2019

Amongst the most distinctive voices in contemporary painting, Amy Sillman (b. 1955 Detroit, USA) is exhibiting through all of the galleries at Camden Arts Centre for her first institutional exhibition in the UK. Over the last three decades, Sillman's wayward form of abstraction has pushed defiantly at the process-oriented approaches typically associated with the traditions of post-war American painting, infusing her work with a modern sensibility, a critical self-reflexivity, feminism and humour.

The title of the exhibition – *Landline* – points to Sillman's participation with outmoded forms and technologies (painting, printmaking, drawing) and suggests a commentary on painting itself as a form of communication. The line is also a place of ambivalence, divide, and connection – between one thing and another. Sillman's work is full of these contradictions and dualities that seem to work both with and against the form of painting itself.

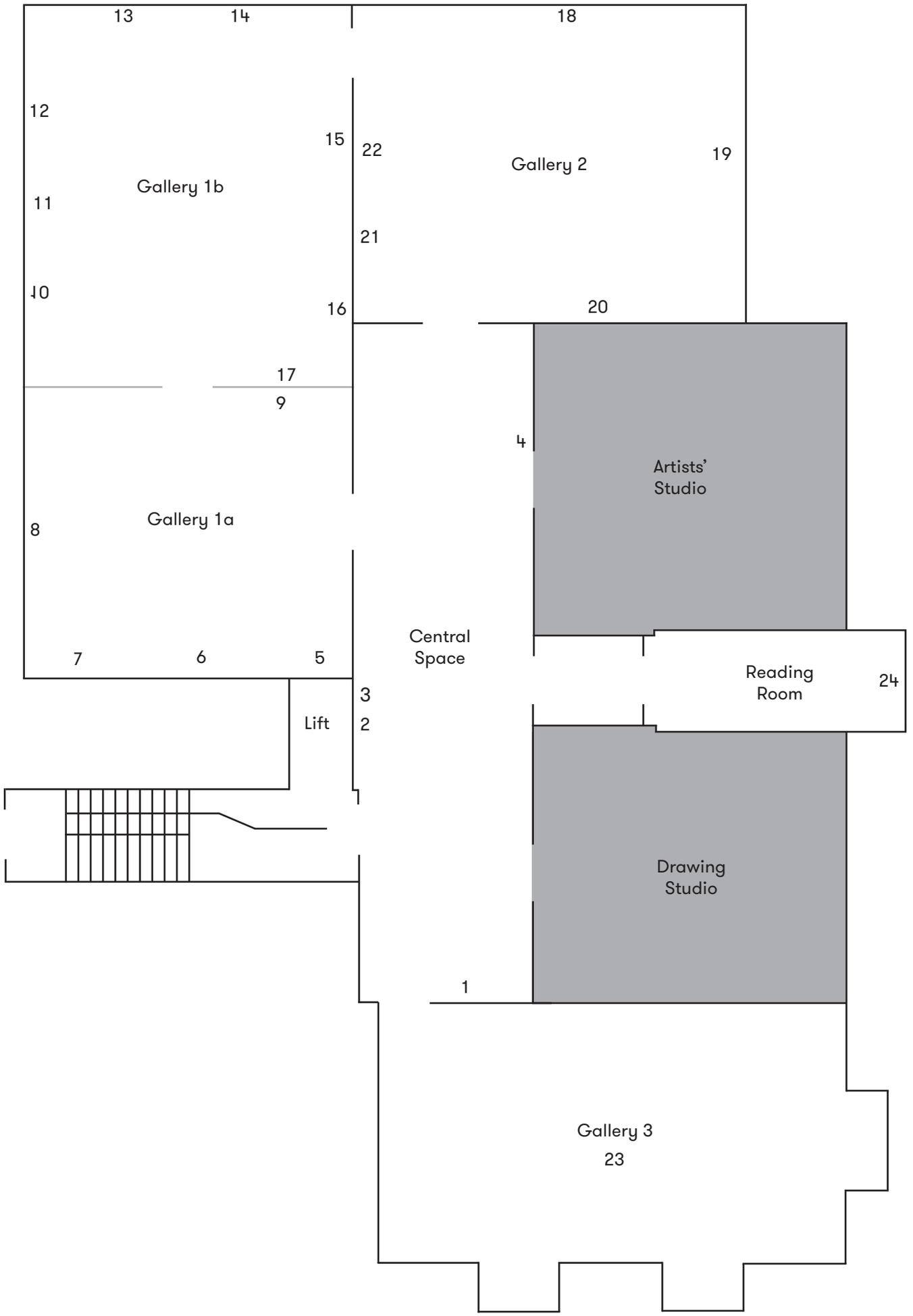
Across all of the galleries, the depth and scope of Sillman's work is explored, ranging from the political and social to the emotional and psychological, encompassing gestural drawing, painting, silkscreen print processes, video and zines. In her expansive practice she extends painting out into the language and logic of other media and forms and, throughout the show, works on canvas are brought into direct contact with animation, print and drawings, re-evaluating and complicating painting's histories and status.

For Sillman, painting is always a time-based medium – both in how it is made and in the experience of viewing it. In her large canvases time is registered, recorded and revealed in the layers of paint that are worked into and scraped back, washed over and built up again, creating densely layered surfaces where traces of past processes remain discernible. Some of these large oils take many months, or even years to make, moving through numerous iterations as compositions shift, change and evolve. This physical and emotional process is inscribed in the accretions of the works' surfaces; an energy of antagonism residing in forms that remain somehow in flux, feelings that don't resolve, signs that don't signify and materials that struggle between construction and deconstruction. Other paintings happen more quickly and in some of the large canvases Sillman has worked primarily in acrylic – a medium that demands a different practice and approach, one that is closer to drawing or collage, as marks are laid down definitively and can only be covered, drawn or painted over.

The *Pink Drawings* (2015-16) in **Gallery 1** share this sense of speed and vitality – a vast family of gouache and acrylic gestures on paper, installed as a grid; a lexicon of calligraphic or hieroglyphic symbols. In **Gallery 2** another group of drawings, *Rebus For Camden* (2017-18), is installed in a line – fragments of figures and body parts emerge and recede like an exquisite corpse unfolding in procession against the wall. This sequential logic is echoed in an animation projected in the **Central Space**, *After Metamorphosis* (2015-16), in which Sillman responds to Ovid's 1st century poem, a chronicle of mutability and change, rendering his narrative visually through a series of bodies and forms that shift constantly from one state to another.

Dub Stamp (2018) is a new site-specific installation created especially for **Gallery 3** that relates closely to the sequential logic, dynamism, flux and transformation of her moving image work. Working in this format for the first time, Sillman has printed, painted and drawn onto both sides of huge sheets of paper that are then hung from a line stretched diagonally through the gallery. As viewers move from frame to frame, an object figure drawn in crude black marks twists and contorts through a sequence of distressed and degenerative postures – devouring and reforming itself. In a figure-ground oscillation, the graphic elements on one side struggle with painterly gestures and abstract patterns and shapes developed on the reverse. These images emerge from a dark and antagonistic moment – drawn by Sillman in the days following the election of Donald Trump as president of the USA, they were originally published in her zine, the *OG #11*, and then revisited to produce this monumental new work.

In the **Central Space** Sillman's back catalogue of self-published zines is available for visitors to buy, including the latest issue – *OG#13* – created especially for Camden Arts Centre. Sillman's zines often intervene discursively or diagrammatically in her exhibitions – branching out from the painting into her personal relationship with a subject. In this new issue she discusses British painting – revealing a complex mix of appreciation and antipathy for the protagonists of modernism in Cornwall. Writing as an outsider about a foreign scene, she positions herself in contrast to her relationship with American painting, a tradition that she works so intimately within and against.



List of Works

Central Space

1. *After Metamorphosis*, 2015-16
HD video, 4:3

2. Back catalogue of OG (#1 – 2; #5; #6; #11; #12)
Self-published zines available to buy for a one-unit coin (£, \$, €)

3. *Sparbüchse (Coin lady)* 2016
Unglazed ceramic
44 x 35 x 18 cm
Courtesy the Artist and Captain Petzel, Berlin

4. *Pink Ground, Face Down*, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
129.5 x 124.5cm
Courtesy Private Collection, Cologne

Gallery 1a

Clockwise from left of door

5. *Kick the Bucket (Loop for Portikus)*, 2016
HD video, 16:9 1:10min (loop)

6. *3-Legged*, 2011
Ink, acrylic and oil on paper
76 x 56.5cm

7. *The Innie*, 2017
Acrylic on linen
190.5 x 167.5cm
Courtesy Private Collection

8. *Pink Drawings*, 2015-2016
Acrylic, charcoal, and ink on paper
76 x 57cm each

9. *What the Axe Knows*, 2018
Oil and acrylic on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

Gallery 1b

Clockwise from left

10. *The Dark Space of Speech*, 2018
Oil and acrylic on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

11. *The Lie Down*, 2018
Oil and acrylic on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

12. *Avec*, 2017
Acrylic on canvas,
129.5 x 124.5 cm

13. *TV in Bed*, 2017-2018
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

14. *Slant*, 2017-2018
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

15. *Edge of Day*, 2018
Oil and acrylic on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

16. *SK35 – 38*, 2017
Acrylic, ink, and silkscreen on paper, framed
102 x 66cm each

17. *Back of a Horse Costume*, 2015-16
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

Gallery 2

Clockwise from left of entrance from Gallery 1

18. *In Illinois*, 2017-18
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

19. *Rebus for Camden*, 2017-18
Acrylic, ink, gouache and silkscreen works on paper
Dimensions variable

20. *Lift & Separate*, 2017-18
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 167.5 cm

21. *Dub Stamp*, 2018
One from a multi-part series of double-sided acrylic, ink, and silkscreen works on paper
152.5 x 101.5 cm each

22. *Duel*, 2011
Oil on canvas
230 x 214 cm
Courtesy the Artist and Thomas Dane, London

Gallery 3

23. *Dub Stamp*, 2018
A multi-part series on double-sided acrylic, ink, and silkscreen works on paper
152.5 x 101.5 cm each

Reading Room

24. *Splitsville*, 2017
Acrylic on linen
190.5 x 167.5 cm
Courtesy the Artist and Captain Petzel, Berlin

Artists' Studio

The Artists' Studio is a space for Camden Arts Centre residency artists to develop and form new work and hosts our programme of events which expand on ideas within the current exhibition and projects.

Drawing Studio

The Drawing Studio is a space for thinking, talking and making. Inspired by the exhibition, we offer a varied programme for schools, families, young people and our community.