

one lump or two

Oct. 3, 2013 to Jan. 5, 2014

The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston presents first museum survey of painter Amy Sillman
(Boston—July 15, 2013)

This October, the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA) premieres *Amy Sillman: one lump or two*, a major traveling exhibition and the first museum survey of New York-based painter Amy Sillman. The exhibition traces the development of Sillman's work over the past 25 years—from her early use of cartoon figures and a vivacious palette, through to her exploration of the diagrammatic line, the history of Abstract Expressionism, and a growing concern with the bodily and the erotic dimensions of paint. The exhibition focuses on the importance of drawing in Sillman's practice, as well as the intensity with which she has embraced the dichotomy between figuration and abstraction. *Amy Sillman: one lump or two* features over 90 works, including drawings, paintings, 'zines, and the artist's recent forays into animated film. Organized by Helen Molesworth, Barbara Lee Chief Curator at the ICA, the exhibition is on view at the ICA from Oct. 3, 2013 to Jan. 5, 2014. It will travel to the Aspen Art Museum from Feb. 13 to May 11, 2014, and the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (CCS Bard) from June 28 to Sept. 21, 2014.

"The ICA is extremely proud to present *Amy Sillman: one lump or two*, an unprecedented examination of the artist's prolific and influential career," said Jill Medvedow, Ellen Matilda Poss Director of the ICA. "Sillman is central to the resurgence of artistic, public, and critical interest in painting and abstraction today. This exhibition is a long-awaited opportunity for a close encounter with the emotion, awkwardness, energy, and sheer beauty of Amy Sillman's art."

"Painting is perhaps more vital today than any time since the heyday of the

New York School in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and Amy Sillman is one of its most influential, contemporary practitioners," said Molesworth. "*Amy Sillman: one lump or two* introduces audiences to Sillman's exceptional body of work and demonstrates that the basic building blocks of 20th-century painting are of continued interest to artists today: color, line, medium-specificity, abstraction, and the possibility of communicating in an exclusively visual manner."

Sillman's mature work started in the mid-to-late 1990s and was deeply rooted in drawing. Works from this period are exemplified by her exploration of the cartoon line combined with a wild, high-keyed palette. The cartoon line moved effortlessly from the figure to landscape, always playing with problems of physical and emotional scale, frequently to humorous effect (trees are bigger than people; the figure's anxiety is bigger than the tree!). Sillman's palette, a riot of pastel and acid hues, was dominated by an extensive mining of the pinks found in the 1970s pastoral paintings of Willem de Kooning and the moody, bruised purples of Philip Guston's abstract paintings.

Since the mid-2000s, the arc of Sillman's work has taken a dramatic turn, morphing into a serious proposition about the ongoing possibilities of New York School Abstract Expressionism. Ironically, this body of work started in portraits, drawn from life, of couples in romantic relationships. Recreating the portraits from memory, Sillman transformed her original drawings into abstract paintings, replacing the intimacy of gesture and touch with richly hued trapezoidal shapes of color; sharp, vectored lines; and a propulsive painterly energy.

Having established that it was still possible to create an Abstract Expressionist painting in the 21st century, Sillman began to complicate her own project through the introduction of the diagrammatic line into her paintings. Abstraction was meant to operate outside of language; similarly, the diagram reduces complex information into an easily comprehensible image form. While her contemporaries staged the relations between painting and

photography, Sillman chose instead to look at other mass media forms of image making, selecting the diagram as her lever to open the historical nature of painting to the present. Just as her early work played abstraction and figuration off one another, in her diagram works the classic antinomies of picture making—color and line, figure and ground, painting and drawing—rub up against one another, with neither ever being able to dominate the other.

In addition to exploring the affects made possible by painting, Sillman is also at work in expanding the medium-specificity of painting. She has begun to make drawings on her iPhone and further is transforming them into movies. In these small films we see a synthesis of many of her concerns, as the films revel in the figuration of her early cartoon paintings while delving further into the spaces of abstraction, color, and the diagrammatic line.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by *Amy Sillman: one lump or two*, a comprehensive, fully illustrated catalogue co-published by the ICA and DelMonico Books, an imprint of Prestel, a member of Verlagsgruppe Random House GmbH. The catalogue includes essays by Helen Molesworth, Barbara Lee Chief Curator at the ICA; Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, William Dorr Boardman Professor of Fine Arts in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University; Daniel Marcus, Ph.D. candidate in the History of Art at the University of California, Berkeley; and artist Thomas Eggerer.