

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Amy Sillman *Temporary Object*

Private view: Saturday 22 April, 12–6pm
Exhibition dates: 26 April–29 July 2023

Thomas Dane Gallery Naples
Via Francesco Crispi, 69 (1o Piano)
Napoli 80122

“You have to simultaneously diagnose, predict and ignore the past, present and future, all at once; you have to remember and to forget at the same time. You have to both deny and embrace all your impulses toward romanticism and irony.”

Amy Sillman (from *On Color*, 2013)

In his essay *Uncomfortable Beauty*, written for the publication that accompanies Amy Sillman’s Naples exhibition, the writer/curator Joshua Decter observes how Sillman “demonstrates that a painting can be understood as an unfolding temporal event that happens at various speeds, ... through a sequence of formal rearticulations, as if in a fluid state of *completed incompleteness*, or *finished unfinishedness*: painting reconceived through the medium of digital animation as meta-painting.”

Throughout her career Sillman has approached painting as a time-based medium. Her large-scale works in particular are like machines of thinking, constructed and deconstructed – both intuitively and analytically – in a time that moves backwards and forwards. In her hands, the painting becomes a *temporal object*, built as though frame by frame in a process that can incorporate anything from a raw or lyrical gesture to a digital diagram.

Studying at art school in the late 1970s, Sillman was trained in the wake of post-war gestural painting, yet within the then-emerging logics of process art, underground film, and writing such as Robert Morris’s famous *Continuous Project Altered Daily*. In the spirit of such handmade and temporal projects, Sillman has written her own responses, built her own narratives, and conducted her own experiments.

Sillman works and wrestles with re-assembly, editing, erasure, and juxtaposition, prompting Decter to notice that she is “continuously rethinking ... complex interrelationships ... problems that really do not have solutions, only moments of aesthetic revelation and, dare I say, optical sensuousness and visual joy. And yet, these paintings also emit degrees of formal discomfort, as if things don’t quite fit smoothly together, a quality that gives them a palpable tension.” The resulting installations, always meticulously hung by the artist herself, work as a kind of overall score, with parts, fragments and notes making up a field of relations.

For *Temporary Object*, Sillman presents a new group of large oil paintings alongside the intimate and more immediate drawings that she develops adjacently. Some – paintings, such as *Mug*, with its feast of greens and reds partially obliterating the crayon outline of a face, or *Crank* with its Matisse-like layers of flattened space – are wrought slowly over many months to their level of complexity. Other paintings, such as *Lee* or *In Rio*, reveal rhythmic tempo and zones of chroma through gestures on raw canvas. Taken together, the works disclose the varying times of painting, and thinking – from an instinctual moment to what is sustained over an hour, a week, or a season.

The exhibition’s namesake, *Temporary Object* – a new 41-panel work made of digital diagrams printed on aluminium and displayed in sequence on a table – sits in the central foyer of the Naples gallery as the first thing a viewer encounters, as if to set the terms of *looking* at the paintings and the exhibition that will

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unfold in the other rooms. In other words, Sillman prepares the viewers to think about an excavation of the problematics and tensions contained within the paintings they are about to experience. Each panel in *Temporary Object* reveals a stage of the development of a painting which is never shown, but which indicates that the way to examine a painting may be as if it were a storyboard, a film-strip, or slide show. Here, Sillman explicitly mines the archaeological history of her own paintings, and responds to Naples itself, a city rooted in its own history, yet never buried by traditions or rules.

Whether they are painted, drawn, or printed, the works in the show make for a vibrant and paradoxical display of shape, form, and colour. The work is historically-minded, but defiant; rigorous, yet open-ended; rooted in modernity, yet radical; familiar, but alien; analogue artefacts and digital discoveries.

Amy Sillman is an artist based in New York since 1975. After studying Japanese language at NYU, she received a BFA in painting in 1979 at School of Visual Arts in New York City, and then an MFA in painting at Bard College in 1995. While still an undergraduate in the 1970s, a teacher told Sillman that she had to “decide between” figuration and abstraction—ever since then, her work has been based on proving that binary (and others) wrong. Instead, she welcomes contradiction and dialectics into gestural painting procedures, working both fast, improvisationally, and slow, with a nearly archaeological process of accumulation and redaction of innumerable layers.

Over the past 15+ years, Sillman has added writing, curating, zine-making, animation, and site-specific installations to her practice. Her work is held in numerous private and public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York NY, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles CA, Tate Modern, London, the Brandhorst Museum, Munich, and the Moderna Museet, Stockholm. A mid-career traveling survey show *one lump or two*, curated by Helen Molesworth, originated at the ICA Boston in 2013 accompanied by a catalogue. In 2019 a monograph by Valerie Wade was published by Lund Humphries, London. In 2022 Sillman participated in The International Exhibition of the 59th Venice Biennale *The Milk of Dreams*.

Besides her work as a painter, Sillman often writes on art, and her bibliography includes *Faux Pas*, a book of collected texts and drawings published in 2020 by After Eight Books in Paris. Her own work has been written about regularly in journals such as *Artforum*, *ARTnews*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *Frieze*, and other publications. Sillman is represented by Gladstone Gallery in New York, and Capitain Petzel in Berlin, and shows with Thomas Dane Gallery in London and Naples, Campoli Presti in Paris, and Susanne Vielmetter in LA.

For exhibitions enquiries please contact Federica Sheehan: federica@thomasdanegallery.com

For press enquiries please contact:

Thomas Dane Gallery Patrick Shier: patrick@thomasdanegallery.com

Rees & Co Rosanna Hawkins: rosanna@reesandco.com | +44 (0) 79 1009 2634

Megan Miller: megan.miller@reesandco.com | +44 (0)77 4303 6449

Gallery hours: Tuesday – Friday 11am–1:30pm & 2:30pm–7pm, Saturday 12–7pm, or by appointment.

Admission: Free

Nearest station: Piazza Amedeo

Tel: +39 081 1892 0545

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Via Francesco Crispi, 69 (1° Piano) 80122 Napoli

TEL: +39 081 1892 0545 FAX: +39 081 246 1168 naples@thomasdanegallery.com