

Amy Sillman: *Temporary Object*

By [Amanda Gluibizzi](#)

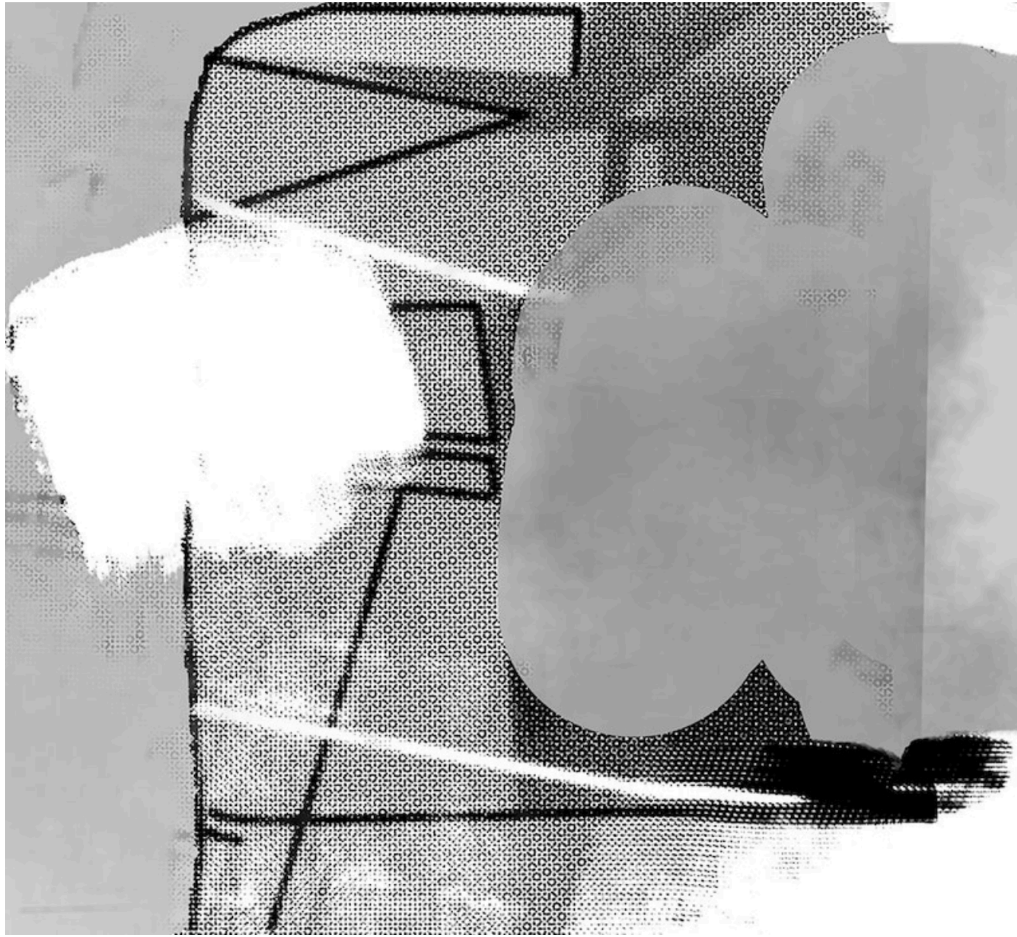


Installation view: Amy Sillman: *Temporary Object*, Thomas Dane Gallery, Naples, Italy, 2023. Courtesy Thomas Dane Gallery.

Although the press release for Amy Sillman's exhibition at Thomas Dane's Naples, Italy, location claims that upon entering the viewer first encounters *Temporary Object* (2023), a 41-panel installation of UV printed on aluminum, I didn't find that to be the case. Always wanting to find my own way, I turned around to explore a small room over my right shoulder. Here, two large-scale paintings face off, *Punch* (2022) and *Crank* (2023). Though their compositions do not look terribly similar, they might have shared strategies: both feature prominent areas of bright yellow (*Punch*'s felt lemony, while *Crank*'s seemed more mustard) and coral, and each is bisected vertically, like one-piece diptychs, just slightly off the center. These felt like good introductions to the other paintings, drawings, and prints, as they included elements found throughout, including heavy black outlines, rectangular shapes evocative of the architectural elements of first-stage Roman wall painting, scratchy veils of mixed color (a patch of dark green in *Crank* turned out to be green, yes, but also blue and orange, scraped up and in spots left curling over), and Sillman's signature *pentimenti*, traces of her working process left visible on the faces of her pictures.

ON VIEW

Thomas Dane Gallery
Temporary Object
 April 26–July 29, 2023
 Naples



Amy Sillman, *Temporary Object*, 2023. UV printed on aluminum, set of 41, 10 x 10 3/4 inches each. © Amy Sillman. Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and Gladstone Gallery, New York.

I used *Temporary Object* to guide me to the rest of the exhibition. It is installed in the middle of Thomas Dane's main room, and its panels rest in two long rows along a high-topped viewing table. It links small rooms at each end of the space to one another, and because of its length at about twenty feet, spans the entrances to the side galleries, as well. The pixelated digital images of *Temporary Object* depict the steps of producing a painting that is not shown, the additions and subtractions, the retrenchments and accidents. But as discernable as that might initially seem, it is also (willfully?) obscure. There are undoubtedly moments of decision that have been left out, not least in terms of palette, and besides, we don't know which end or side is the beginning or which way we should turn to proceed. We could compare it to storyboards, as indeed, the gallery does, but Sillman allows us more control than we're given when watching a movie. We're not simply passive viewers; through our agency the objects are activated. In this way, though monochromatic and hard and made *after* the moves of painting—and therefore unlike Sillman's limpid drawings, with their transparent medium and evident switchbacks—*Temporary Object* bears an important resemblance to the drawings included throughout and testifies to the artist's process.

The display of *Temporary Object*, in regimented rows that seem to suggest some sort of progression—even if one that proceeds in fits and starts—also calls out to the installation of a suite of drawings named after the days of the week, eight of them ranging from *Monday* all the way to *Next Monday* (all 2022). Their groupings are unlike the rest of the show, in which Sillman uses the nineteenth-century architecture of the gallery to determine placement, corralling its fireplaces, moldings, and vents to become aspects of her own display. *Untitled (small drawing 4)* (2023), for example, is hung just above and on the left-hand side of a reddish-purple stone fireplace. The veining of the stone echoes the skeins within the drawing, the colors of which, if combined just so, could create a deep purple, but which here are left discrete, with the brightest red at the lower right of the drawing, closest to the fire. Paintings are hung close to the ground, on either side of windows, clustering in corners, some even placed over the dado, using the chair railing as another painterly support. This is painting and architecture in collage.

For me, this strategy of display is most ecstatic in the case of *Queenie* (2023), the show's largest painting. It shares a room with *Untitled (small drawing 3)* (2023) and the painting *The Bronze Decor* (2022), all of which suggest the trappings of an artist's studio in their intimations of paintings in progress, drapery studies, and the thick contour lines of a back smoothing over buttocks, scissoring legs, languid poses, and monstera leaves of the Mediterranean and so much of its art, but they are Sillman's own; to use her words, they “offer a model of alterity.” *Queenie* is primarily red, pink, white, and green—there might be a pseudo-flag of Italy somewhere amongst its stripes—and it reflects the heat and sun of the region. Naples is a wonderful place to see painting, with its Titians, Raphaels, and Caravaggios, as well as Jacopo de' Barbari's *Portrait of Luca Pacioli* (c. 1495–1500), which would undoubtedly appeal to Sillman's passion for the diagrammatic. But it has been a place for women painters, too: Artemisia Gentileschi, currently represented by an exhibition at the Complesso Monumentale Donnaregina, spent several years in the city (the Capodimonte owns several of her paintings). And at the National Archaeological Museum, a fresco pulled from Pompeii depicts a seated woman painting the figure of man from a herm placed before her. I was reminded of the writings of these female artists, of Gentileschi in 1649: “I will show [you] what a woman can do,” and of Sillman herself: “... color is a powerful force, a feminine or anarchistic other who is resistant to the language of law.” In a place as ancient as Naples, these objects are impactful perhaps *because* temporary.



Amy Sillman, *Mug*, 2023. Acrylic, oil on linen, 75 x 66 inches.
Courtesy Thomas Dane Gallery.

Contributor

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