

AMY FELDMAN

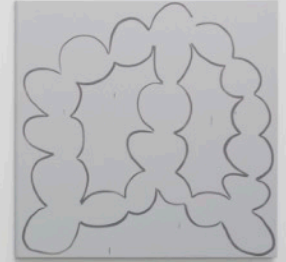
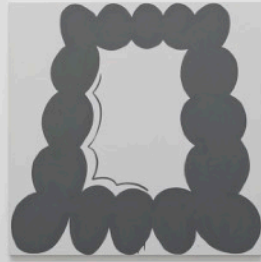
Amy Feldman's (b.1981) work offers the viewer a vivid conversation between the physical and formal language of abstract painting. This is evidenced in the interactions she creates between the figure and ground, questioning the hierarchy of the two. Drips of wayward paint are unplanned yet embraced by the artist as they break the boundary from the figure of the painting into the ground of a pristine, almost-white canvas, a surface always modulated with hints of colour, from violet to pale, silvery greys.

Consistently working in just shades of grey, Feldman has developed an abstract sign system that alludes to systems of writing and the transmission of information: the viewer might be reminded of the monochrome of newsprint and calligraphy, or the grey scale of early TV. With this reduced palette, she also aims to strip away associations and limitations that many colours would introduce to the painting. Similarly, the bulbous, sketchy and irregular forms that she paints are just familiar enough to be reminiscent yet – as with her colour palette – elusive enough to dodge literal decoding. Yet a clear allusion to the body and to Feldman's position as female painter persists in the work.

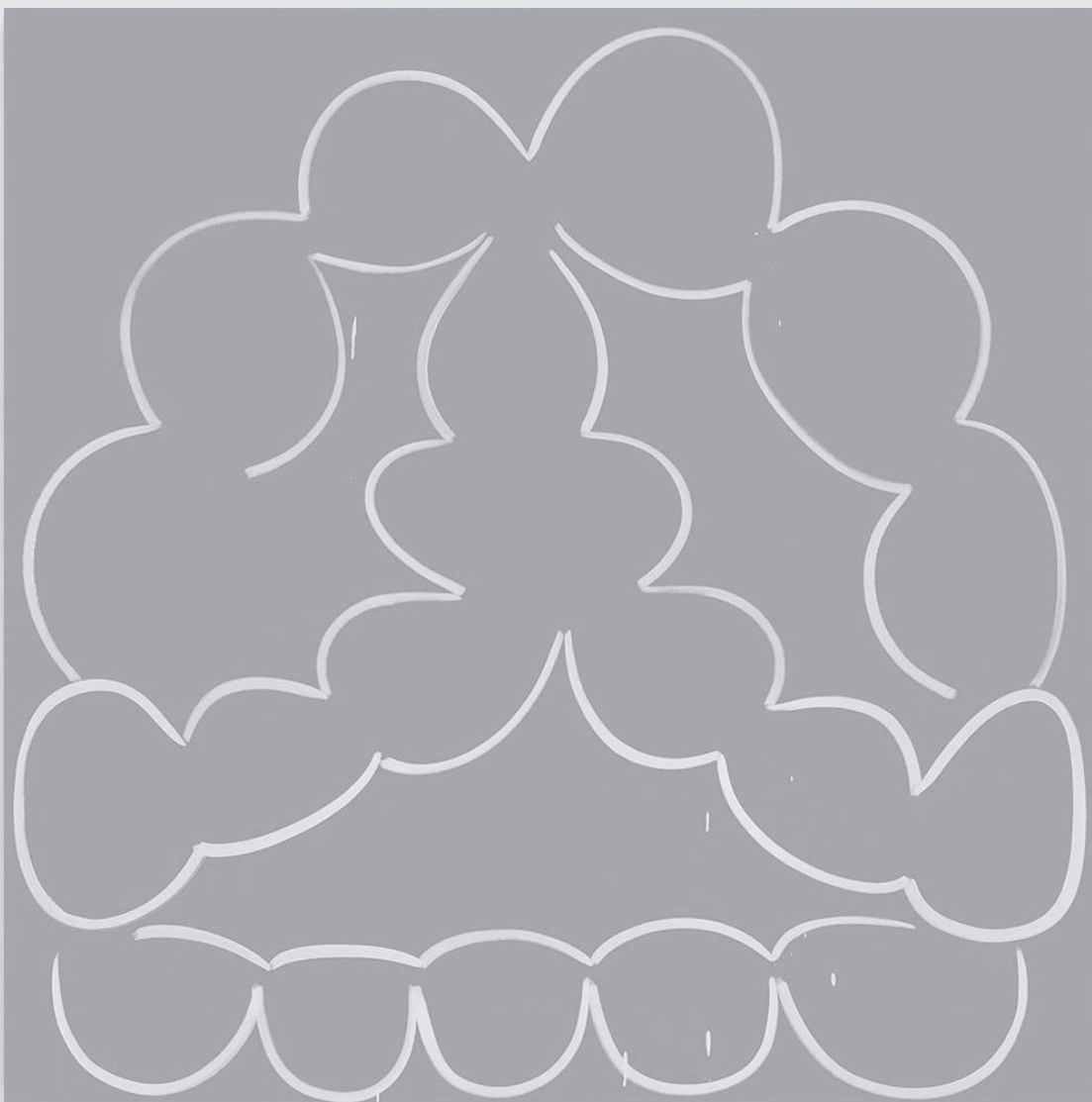
Her ebullient, cartoonish shapes also have a comic effect; along with the humorous wordplay in the titles and her light-hearted way of handling paint, they counter the sombre tones and imposing scale of works. With stretchers that often exceed 2 metres, the canvasses are slightly beyond the extent of her arm's reach, which imposes an extra element of physicality on the performance of painting.



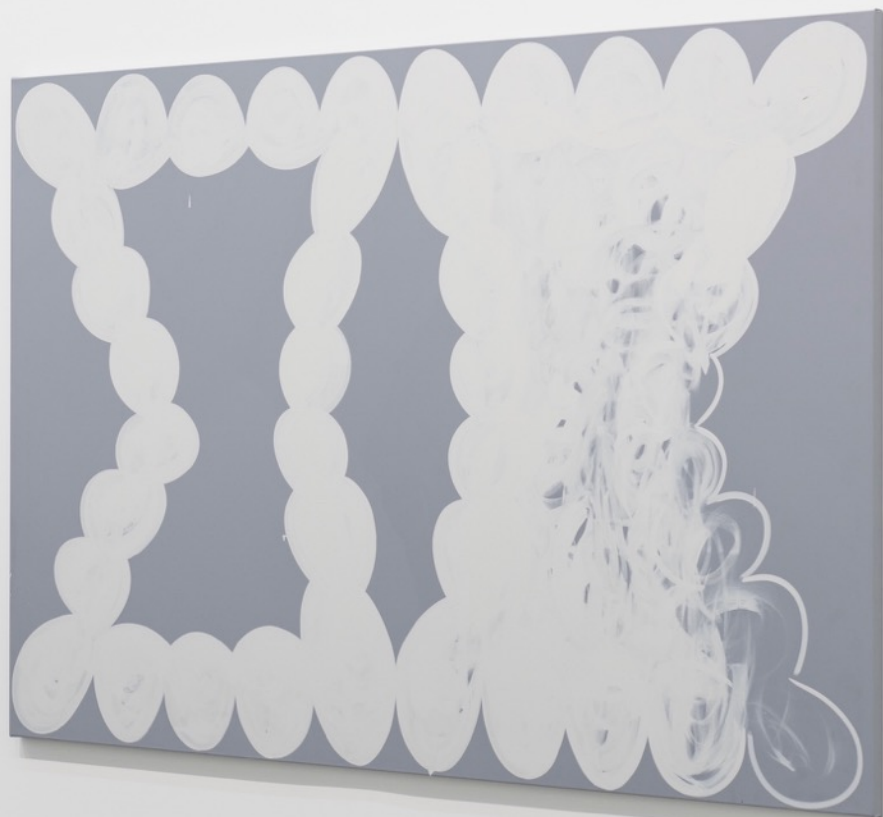
Blain Southern, Berlin  
*Breath Myth*  
solo exhibition  
February 10-April 8, 2017



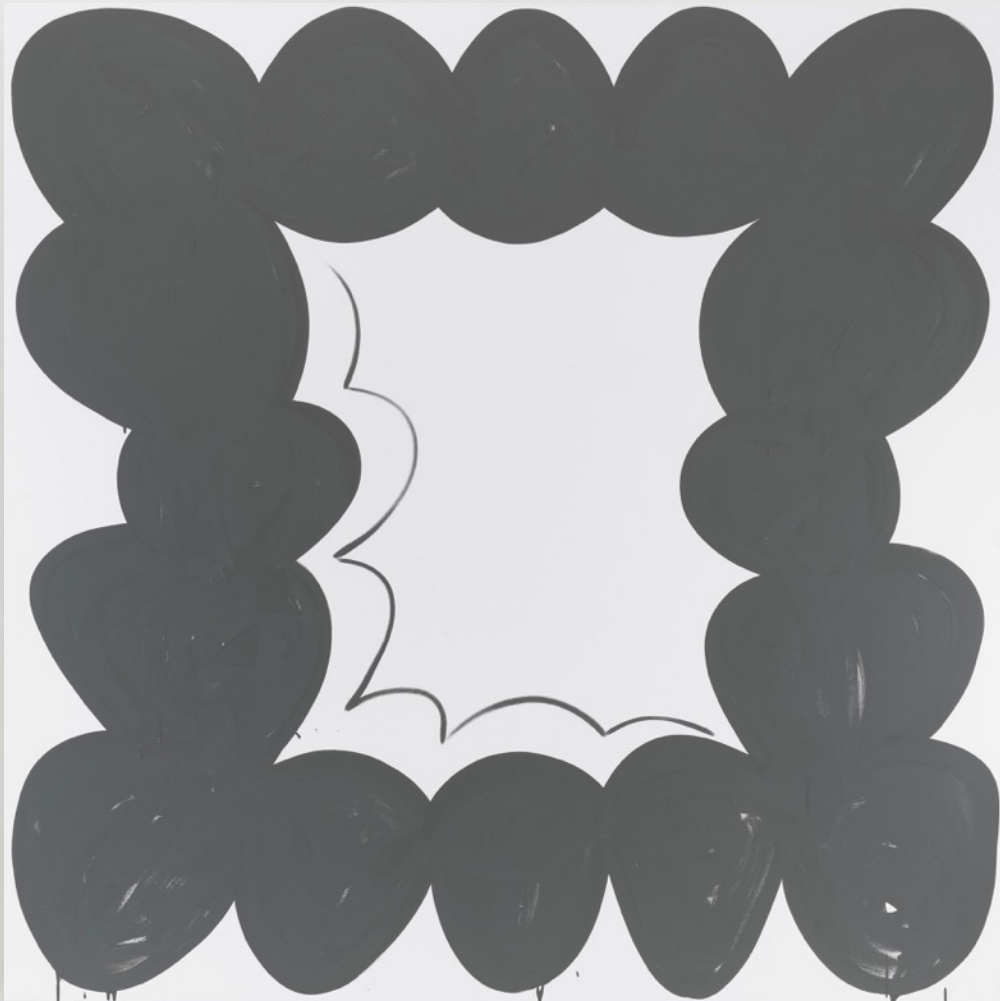
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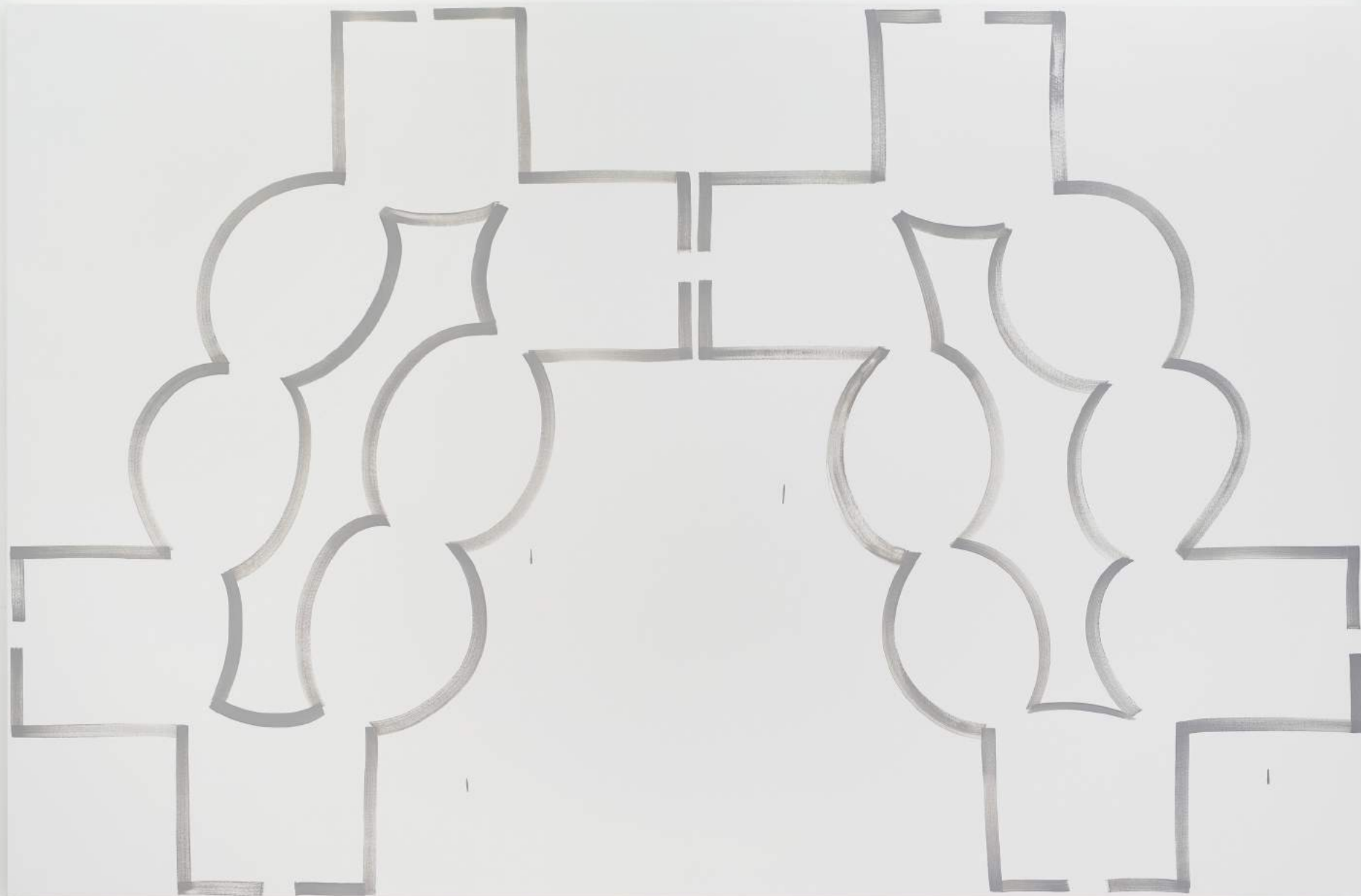
Blain Southern  
Breath Myth  
solo exhibition  
February 10-April 8, 2017



Ratio 3  
Psyche Shade  
solo exhibition  
September 9-Oct 29, 2016

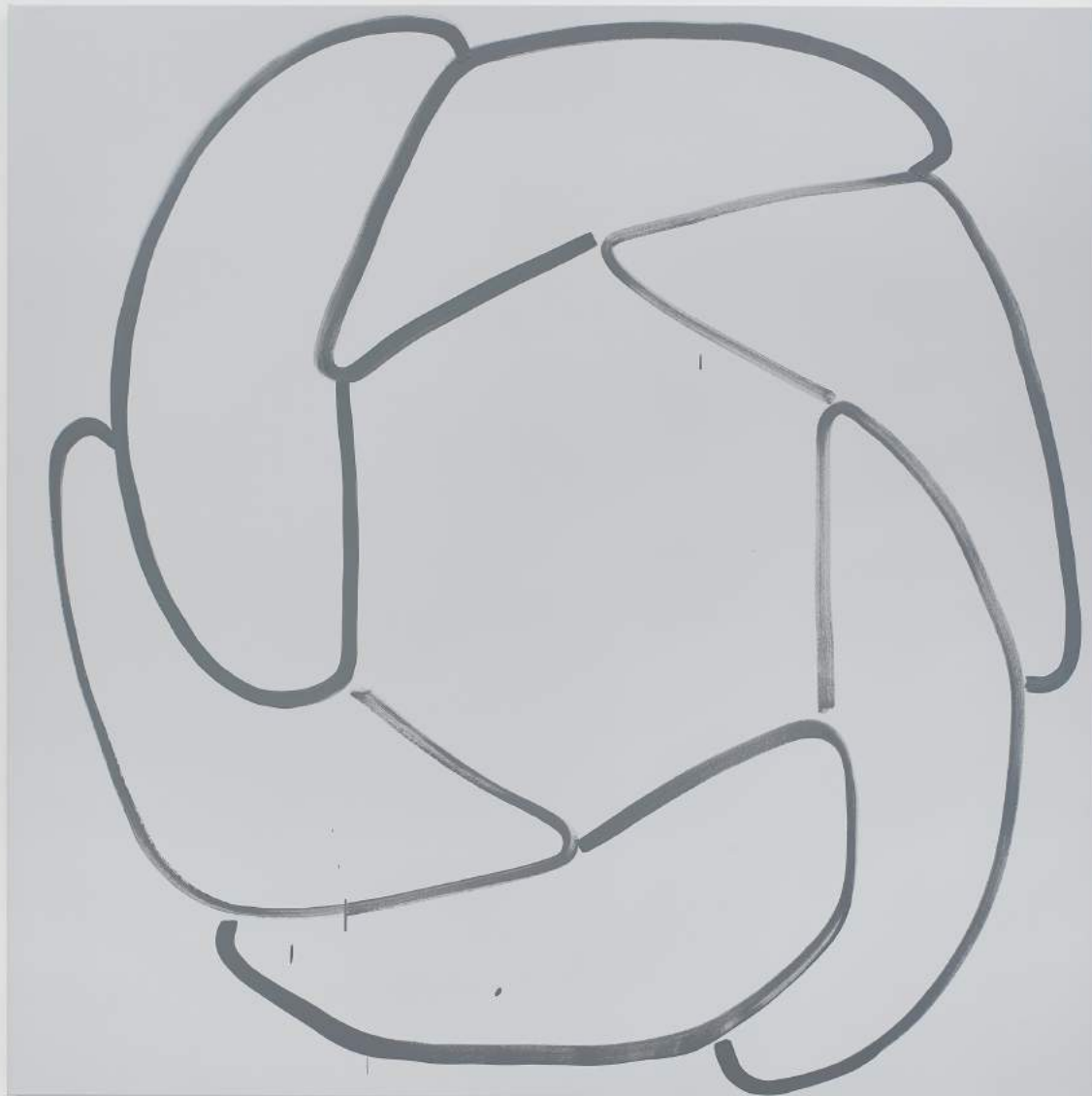


Ratio 3  
*Psyche Shade*  
solo exhibition  
September 9-October 29, 2016



James Cohan, New York  
*Nerve Reserve*  
solo exhibition  
April 27-June 4, 2017

James Cohan, New York  
*Nerve Reserve*  
solo exhibition  
April 27-June 4, 2017



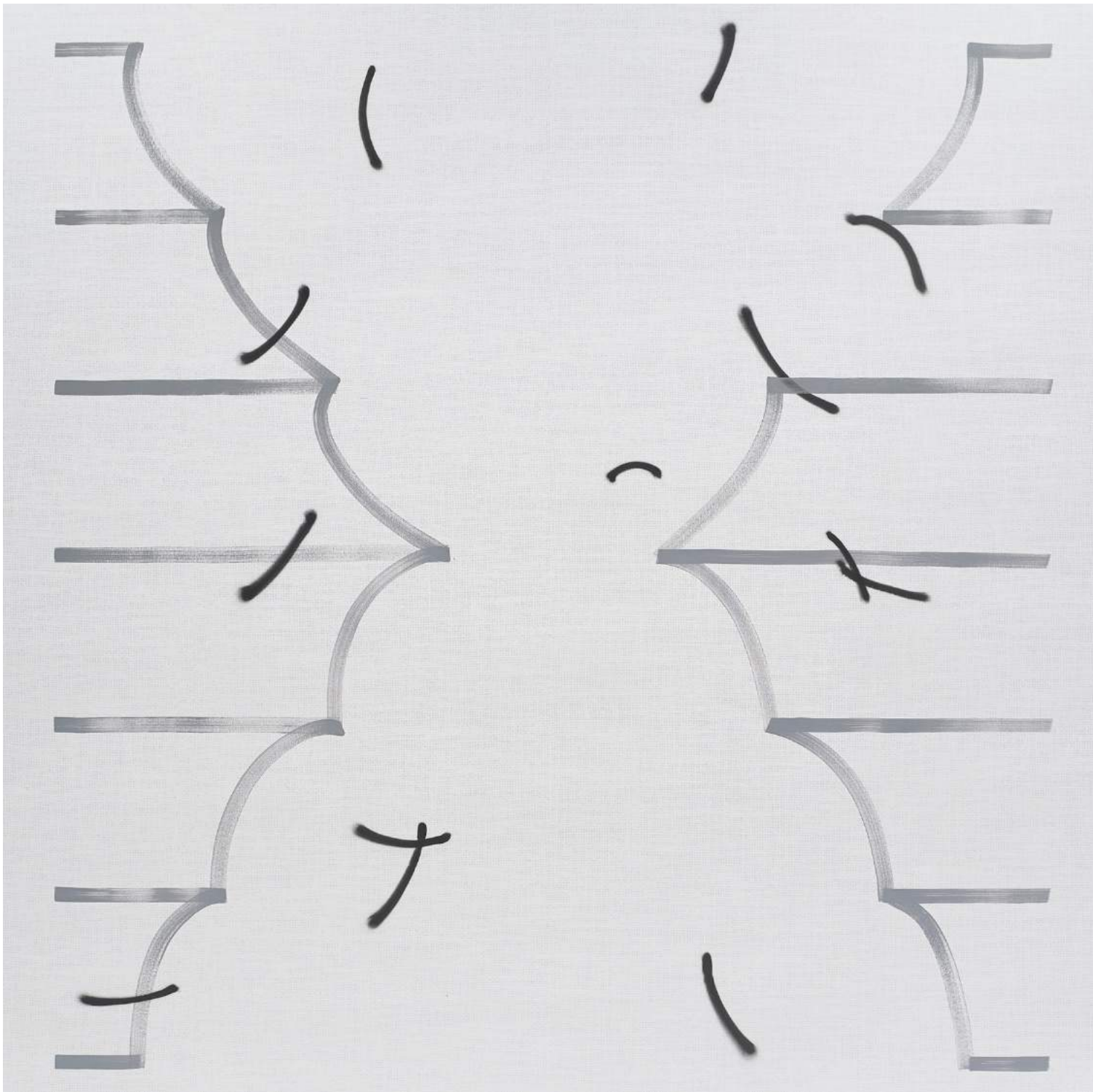


Corbett vs Dempsey  
*Good Gloom*  
solo exhibition  
April 29-May 28, 2016

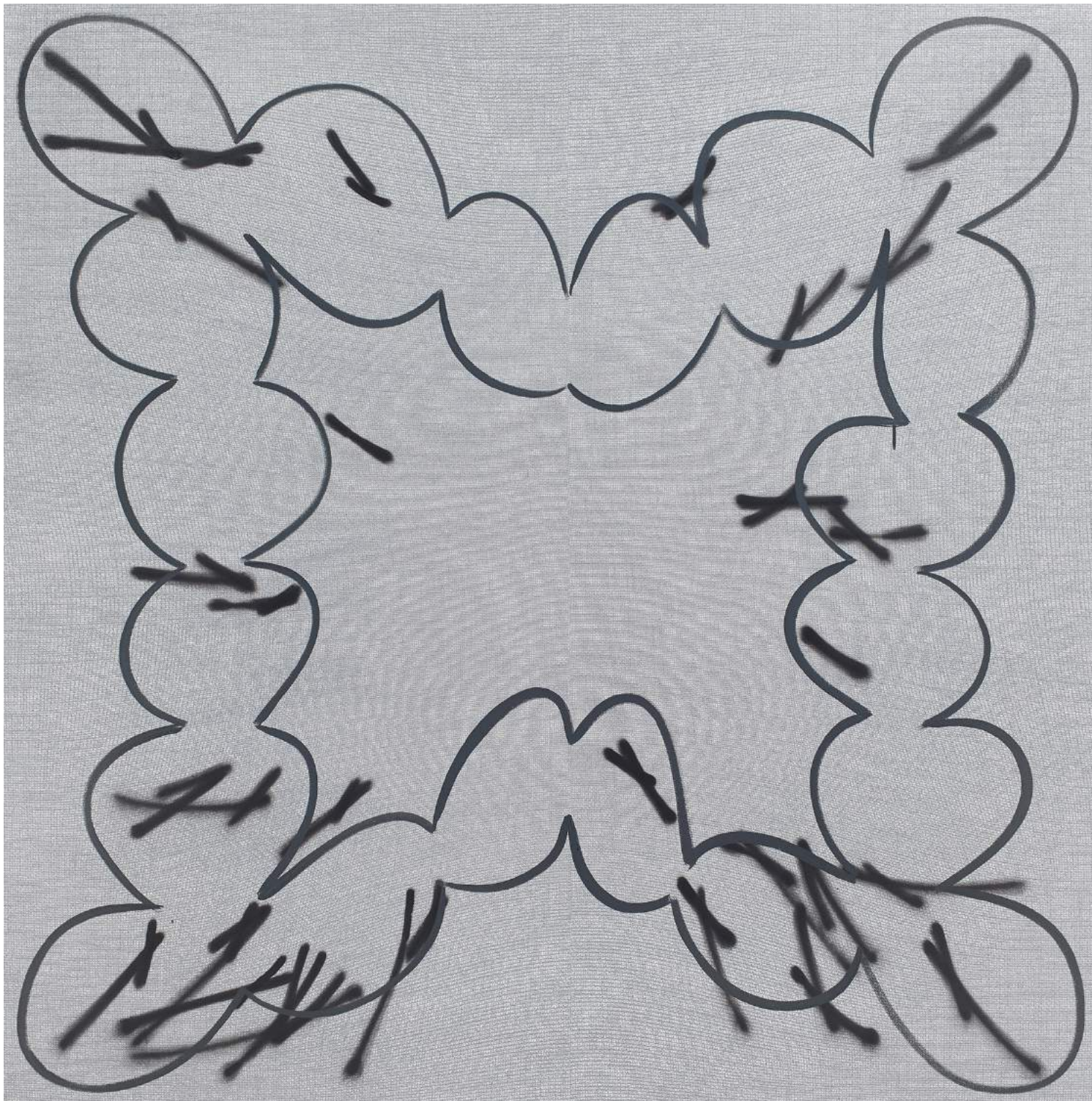




Satyr Chatter  
2018  
60 x 60 inches  
(152.4 x 152.4 cm)  
Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas  
(#AF1809)



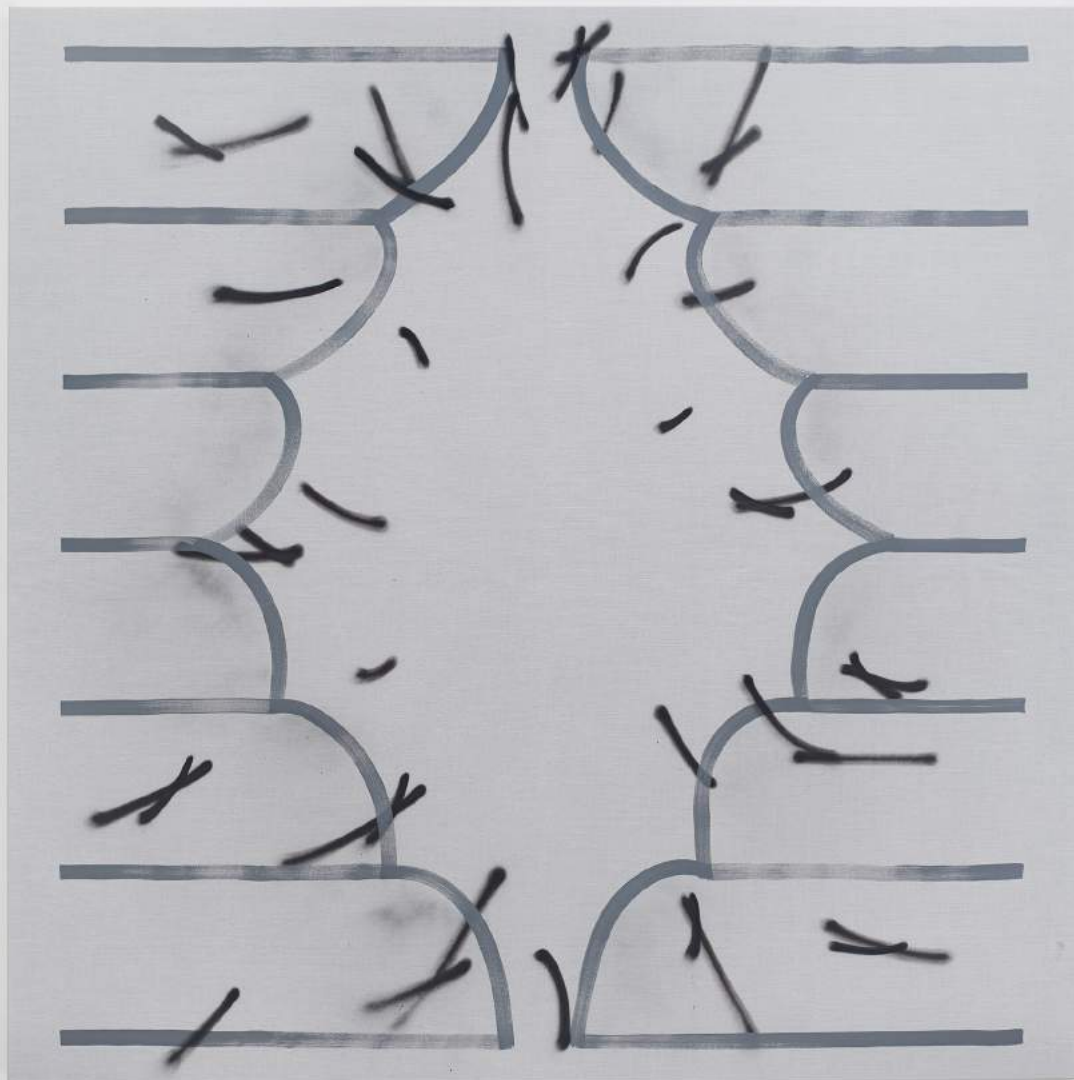
*Muted Cupid*  
2018  
79 x 79 inches  
(201 x 201cm)  
Acrylic, spray paint  
and silkscreen ink on canvas  
(#AF1813)



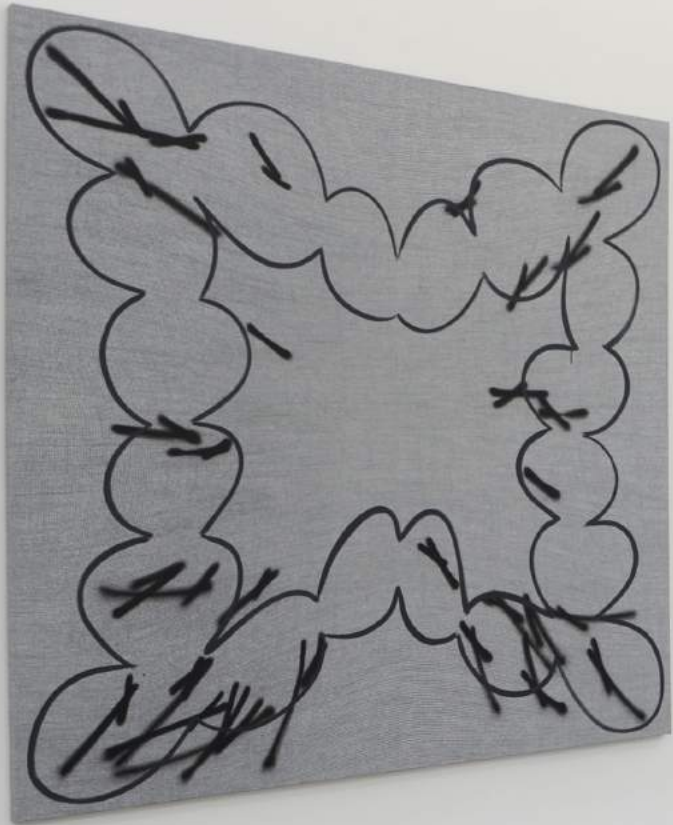
*Grid Grin*  
2018  
79 x 79 inches  
(201 x 201cm)  
Acrylic, spray paint  
and silk screen ink on canvas  
(#AF1810)



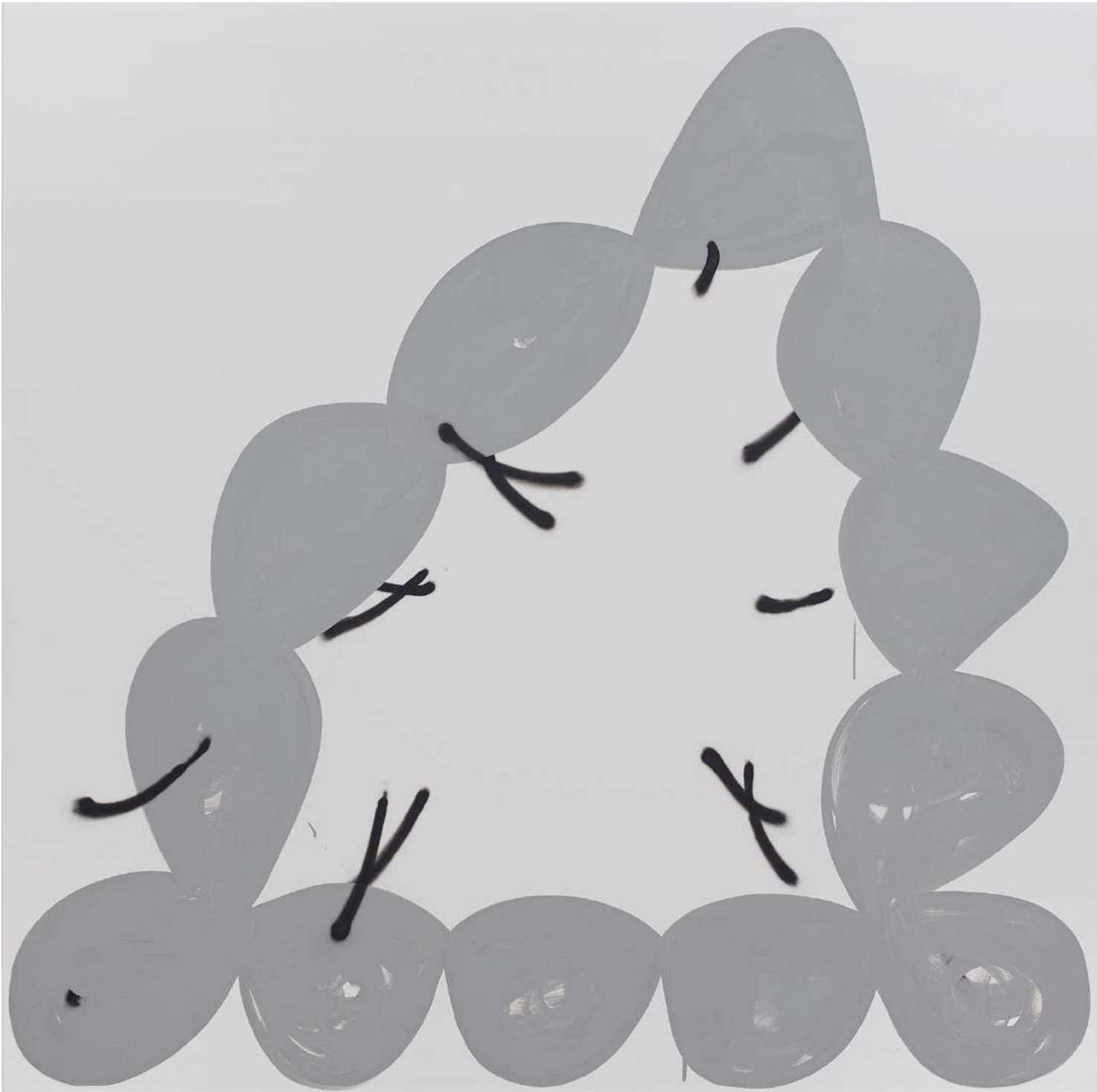
ANNAELLE, Stockholm  
*Counter Ground*  
solo exhibition  
August 23-September 23, 2018







ANNAELLE, Stockholm  
Counter Ground  
solo exhibition  
August 23- September 23, 2018



Even Venus  
2018  
60 x 60 inches  
(152.4 x 152.4 cm)  
Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas  
(#AF1814)



◀ **Ned Vena**,  
*Ohne Titel /  
Untitled*, 2012;  
Courtesy of  
the artist and  
Société

▶ **Amy Feldman**,  
*POW!NOW!*,  
2013; Courtesy  
Van Lierde  
Collection,  
Photo: Cary  
Whittier



▲ **Joe Bradley**, *Maag Areal*, 2015; Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, Photo: Thomas Müller

◀ **Ruth Root**, *Ohne Titel / Untitled*, 2014; Courtesy Galerie Nikolaus Ruzicska, Salzburg, Photo: Galerie Nikolaus Ruzicska

▼ **Ryan Sullivan**, *Ohne Titel / Untitled*, 2014; Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London and Maccarone, NY



▼ **Ross Iannatti**,  
*Hysteresis/Large  
no.2*, 2014; Courtesy  
of the artist and Kate  
Werble Gallery, New  
York, NY, Photo:  
Elisabeth Bernstein



▲ **Eddie Martinez**,  
*Time Was*, 2007;  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Private Collection

◀ **Jeff Elrod**, *West  
Gray*, 2013; Private  
Collection, London,  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Simon Lee Gallery,  
London / Hong Kong

▼ **Matt Connors**, *Collateral Rainbow (3 colors)*, 2013; Private Collection, London, Courtesy Herald St, London, Photo: Jacob Krupnick



KUNSTMUSEUM BONN, Bonn, DE  
New York Painting  
May 14-August 30, 2105



KUNSTMUSEUM BONN, Bonn, DE  
New York Painting  
May 14-August 30, 2105



Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE

MCA Chicago  
*MCA DNA:RIOT GRRLS*

December 17-June 18, 2017  
Chicago, US



*Riot Grrrls* is a celebration of female artists who are making bold and adventurous abstract paintings. Sexism continues to pervade the art world; male artists still garner higher prices for their work and are disproportionately represented in exhibitions. In a challenge to the boys' club sensibility that has historically shaped abstract painting, the female painters featured in the exhibition achieve a level of mastery, innovation, and chutzpah that doesn't need external validation.

The exhibition presents ten pioneering painters, including Mary Heilmann and subsequent leaders Charline von Heyl, Judy Ledgerwood, and Joyce Pensato, along with a younger group of rebels including Molly Zuckerman-Hartung and Amy Feldman. As with the feminist hardcore punk movement that gives the exhibition its title, these painters have influenced each other and the next generation of emerging artists.

*Riot Grrrls* is part of an ongoing exhibition series featuring iconic works from the MCA's collection. This exhibition is organized by Michael Darling, James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.



The Hall Art Foundation, Schloss Derneburg Museum, Derneburg, DE





Mountain Valley Sparkling Water

Sharpie KING SIZE

NO 3  
Sept 20  
7ax 79  
7ax 95



## Education

- 2009 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan ME
- 2008 Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, Masters of Fine Arts, Painting
- 2003 Rhode Island School of Design,

## Solo Exhibitions

- 2018 The Journal, Brooklyn, NY, Tennis Elbow  
ANNAELLE, Stockholm, SE, Counter Ground
- 2017 James Cohan, New York, NY, Nerve Reserve  
Blain Southern, Berlin, DE Breath Myth
- 2016 Ratio 3, San Francisco, CA, Psyche Shade  
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, IL, Good Gloom
- 2015 Brand New Gallery, Milan, IT, Moon Decorum  
ANNAELLE, Stockholm, SE, Trice Electric  
Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA, Mirror Cool
- 2014 Blackston, New York, NY, High Sign  
Sorry We're Closed, Brussels, BE, Gray Area
- 2013 ANNAELLE, Stockholm, SE, Stark Types

## Public Collections & Foundations

- MCA, Chicago, Chicago, IL, US
- Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE, US
- The Hall Art Foundation, Schloss Derneburg Museum, Derneburg, DE
- Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, BE

## Awards

- The Guggenheim Fellowship
- The Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant

# The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

## Amy Feldman: 'Dark Selects'

By ROBERTA SMITH

Published: July 12, 2012

*Blackston*

*29C Ludlow Street, near Hester Street, Lower East Side*

*Through July 27*

A kind of back-to-basics abstraction characterized by simple forms, not much color and an emphasis on process is attracting a lot of younger painters right now. The renewed faith in form is refreshing, and the starting-over feeling is understandable at a moment when so much about art seems up for grabs. But such reductionism can also feel both undernourished and uninformed.

Amy Feldman's small New York debut at [Blackston](#) is an exception; its four largish paintings, for all their ostensible simplicity, are satisfying as well as knowing, intent on not simply repeating the past. Painted with somewhat ham-handed flair, they contrast big, rambunctious, slipshod shapes in black or gray acrylic with negative areas of bare canvas. Their motifs are loosely geometric, vaguely symmetrical and spontaneous in appearance, thanks to drips, irregular edges and varying thicknesses of paint.

In "All or Nothing" two pairs of broad verticals bend outward to accommodate a wedge or delta shape that intrudes, point down, between them from the painting's upper edge. In "Pressure Points" various wedges and triangles slope in from the edges, framing an elongated, four-sided shape that suggests a flying carpet seen in perspective for a complicated spatial effect.

"In & Out" lives up to its name with four sort of concentric rectangles that center — but not exactly — on a solid, doorlike shape; the entire configuration wobbles, receding and advancing, while also expanding and contracting, bellowslike.

Barely contained in a small back space, "Owed" presents a large doughnut shape whose bumpy outline can bring to mind Little Orphan Annie's hair, as the painter and critic Stephen Westfall points out in his perceptive essay in the show's catalog. This publication reproduces many more works than the gallery can hold, many of which also look very promising.

# ARTFORUM

DECEMBER 2014

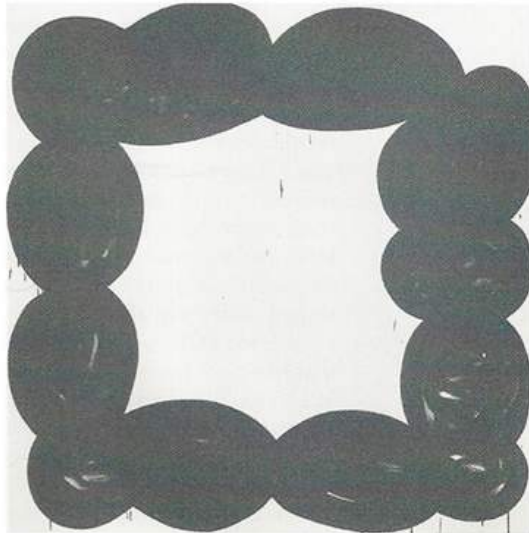
I N T E R N A T I O N A L

## Amy Feldman

BLACKSTON

There's a photograph in the catalogue for Amy Feldman's exhibition "High Sign" that depicts one of her large square canvases being winched out of the artist's Brooklyn studio. As the painting hovers momentarily in front of an open garage door, the bushy-looking, ring-like form that occupies its lower three quarters is juxtaposed with the building's upper windows to give the squat two-story structure what looks like a bearded face. Whether this mildly comical anthropomorphic effect was intentional is unclear, but the shot nonetheless announces the witty ambiguity of Feldman's compositions; as Raphael Rubinstein reminds us in his tidy catalogue essay, "serious painters can be great comedians."

Working from small doodles made with a marker, Feldman usually completes a painting in a single session, rarely editing or revising it thereafter. As Rubinstein also points out, the viewer's awareness of this all-or-nothing process helps imbue the work with a sense of performativity and risk; the procedure's apparent simplicity notwithstanding, one feels these canvases are perpetually balanced on a knife-edge between success and defeat (though it's not always easy to identify precisely where this border resides). At Blackston, the work (all 2014) at first seemed to teeter toward failure, nudged along by what might sound like a rather ill-advised installation design, with five large panels shoehorned into one cramped room, and walls tinted a shade of gray similar to—but not quite matching—that used in all the paintings. A counterintuitive setup, perhaps, but it worked.



Feldman generates seemingly endless variations on a vocabulary of simple shapes. The beard mentioned above was not represented here, but there were takes on a stylized ornate picture frame (*Open Omen* and *psych alike*), an intestinal tube (*Gut Smut*), a vaguely aquiline silhouette (*Spirit Merit*), and what might be a wailing face (*Killer Instinct* and the two suites of four smaller paintings arrayed in the back room, *Hour Triumphs* and *Popular Mantra*). Feldman's titles are unarguably evocative and linguistically playful, but they are generally unreliable guides to meaning: More important is the act of riffing—of gesture and repetition in concert with pared-down graphic symbolism—and of the quick, bold reconfiguration of pictorial (and, especially given the close quarters here, architectural) space.

None of this is not to suggest that the paintings in "High Sign" are expressive in the conventional sense of the term, or that mark-making per se is key to Feldman's methodology. Rather, her use of acrylic, with its dull plastic sheen, and exclusive reliance on the kind of mid-gray that generally signals the neutral or nondescript but here focuses one's attention reveal an interest in suppressing painterly surface and texture. What she pursues instead is a visual language that seems oddly transferable, that might almost be taken up and applied by anyone with a brush. Yet there is just enough flux and flaw in these works—in, for instance, the spatter of tiny drips that invades their fields of otherwise pure white—that their inimitability is retained. There's something of the cartoonish corporeality of Carroll Dunham and Sue Williams in the bulbous, bouncy, exuberant forms of these pictures (think again of that false beard). To view them is to be immersed in the colorfully human, and their cool palette does nothing to counter this effect.

—Michael Wilson

Amy Feldman,  
*Gut Smut*, 2014,  
acrylic on canvas,  
79 × 79".

# MOUSSE

Amy Feldman “Moon Decorum”

December 7~2015



Amy Feldman's latest work in “Moon Decorum” embodies a world that is both restrained form and wild paths. Her pristine pearlescent surfaces are a substrate upon which she showcases gesture. This is mark making in two forms.

*Moon Decorum*, the painting from which the exhibition takes its title, has both of these forms occurring at once. On the one hand, there are fluid gibbous forms that explode outward and highlight escaping drips akin to the effulgent white drips in the black and white paintings of Willem de Kooning. On the other hand, her marks evidence a reduced seriality, manifesting as a footnote of expression or an acknowledgment of the ironic symbol of gesture—much as in a work by Jasper Johns. Therein resides what could be called a lunar friction in Feldman's paintings, between two divergent cultural interpretations of lunar activity: the moon demonstrates precision and regularity in its rotation, yet epitomizes our primal fears of its transformative power (as in the cultural myth of the werewolf). The darkness of these paintings is analogous to the cold vacuum of space and also to the palpable electricity of fear in the night air: Heideggerian, both angst and furcht, that is feeling that is abstract and concrete.

It is noteworthy that Feldman titled her exhibition in consideration of the moon with its multiple connotations. We take the scientific and poetic resonance of the moon—its tidal sway, its white and grey modulated surface—as commonplace. We are accustomed to thinking of a stark division between the science of astronomy and the art of painting: the planetary bodies as opposed to the Romantic achievement for instance in the *rückenfigurs*, who sit with their backs to the viewer gazing at a bright hovering orb in the sky and populate the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. The ancients had no such divisions. Plato reasoned the moon revolved with mathematical precision in a musically harmonious motion while at the same time he understood it as being an apparatus of divine retribution where the gods could play out their wrath on humans below. It is this duality that Feldman strikes in her most recent work.

A painting such as *Swollen Omen* alludes to the aforementioned primal anxieties and also recalls the body. The cavities and protrusions of her bulbous shapes simulate viscera. Is it her body? Is it

an abbreviation of her movement with the brush across the surface? Is it a thigh or a knee? Feldman's lines are reminiscent but indiscernible, and their allusiveness hardly matters. What does deserve consideration is how these forms activate reminiscence. Feldman creates a biomorphic shorthand that reminds us of a body suspended between the scientific and the poetic: between the anatomic and the lustful. It is on that line that her rippling forms can activate humor and also serious thought. When Feldman approaches her surfaces, she is this instrument on the milky porcelain finish of her surfaces. You can sense her wildness in a field of restraint: always grey paint upon an always immaculate light ground. Feldman's greys fluctuate between lighter and darker values, often reading as pewters, slates or concretes. Her greys are tethered to her mark making. I think of their subtlety as akin to clouds casting shadows over the landscape. Forms racing on a surface, but intangible and completely abstract. Similarly, her greys mirror movement, like a shade following a figure. At times faint and at other times dusky, they intimate the trace of her painterly act.

Pronounced shifts in her oeuvre are evidenced in her mark making. Her cartoon-like stroke shows the influence of Futurism, of Pop namely Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. But with the Feldmans in this exhibition, I think of a time in art that is so rarely considered, such as in the work of Nicholas Krushkenick, who painted after the heyday of Abstract Expressionism in a style best described as abstract Pop. Unlike Krushkenick, Feldman restricts her palette showing her digestion of all of these iconic painters, but also her improvisation in the current moment. Aren't we in such an era of hyper-commodification, but also of hyper-regionalism, and locavorism? We consume images, products, ideas at a clip, but are almost wistful for a slower time. Feldman's synthesis of an immediate serial form and her judiciously subdued palette manages to locate a contemporary abstraction that navigates beyond irony to a place of sincerity and sharp wit.

*Andrianna Campbell*

at Brand New Gallery, Milan  
until 23 December 2015



# Art in America

REVIEWS OCT. 18, 2012

## Amy Feldman

NEW YORK,  
at Blackston  
by Amanda Parmer



For her first solo exhibition in New York, Brooklyn-based painter Amy Feldman installed four large canvases (all 2012) snugly within the small gallery's space. These paintings—as big as 8 feet high or wide—present a simple visual grammar that offers a counterpoint to the effusive visual cacophonies of Feldman's earlier work. In the 2012 paintings, one encounters single geometric shapes repeated in light to dark gray monotoes on a white ground. Despite being completely abstract, they are charged with a healthy dose of anthropomorphic humor.

Asserting individuality and character to rehash minimalist and conceptual vocabularies, Feldman critically situates her work in contemporary practice. In *All or Nothing*, a repeated chevron shape riffs playfully on Frank Stella's *Delta* (1958) and "Notched V" series (mid-1960s). She takes up the kind of self-conscious humor Mary Heilmann has deployed throughout her career by similarly retaining painterly drips and mishaps in the finished work. The show's catalogue traces Feldman's practice from 2007 onward and offers a means to contextualize the exhibition vis-à-vis her earlier work. A selection of the artist's small collaged drawings, sparsely populated by sketched, cartoonish images of jewels, magazine cutouts and a USDA food pyramid amid an array of gestural marks, hint at the roots of the large paintings' abstract forms. One suspects a critique of consumerist Western culture, of the growing abyss between dearth and excess.

The lone, bloated, bulbous donut shape that occupies the preponderance of canvas in *Owed* is painted in large looping gestures, with haphazard drips of paint splattered on what remains of the clean, gessoed surface. The lower half of the form, which seems to encroach on the viewer's space, is slightly thicker than the top, so that the upper portion of the canvas effectively recedes. One thinks all at once of a slobbering animal, an overly enthusiastic speaker's spittle and the sloppy habits of a careless, gluttonous eater.

As the artist has explained, each canvas consists of multiple layers of shapes and marks that coalesce into the final, pared down forms. This underpainting, only occasionally visible, tugs on the viewer's imagination, suggesting unknowable iterations of the image below. It is as if an invisible level of extravagance has undergirded the work's seeming simplicity. Add to this Feldman's loose play of personal, cultural and historical references, and one sees the artist achieving a compelling synthesis of meaning through humble, unpretentious means.

*Photo: Amy Feldman: All or Nothing, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 96 by 80 inches; at Blackston.*

# BOMB

## Amy Feldman by Mary Jones

*"No room for doubt": the painter on her formalism, subjects, and sense of humor.*

Amy Feldman's paintings definitely put the "form" back in formalism. Big, bold shapes squirm, teeter, and blast out of their white grounds like the thought balloons of a superhero in a comic book. Staunchly gray on white, Feldman's palette in particular separates her rigorous practice from much of the abstract painting of her contemporaries, and resists any easy categorization. Critic Stephen Westfall thought of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, quoting "the color of television, turned to a dead channel." Many connections to the neutral palette have been made along the walk to Feldman's studio in an industrial part of Brooklyn.

With simple and strong contrast, Feldman's forms activate the ground, dispelling any metaphors of the mechanical. Expressive, letter-like cartoon and carnal shapes drive Feldman's unique, psychologically charged language. The rigorous simplicity of the work embraces the fundamental elements of painting, a barebones approach of all or nothing, without revisions or second layers. The shapes can be humorous at times, as are her titles. Several other painters of her generation have embraced the idea that paintings can function very much like a skilled stand-up comedian. This seems especially true of Feldman: the moment is fast and exhilarating, the humor is not always comfortable or tame, and she usually pokes into some very anxious territory. But more importantly, the timing is everything. This is most evident in the improvisation necessary to construct the paintings. The compositions reflect the artist's active drawing practice, functioning as a "rehearsal" of sorts, a preparation for the work on the canvas, which has no second acts.

## AMY FELDMAN *High Sign*

by David Rhodes

BLACKSTON | SEPTEMBER 12 – OCTOBER 26, 2014

For this artist's second solo exhibition at Blackston, the walls and ceiling of the front gallery have been painted gray, and the difference this makes in how one experiences the five large-scale paintings that explore the tonal shifts of the complex hue is significant. The usual neutrality and isolation of the white cube experience is diminished in favor of an enhanced and continued range of gray tones that separates the paintings but does not provide the jolt that white would have when looking from one painting to another. Each of the five paintings, however distinct from one another, exchanges aspects and elements—such as color, animated application of paint, and the rounded lines and shapes—freely. The direct and playful surety of the images is a result of retaining a near duplication of formal elements while being willing to invent and accept the byproducts of a performative approach to painting.

"psych alike" and "Open Omen" (both 2014) boast largely empty canvases with a number of scalloped and curved shapes that stick close to but don't always touch the paintings' outer edges. Brush marks and drips evince an unfussy precision and subtle asymmetry, suggesting a poised but out of kilter and rather comedic sense of balance. In "psych alike," lighter gray shapes and two central, horizontal shapes that mimic a moustache establish a completely different feel; it is gentler in impact, less tense, an altogether different character though still part of the same family. "Open Omen" shares a similar charcoal color and centrifugal composition to "Gut Smut" (2014) but the shapes have become completely rounded, as if they have moved in from the edge to become more visible. Of course, this is not the case. Each painting is independent; it is the curious identifications that occur when confronted with such strongly related works that expose the formal logic—and humor—while not spelling out what this might signify. Not that explanations are necessary, for the "expression" that a painting possesses is here enigmatic and fun; think Buster Keaton's face in close up.

"Gut Smut" echoes "psych alike" and "Open Omen" with its open center, its negative shape similarly sided with two curves on three sides, three on one side. The stacked pebble forms create a sort of frame, appearing to circle and turn, become oblique or frontal. The gray surface fluctuates between flat opacity and openly brushed internal gestures against the even pale gray ground. As with all the paintings here, the figure/ground relation is active and questioning, creating a kind of spatial ambiguity, especially from distance. It is obvious that the artist takes pleasure in the material aspects of painting, an approach not unlike Mary Heilmann's; there is no "duking it out" as Heilmann put it, as there was for the Ab-Ex generation. Planning and preparatory drawings allow Feldman a spontaneity within limits that also leaves plenty of room for happy accidents or the occasional disaster. The process of revision and struggle over days or months that defined Ab-Ex is now a tightrope walk of one painting session.

In the back gallery, the walls of which are a darker gray than the first room, is a series of smaller paintings titled "Hour Triumphs" (2014) and "Popular Mantra" (2014), each comprised of a group of four canvases. Respectively, all share a formal closeness to one of the larger paintings present in the front space entitled "Killer Instinct" (2014). They collectively underline the apparently endless variations of seemingly minor displacements and adjustments. The two pieces read like freeze-frame moments in the evolution of an image, or the declaration that a definitive image is neither desired nor realistically possible. Each image might evoke anger, amusement, or exhaustion; some shapes seem to lean against the edge of the picture plane for support. The bold and swiftly constructed images are a product of staying within the traditional means of painting and not seeking out novel materials or techniques. Consequently, it may be surprising that painting can look so fresh and that an artist can find the means that she needs without looking further than paint, brushes, and canvas.

The potential idea of monumentality is easily undone by Feldman's insistence on not using size or somber color as a prop for seriousness. Her sense of humor, cartoonish and punning, allows the urgency and immediacy of both idea and image to balance without becoming encumbered with the conceits of previous or current generations. As time passes, grouping artists together under categorical titles—can we see Robert Ryman as a minimalist now?—becomes less effectual, and artists like Feldman will outweigh their similarities to others with differences, every time.

# ARTNEWS

REVIEWS: NEW YORK



Amy Feldman. *Killer Instinct*. 2014. acrylic on canvas.  
79" x 79".

## AMY FELDMAN

BLACKSTON  
SEPTEMBER 12 - OCTOBER 26

Like billowing smoke rings or gaping, gasping mouths, the images in Amy Feldman's paintings seemed to float, expand, and contract, contorting space by means of assured lines and gestures.

In this show, titled "High Sign," five large-scale paintings, all in shades of gray on pristine white grounds, were hung in the gallery's front room against walls of another, neutral gray, highlighting the differences in the hues. Displayed in the back room were eight small canvases that were hung close together. These were exploratory but ultimately less effective variations on the larger canvas *Killer Instinct* (2014), with its expressive interplay of positive and negative space.

*Gut Snut* (2014) has the appearance of a necklace of cartoonish thought bubbles, while *Killer Instinct's* bloated bottom ring looks like a mouth caught between a grimace and a snarl, and the masklike shape above it might conceal a murderous gaze.

In all of these works the smattering of accidental drips functioned to further animate and add a little extra spark to already dynamic canvases. Composed in one shot, the paintings adeptly straddled the line between spontaneous and considered; they purveyed an expansive sensibility, akin to that of Mary Heilmann and her loose, humorous geometry, but with the reins pulled tight in terms of a commitment to their reductive palette and pared-down imagery.

AMANDA CHURCH

# ARTFORUM

## Amy Feldman

REYNOLDS GALLERY

1514 West Main Street

April 10, 2015–May 30, 2015

New York–based artist Amy Feldman’s exhibition “Mirror Cool” features four large paintings in two colors: cool gray pigment against stark white canvas. Each work is a 6.5-foot square canvas, but the painted images—bubbling rectangles in *Mock Zero* or cartoonish biomorphic shapes in *Is for Idiot*, both 2015—emphasize verticality. Feldman, who works from preparatory sketches, quickly completes each painting in one sitting: the gestural brushstrokes, dripping paint, and swooping lines that compose the simple subjects underscore the sense of motion and speed.

Although these are new works, Feldman has returned to previously used subject matter. For example, *Former Future*, 2015, a massive rectangle composed of large circles overlapping one another, is nearly identical to *Holy Over*, 2014, and very similar to *O*, 2014, and *Owed*, 2011 (the earlier works are not included here). With this repetition, Feldman seems less concerned with the image, resigned instead to highlight the act of painting itself.

Indeed, these works are smart and intentionally elusive. Feldman claims influence from semiotics and wordplay, irony and stand-up comedy, and Robert Ryman’s monochrome. Really, these works rely on much more: the history of painting from Abstract Expressionism to Minimalism. If irony is at play, it at first seems disingenuously aligned with the exploitation of the viewer. On closer inspection, perhaps irony and repetition are tools for reconsidering the proliferation of images. But, then, to what end? While Feldman offers visually straightforward images, subversion and critique linger just beneath the surface.

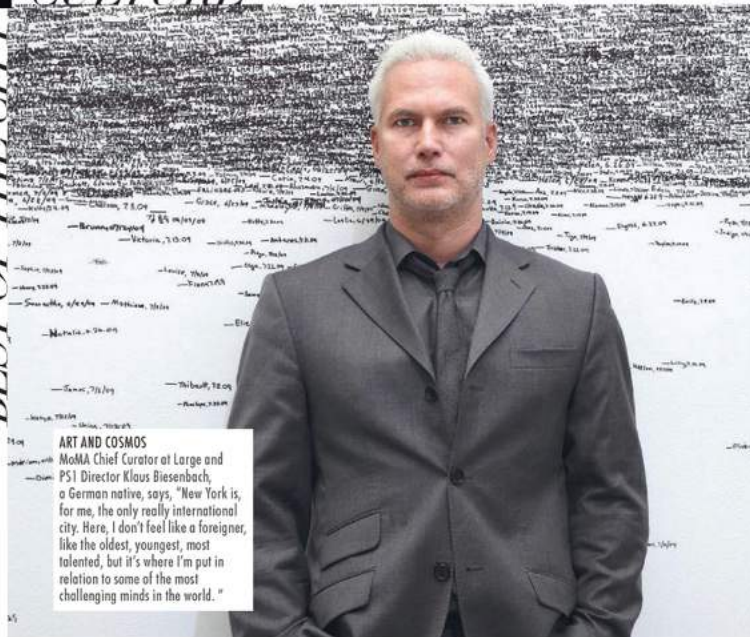


Amy Feldman, *Mock Zero*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 79 x 79".

— Amanda Dalla Villa Adams

## CULTURE

BEST OF THE CITY



**ART AND COSMOS**  
MoMA Chief Curator at Large and PS1 Director Klaus Biesenbach, a German native, says, "New York is, for me, the only really international city. Here, I don't feel like a foreigner, like the oldest, youngest, most talented, but it's where I'm put in relation to some of the most challenging minds in the world."

### Best Museum Curator

**Klaus Biesenbach**, the chief curator at large at MoMA (11 W. 53rd St., [moma.org](http://moma.org)) and director of PS1 (22-25 Jackson Ave., Long Island City, [momaps1.org](http://momaps1.org)) since 2010, has a knack for translating the cultural and political zeitgeist through shows that are lauded by both critics and audiences alike. A product of post-reunification Germany, Biesenbach founded Kunst-Werke, a cultural venue he transformed from an abandoned margarine factory in Berlin. His work caught MoMA's attention; and there, after he joined full-time in 2004, he launched the department of media, the first new curatorial department since photography in 1940, later expanding it to include performance art. In 2000, MoMA had brought PS1 under its umbrella; soon, it was under Biesenbach's aegis. Hedonistic in work, his personal life is a monastic experience—Biesenbach lives in a nearly empty apartment on Grand Street that has no sofas, tables or books—and that helps him eliminate unnecessary visual stimuli to better focus on his work, a necessity given the copious amounts of artistic information tracks. "There are so many talented, creative and inspiring people who invent the world again and again every day," Biesenbach says, referring to his work's challenge and allure. "Every day they create territory and images and imaginings that weren't there before." —*Sahar Khan*

### Best New Arts District

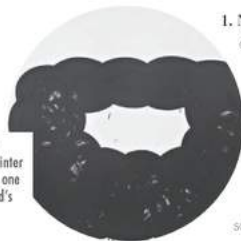
The city's newest arts district is in a once-gritty neighborhood in Astoria, Queens—the borough was voted the top place to visit in 2015 by travel guide *Lonely Planet*—that's become home to a growing number of cultural institutions. Christened **Kaufman Arts District**, the 24-block circumference, which joins others like Chelsea, is rich in film and theater venues, including the historic Kaufman Astoria Studios ([kaufmanastoria.com](http://kaufmanastoria.com)), for which the district is named and where shows like *Sesame Street* are taped. Nearby is the Museum of the Moving Image ([movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)), dedicated to the technique and technology of film, and the Theater Development Fund's Costume Collection ([tdf.org](http://tdf.org)), a repository housing more than 80,000 Broadway and movie costumes. Astoria Performing Arts Center ([apacny.org](http://apacny.org)) is one of the seven art spaces in the district, as well as the Frank Sinatra School of Arts ([schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov)), founded by Tony Bennett, and the Queens Council on the Arts ([queenscouncilarts.org](http://queenscouncilarts.org)). [kaufmanartsdistrict.org](http://kaufmanartsdistrict.org) —SK



**PICTURE THIS**  
The Museum of the Moving Image, devoted to the subject of film, is one of several cultural institutions in Kaufman Arts District in Queens.

### EDITORS' PICKS: BEST EMERGING ARTISTS

Celebrated artist and NYC resident Ross Bleckner tells us about the emerging artists he finds most exciting on the local art scene.



**GRAY MATTER**  
"Low D" by painter Amy Feldman, one of the art world's rising stars

1. **NED COLCLOUGH's** spare sculptures, seen at galleries such as Nicole Beauchene, encapsulate the methods of Bauhaus theater and ikebana arrangements to serve as abstract meditations while using everyday materials like found wood, rope and plaster. ¶ 2. **VAN HANOS'** oil on linen paintings range from photorealistic to sci-fi-inspired fantasies that have been exhibited at big-name spots such as Tanya Leighton Gallery in NYC. ¶ 3. Brooklyn-based artist **AMY FELDMAN's** loosely geometric patterns collide in a spasm of black-and-white anthropomorphic ideas that she delineates with a humorous take on the human condition. [amyfeldman.org](http://amyfeldman.org) ¶ 4. Another Brooklyn painter, **JAMIAN JULIANO-VILLANI**, creates saccharine-hued scenes that delve into explicit, tongue-in-cheek abstractions of historical works and social norms. [jamianjulianovillani.com](http://jamianjulianovillani.com) ¶ 5. **MICHAEL WILLIAMS'** finely embellished canvases covered in graffiti-like scrawls and often printed via triquet extract societal meaning through a pastel-colored blur of fantastical figures.

BIENBACH PHOTO BY OTTE WOLFFERGER

**M**anchmal hat man nur eine dunkle Ahnung von den Dingen. Sie lassen sich nicht bestimmen oder sind schlicht unklar. Oft sind es gerade die Dinge, auf die es ankommt. Die englische Sprache hat dafür den Begriff „grey areas“. Man verwendet ihn, wenn man nicht mehr weiterweiß, wenn etwas verschwommen ist, rätselhaft oder halblegal. Die „Grauzone“ im Deutschen trifft es nicht ganz. Denn im Englischen schwingt immer etwas Verdrängtes mit, etwas Komisches oder Anzügliches.

VON DANIEL SCHREIBER

Amy Feldman, 35, öffnet die Tür zu ihrem lichtdurchfluteten Wohnatelier im Stadtteil Red Hook von Brooklyn. Mit ihren lose zusammengesteckten Haaren sieht die Malerin in Daunensweste und grauen Jeans so aus, als würde sie lieber gleich weiterarbeiten wollen. An großformatigen abstrakten Bildern, die nicht nur deshalb jenen unbegreiflichen Bereich der Abstraktion beherrschen, weil sie beim Malen ausschließlich eine Palette von Grautönen benutzt.

Eine dünne Wand trennt die stilvoll eingerichteten Arbeits- und Wohnräume voneinander. Auch hier dominieren elegante Abstufungen von Grau. An den Wänden in der Küche hängen Bilder von Kollegen und Freunden, von Jonathan Laskers oder Laura Owens. An der Eingangstür klebt das Plakat, das Hillary Clinton nach einer langen Männerforenreihe als 45. amerikanische Präsidentin ausruft. Wie mit jedem, dem man zum Zeit in New York begegnet, reden auch wir zunächst über Politik, bevor wir uns der Kunst zuwenden.

Der hervorstechende Aspekt von Feldmans Bildern sind die bauschigen, knollenförmigen Formen, die einem mit Wacht entgegnetreten. Es sind Formen, die in der Kunstgeschichte nicht selten als „weiblich“ codiert wurden, was immer das zu bedeuten hatte. Mal sind sie zu biomorphen Girlanden angeordnet, mal nachlässig in einem geometrischen Raster angeordnet. Sie sind flüchtig auf die Leinwand gemalt oder treten ex negativo hervor, zuweilen sind auch nur Umrisse zu erkennen. Die satten Grauschattierungen mischt Feldman nicht

aus Weiß und Schwarz zusammen, sondern aus verschiedenen Farben. Spritzer, Flecken und Leerstellen brechen die Strenge der Motive auf.

Auf den ersten Blick strahlen die Bilder eine fast pastelige Leichtigkeit aus, doch länger man sich ihnen aussetzt, desto stärker spürt man die Spannung, die in ihnen drückt und nicht die diese Komposition so sehr auflädt, dass sie fast zu platzen droht. Sie haben etwas von Cartoons, erinnern an verstaubte Körperpartien und Funktionen und verweisen zugleich auf die quasi-sakrale Ernsthaftigkeit der etablierten abstrakten Malerei.

Die Bilder sind wild, aber auch zurückgenommen, humorvoll und dennoch psychologisch aufgeladen, vom Geist einer schnoodrigeren Rebellion geprägt, aber gleichzeitig auch von großem Optimismus. „Meine Bilder“, sagt sie, „sind hoffentlich irgendwo zwischen Widerspruch und Möglichkeit angesiedelt. Ich finde es wichtig, dass man in ihnen immer auch eine Haltung erkennen Widerstands spürt.“

Feldman hat ihr Atelier über einer alten Garage eingerichtet. Sie ist vor vier Jahren hergezogen, nach Stationen in Rhode Island, Maine und Manhattan. Sie stammt aus dem Bundesstaat New York und machte als Schülerin Führungen durch das Museum Dia Beacon, sog die Sprache der Hochmoderne und Abstraktion in sich auf. Red Hook, wo heute viele Künstler wohnen, war traditionell ein Hafen- und Industriegebiet, inzwischen verstreute Wohnhäuser. Am Horizont erkennt man die Skyline von Manhattan; der Atlantik ist nicht weit. Park Slope, ein Epizentrum der brooklynisierten Welt, aber auch nicht. Man hat das Gefühl, in New York zu sein und auf dem Land, nah am Leben, aber auch abgeschottet – in einer Umgebung, in der man konzentriert arbeiten kann.

Genau diese Konzentration ist für Amy Feldman essentiell, denn fast genauso wichtig wie die Gemälde ist der Malprozess, der zu ihnen führt. Feldman zeichnet mit einem Filzstift so lange Skizzen, bis sie für sie stimmen. Wenn sie eine Form gefunden hat, malt sie in einer physischen wie psychischen Performance. Die Bilder bekommen Titel wie „Mondstimmung“, „Kaltes Kribbeln“ oder „großer Schweißausbruch“. „Wenn ich an eine neue Leinwand herantrete“, erzählt sie, „fühle ich eine Mischung aus Aufregung und Angst.“



Alle Farben grau: Amy Feldman in ihrem Atelier in Brooklyn. Ihre Bilder werden nun erstmals in Deutschland gezeigt

## Amy's Shades of GREY

Beim Malen setzt die New Yorkerin Amy Feldman Kopf und Körper ein. Ihre Bilder sind nicht so abstrakt-cool wie die ihrer männlichen Kollegen. Ein Atelierbesuch in der Grauzone der Malerei

Sie stecke ihr ganzes Selbst und alles, was sie wisse, ins Malen. „So treten Dinge hervor“, sagt sie, „die mir vertraut und gleichzeitig völlig fremd sind.“ Die Bilder versteht Feldman als Fortführungen ihres Körpers, als Produkte eines Moments. Sie erlaubt sich keine Korrekturen, keine Nachbearbeitungen.

Aus der Welle der jungen abstrakten Maler, die in den vergangenen Jahren über den Kunstmarkt geschwappt ist, sticht Feldman hervor. Obwohl sie als einzige Frau in der Diskussion um neuen „Zombie-Formalismus“ auftaucht, ist sie kein Liebling der Art-Popper. Ihre Arbeiten könnten sich von der Leere und dem coolen Nihilismus von Malern wie Jacob Kassay oder Lucien Smith auch kaum deutlicher unterscheiden.

Sie hat viel Erfolg damit. Nach ihrer Malerausbildung und einigen Stipendien ist sie nun sehr präsent als Künstlerin – zuletzt in der viel besprochenen Schau „Riot Grrrls“ im Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago und in der Galerie Blain Southern in Berlin. Ihre Bilder sind nicht nur aufdröhrender als die der Boyband-Zombies, sondern auch kunsthistorisch geerdet. Echos von Robert Ryman, Philip Guston und Christopher Wool hallen hindurch, ihre wahren Vorbilder aber sind die radikalen Heldinnen der Abstraktion: Helen Frankenthaler und Agnes Martin, Mary Heilmann und Joyce Kato.

Immer wieder kommen wir auf das Unbegreifliche zu sprechen, das man beim Sehen einiger ihrer Bilder empfindet – ein Schlüsselbegriff für die Knollen und aufgeblähten Flächen in Feldmans Werk. „Meine Bilder geben einen zeitgenössischen Widerwillen an“, sagt sie zum Ende unseres Treffens. „Ein Unbegreifliches mit der weiblichen Form – und zwar auf eine Weise, die man ‚mache‘ nennen könnte.“ Auch außerhalb des Ateliers nimmt Feldman diese Haltung ein. Es ist selbstverständlich für sie geworden, an den Demonstrationen gegen die neue amerikanische Regierung teilzunehmen, die in New York stattfinden. Ob man abstrakte Kunst in den Dienst eines gesellschaftlichen Anliegens stellen kann? Dazu entzieht sie sich zu schnell, liegt zu sehr in den Augen des Betrachters. Aber den Versuch, ist es Amy Feldman wert.

„Breath Myth“, bis zum 8. April, Galerie Blain Southern, Berlin

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# monopol

MAGAZIN FÜR KUNST UND LEBEN



PORTRÄT AMY FELDMAN

## Grau ist eine *frohe* Farbe

Was bleibt vom Ringen um formalistische Fragen? Butterkringel und leere Sprechblasen. Die Malerin *Amy Feldman* macht aus großen Problemen der Kunstgeschichte kleine Sensationen



„Grau als Idee hat eine gewisse Komik. Eine neutrale Farbe, die ich nicht neutral behandle“

OBEN  
Amy Feldman  
„Ghost Host“, 2016

RECHTS  
„Cold Century“, 2016



## PORTRÄT AMY FELDMAN

**E**in eisiger Wind weht über die Gowanus-Bucht, aber auf der Kompostfarm lassen sie sich nicht beirren: Freiwillige sieben den Küchenmüll der Anwohner des umliegenden Red-Hook-Viertels und schippen ihn zu Mieten auf. An diesem ersten Wochentende nach der Amtseinführung des neuen US-Präsidenten, nur ein paar Kilometer entfernt vom Kennedy-Flughafen, wo heute Nachmittag Hunderte Demonstranten gegen Donald Trumps Einreisepolitik protestieren, verrichtet diese New Yorker Nachbarschaftsinitiative stolz ihre Arbeit: sieben, umschichten, auf zersetzerische Prozesse warten.

In Amy Feldmans Wohnatelier gleich neben der Kompostieranlage geht es dann sofort um Politik: „Alle meine Künstlerfreunde versuchen, Sinn in dieser wahn sinnigen Zeit zu finden“, sagt sie, und wie wahn sinnig diese Zeit tatsächlich ist, merkt man daran, dass man alles zu ihr in Beziehung setzt – egal ob Kompost oder Malerei. An der Ateliertür hängt ein Poster, das die Herrenriege aus 44 US-Präsidenten zeigt, an deren Ende Nummer 45 steht: Hillary Clinton. Amy Feldman seufzt. Sprechen wir über Kunst?

Die Malerei der 35-Jährigen hat tatsächlich eine erfrischende Wirkung, auch wenn sie lediglich Grautöne benutzt. Auf großformatige, säuberlich grau grundierte Leinwände malt Feldman geschwungene graue Linien, um sie zu grauen Flächen zu verbinden: biomorphe, kaugummilartige, cartooneske, sternförmige, darmgleiche, auf jeden Fall prägnante zeichenhafte Umrisse oder Farbfelder. Obwohl: Was ist Grund, was Figur? Uralte innerbildliche Fragestellungen der Malerei drängen sich bei Amy Feldman auf, obwohl sich in ihren Bil-

dern gleichzeitig das Bewusstsein von der fortschreitenden Emojisierung und Infantilisierung der Kommunikation abzeichnet. Ja, gerade diese Spannung weckt die gute Laune.

## Uralte Fragen der Malerei treffen auf das Bewusstsein um die Emojisierung der Welt

Vier Leinwände stehen im Moment im Atelier, auch in ihnen erkennt man eine einfache Freude an der Malerei, die in komplexen Problemen mündet, deren spielerische Aufführung wiederum Anlass zu Freude bietet. „Meine früheste Erinnerung besteht darin, dass mein Vater und ich ein Malbuch kolorieren“, erzählt Feldman. „Mein Vater zeigte mir, wie man Farben mischt: ein dunkles und helleres Braun für einen Baumstamm.“ Die spätere Absolventin der Kunsthochschulen auf Rhode Island und in New Jersey benutzt noch eine breite Auswahl an Farben, dann reduziert Amy Feldman ihre Palette, bis nur noch Grau da ist und Feldman-Bilder wie Feldman-Bilder aussehen. „Grau als Idee empfinde ich als komisch. Die Farbe kann sowohl Krassheit als auch Sanftheit ausdrücken, und diese Paarung der Effekte schafft



Amy Feldman arbeitet in einem Wohnatelier über einer Garage, fertige Großformate verlassen das Studio durch das Fenster

# MONOPOL

MAGAZIN FÜR KUNST UND LEBEN

PORTRÄT AMY FELDMAN



OBEN  
„oben“, 2016

eine interessante Plattform für mich, die ich mit Humor fülle, indem ich eine neutrale Farbe nicht neutral behandle. Beckett schrieb, dass nichts lustiger sei als Traurigkeit. Ich glaube, Grau ist eine unfrohe frohe Farbe.“

Das Grau des Himmels draußen über Süd-Brooklyn: traurig. Das Grau in Ihren Bildern hier im Atelier hingegen hat etwas Glamouröses, es ist das Grau von TV-Schnee, das Grau von Disco-Glitter, ein künstliches Grau, ein freiwillig gewähltes Grau, ein Grau, das sich nicht mit Schwarz-Weiß-Abbildungen reproduzieren lässt, ohne dass alles verloren geht. Und dann steht dieses Grau im Kontrast zu diesen comicartigen Formen – leere Sprechblasen, pupillenlose Mickey-Maus-Augen, „Zack!“ und „Boomi!“ und „Bang!“ Die Bezüge zur Pop-Art sind überdeutlich, auch wenn deren Knalligkeit hier fehlt. Als hätte jemand den Synth abgestellt, und trotzdem tanzen alle weiter. Bass und Beat reichen völlig aus.

Auch wenn das Grau eine zeichnerische und grafische Qualität hat, an Graffiti-Schraffuren denken lässt und Illustrationen, sind Amy Feldmans Bilder ganz klar malerisch: Gestus und Pinselstriche sind erkennbar, manchmal wird der Farbauftrag pastos, immer halten einzelne Spritzer, die vom Malprozess erzählen, wie Reißzwecken auf einer Pinnwand die Komposition zusammen.

Denn obwohl Amy Feldmans Bilder „cool“ sind, was den Schwung und die (Nicht-)Farbigkeit angeht, scheinen die Formen doch unter Spannung zu stehen: Sie drängen zum Rand, als würden Fliehkräfte an ihnen zerren, sie wollen das Format sprengen und können nicht, sie verlieren manchmal ihre Grenze und werden eins mit dem Grund. Das Drama aus Helligkeit und Dunkelheit tut das Übrige. Theatraler Slapstick, der sich in Bildtiteln wie „Doodle ooze“, „Naked Baked“, „Good Gloom“, „Ohm oomph“ oder „Icky Tickle“ spiegelt, erstreckt sich auch durch den unmittelbaren und dynamischen Malprozess, denn ist die Leinwand erst mal grundiert und hat sich aus unzähligen Vorstudien mit Tusche, Kugelschreiber oder Bleistift auf Papier eine Idee von einem gültigen Bild entwickelt, geht es offenbar schnell im Atelier Feldman. „Wenn ich arbeite, muss ich darauf vertrauen, dass meine Hand, mein Körper und mein Malmaterial sich verschwören“, sagt die Künstlerin, die – das ist an dieser Stelle tatsächlich eine Erwähnung wert – von

zierlicher Statur ist. „Wenn alles auf Linie gebracht ist, kann sich das Bild materialisieren.“

Der Körper, Größe, Energie, Reichweite der Hand, schreibt sich so im Bild mit ein. In den jüngsten Werken, die jetzt in ihrer neuen Galerie Blain Southern in Berlin ausgestellt sind, gehe es mehr denn je um das Unbehagen, das auch die säkularste Gesellschaft immer noch, man mag es kaum glauben, mit dem weiblichen Körper hat. „Die Arbeiten geben abstrakt den Körper und seine Funktionen wieder. Man kann Destillationen von Angst, Leidenschaft, Schmerz, Lust in diesen Formen sehen, wie positive Flächen negative Flächen verdauen und umgekehrt ...“ Amy Feldmans Hund, der sich auf dem Sofa eingerollt hat, wimmert wie zur Bestätigung zweimal im Schlaf.

Sieben, umschichten, auf zersetzende Prozesse warten – auch in der Kunst von Amy Feldman. Sie breitet Zeichnungen und Collagen aus, Zeugnisse ihrer Bildfindungsprozesse. In einige Skizzen hat sie Fotos von Butterkringeln und anderem Gebäck geklebt, auch das wieder ein augenzwinkernder Verweis auf eine angeblich weibliche Sphäre des Häuslichen, des Dekorativen, aber eben auch ein lustvolles Spiel.

Einst suchten männliche Avantgardkünstler in der abstrakten Malerei eine Universalsprache, die über alle kulturellen Differenzen hinweg verständlich wäre, und vergaßen dabei, dass schon ihre eigenen Frauen sich vielleicht nicht angesprochen fühlten von ihrem Machokram. Bei Feldman, die als Teenagerin als Ausstellungsführerin im Dia:Beacon-Museum im Bundesstaat New York arbeitete, findet sich dieses 100 Jahre alte Ringen um formalistische Probleme wieder, mit beeindruckender Lässigkeit überführt in ihre eigene Sprache. So

## Feldman gelingen luzide Kommentare zur Malereigeschichte, die einen noch im Wegdrehen erwischen



Hier entstehen Amy Feldmans Bilder.  
Hinter der Holzwand wohnt die Künstlerin



Amy Feldman lebt es,  
schnell und energiegeladent zu arbeiten.  
Ihr Hund lies selbst zu

gelingen ihr luzide Kommentare auf die Malereigeschichte, die einen noch von hinten erwischen, wenn man sich schon in dem Glauben abwendet, die Bilder verstanden zu haben.

Helfen Kategorisierungen zur Abwehr solcher Angriffe? Amy Feldmans Arbeit würde gelegentlich als „Zombie-Formalismus“ bezeichnet, ein Begriff, der unterschiedlichste auf dem Markt erfolgreiche, junge, abstrakte Maler zusammenbringen will. Der respektlose Umgang mit tot geglaubter Materie – abstrakter Malerei – mag diese Bezeichnung rechtfertigen.

Aber die Bilder der New Yorkerin sind zu selbstbewusst, zu klar, zu lebendig und wach, um Zombies zu sein. „Historisch gesehen hat die Malerei durch Ihre suggestive Kraft ein Potenzial bewiesen, das Denken zu ändern“, sagt Amy Feldman. Wir reden doch nicht schon wieder über Politik, oder?

Dech, die ganze Zeit.

Aktuelle Ausstellung: „Broath-Math“, Blain Southern, Berlin, bis 8. April

Saltz, Jerry, "To Do: May 31 - June 14, 2017," *New York Magazine*, May 31, 2017.

# NEW YORK

## Art

### **21. See Amy Feldman: Nerve Reserve**

*Take that, critic!*

A lot of the art world laughed at an art-blog-know-nothing attack on the geometric abstract paintings of artist Amy Feldman. Her new show finds her loosening up, happily unaffected by the cynical assertions that she made a windbag critic lose his "will to carry on writing." —J.S.

*James Cohan, 291 Grand Street, through June 4.*

## Tough Love

### Catalogue Essay by Stephen Westfall for Solo Exhibition *Dark Selects*

There's a visual hit to our first encounter with an Amy Feldman painting, or better, a group of them. They telegraph their overall image structures across space like bold signage. Greenberg would have approved. Or, who knows? He might have found their tracteries of the grotesque a bit icky: ok for Pollock, Louis, and Frankenthaler, maybe, but Feldman may just be a bit too cartoonal. For Greenberg, that meant Pop, "easy stuff" in his mind. But Feldman's stretched and pulled geometries hint at a darkness that her stark and high contrast figure/ground relationships don't dispel. What's moving about in the shadows? The usual sex and death, cognitions that are generally hard on the intent to remain abstract, and invariably complicate easy formal ironies.

Feldman's studio is by the elevated F train in Brooklyn, in an old manufacturing loft area not too far from the Gowanus Canal. It's a brutal stretch if you're looking for greenery, but the kind of area artists love (there's a Lowe's next door). She describes the elevated tracks, which have been under long-term repair, as " . . . very toxic and beautiful and bare-bones."<sup>1</sup> It's an apt description of the emotional pitch of her paintings with two additions: they are also funny and sexy. Feldman has a gift for drawing with paint on a large scale. Her compositions seem big even in a small size, but her natural scale is a canvas half again as high, or long, as she is. This is a scale that addresses and virtually embraces our embodied gaze, pulling us into the illusionist space of her forms, or pulling her forms out into our own physical space.

What's "toxic" about Feldman's paintings is the way in which the scale of her forms gets up in our faces and the peculiar poison of her near black mixed greys, the color described by William Gibson in the opening line of *Neuromancer*, "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel." But the toxicity is also funny, because it emanates from paintings that have the elegance of Rothko's "tragic sublime," Motherwell's epically ridiculous "Spanish Elegies," and Louis's "Bronze Veils" in their DNA. The only way to bring toxicity into the language of the beautiful is through a sense of humor and seductiveness. Feldman belongs to a generation that can love the "tragic sublime" from a distance that allows parody. And effective parody usually comes from love. We can see that this is a sexy love in the graphic fluidity of her paint.

So we're confronted by *Owed*, an enormous pun wherein the large circular band whose outline grows little semicircle ridges of its own, like Little Orphan Annie's ringlets in silhouette. It flattens on the bottom, like a Guston automobile tire. It's a painting that goes boo and then tries to stifle its own laughter. It's a vortex that asks you to stick your head in the center, from behind the picture plane. *Mermaid Merman* is a gigantic melting chevron in a wastebasket. Or maybe the thin, dark grey line isn't a cross section, but the edge of a hanging cloth, as if an abstract image was burned into the Shroud of Turin. Or the Shroud was really a beach towel. *All or Nothing* is a rectangle target listing to one side the way barbershop mirror reflections eventually do, and also a dark door at the end of a mesmerizing hallway. The stacked triangles of *In or Out*, create doubles in the off white "negative space." It is a deeply rhythmic painting, deep as Jah Wobble's bass. The lower right triangle appears to be giving birth to a grey-blue cloud in an Advent calendar window. The lower left triangle is just roughed in with long brushstrokes. The "white" is stained with ochre, like nicotine. There

are drips in all the paintings, daring us to call them decoration or affective, when they are so obviously intrinsic to her seductive performance of painting.

Feldman paints with irony as a defense against the punishing naiveté of ideology, and she is sincere about it. That is to say, her paintings know a lot, they have a lot of languages in them, and they let us know what they know with startling economy of means and a necessary theatrical grandeur.

Stephen Westfall

<sup>1</sup> Interview with ValB in *Studio Critical*, August 9, 2011. <http://studiocritical.blogspot.com/2011/08/amy-feldman.html>

## Great Gray

### Catalogue Essay for Solo Exhibition *Stark Types* by Barry Schwabsky

These are seemingly simple paintings of which there could in fact be so much to say—though the thoughtful viewer will always wonder how to say what there is to say of them, since the paintings themselves, cunningly evasive of the words they nonetheless provoke, offer so little clue as to their preferred verbal accompaniment. Their impact is first of all physical. But I'd start by remarking that to really appreciate them takes a certain relish for the flavors of gray—a sort of wine taster's delight in sniffing, sipping, and rolling around in the mouth of one's eye (I hope the metaphor is not too grotesque) the subtly distinct achromatic tones of Feldman's paintings. The differences from painting to painting are delicate, and perhaps in the eyes of some viewers insignificant compared to the graphic force of the big, blunt, often cartoonlike abstract shapes they embody. And subtlety may not be the first thing you'd expect when faced with the sense of enthusiastic energy with which Feldman wallops her paint onto the canvas, leaving splatters flying every which way. Prepare to be surprised. As the artist herself once put it, her forms are "carefully articulated yet under-polished," which is to say the deliberate roughness of effect should not distract you from noticing her fastidious attention to rightness of construction. It would be a mistake to see in Feldman's work only its brash vitality and not the more reflective aspect embodied in these myriad shades of gray, the color or noncolor that can never shed its association with the neutral, ambivalent, saturnine, pensive—gray days, gray matter, *éminence grise*. In painting, gray conjures a tradition that includes Jasper Johns, Gerhard Richter, and Brice Marden, and before them Whistler, Manet, and their beloved Spaniards.

Keeping Feldman's romance with gray in mind, consider this: For their shared sense of loose, spontaneous geometry and insouciant, almost punkish élan, one would naturally cite Mary Heilmann as the most evident model for Feldman's brand of unbuttoned formalism. "We artists channel the artists that worked before us," as Heilmann herself once told Ross Bleckner; of course Feldman channels a host of familiar spirits, going back beyond Heilmann to take suggestions from Al Held and Tony Smith, to be sure, but from the likes of Tex Avery too. But has Heilmann (whose color sensibility one imaginative critic once compared to "the summer-print bathing suits sold at Wal-Mart") ever made a predominantly gray painting? Having followed her work as closely as I could since 1986, I don't recall ever seeing one. So how is it that an artist who on other levels seems so influenced by Heilmann has been able to rein in her palette to such a limited range of grays on white? The beginning of an answer would be the observation that in fact Feldman's palette never does seem reined in. I'm not ready to swear that Feldman's grays can do anything that Heilmann's blazing panoply of ripe primaries and juicy secondaries can do—that will take a lot more time to tell—but they can do an awful lot, from quasi-rococo fluffiness to quasi-minimalist implacability. I am suddenly reminded of Paul Valéry's observation that "artists need to understand each other just sufficiently to differ. The same applies to philosophers."

In any case, and contrary to its reputation for blandness, indefinability, and gloom, in Feldman's hands gray always feels lively and particular; it has bounce. In the push and pull that she sets up between her grays and the white grounds on which she paints with them—and those whites are no more the same from painting to painting than the grays, but that's another story—both forces are equally

active. I asked Feldman once whether she spent more time mixing her paints or putting them on the canvas. "About the same," she responded. "I can spend a whole day trying out mixtures, trying to get just the right one." The act of painting starts well before a mark is ever put on canvas, and the relative slowness of the preparation balances out the boldness and spontaneity of the gestures just as the gray always balances out the white, no matter how much or how little of either end up in any particular painting. Feldman's work has on occasion been referred to as "drawing with paint on a large scale," but I have to insist, on the contrary: Whatever it is that Feldman does, it is not "drawing with paint." It is, quite simply and quite definitely, painting. That Feldman's gray on white approximates the black on white that we associate with drawing (and with writing) is surely a conceit entertained by the paintings and the canny viewer will find it worthwhile being inveigled by the approximation, but to let oneself forget that it is, after all, only a comparison—that would be a shame. As is the case with most other painters, Feldman's paintings come from drawings—and the ink used in those drawings is black, not gray—but the drawings and paintings are very different. Only in painting is gray so various. The point is not just that Feldman shows herself entirely the painter by the care with which she mixes her grays; I could almost even say that this might not be necessary, because—keeping in mind Matisse's observation that with colors, "as their quantities differ, their quality also changes; the colors applied freely show that it is their quantitative relation that produces their quality"—even the same gray would seem different as it appears in different ratios from one canvas to the next.

Another part of the reason for Feldman's work being painting, rather than drawing on canvas, has to do with scale, of course—as we would only expect if we understand that the quantity of a color impinges on its character: Feldman knows how to give lightness of spirit a monumental presence. But scale is never just a matter of scale. Color and facture as well as form can help give painting a scope immeasurable by the yardstick, so those exquisite grays are relevant here too. The kind of size that matters is what looms up in the imagination before it asserts itself on the wall, and lingers on long after you've left the room. By that measure, Feldman's are some of the biggest paintings being made today.

Barry Schwabsky

## Amy Feldman's Condensed Poetics

### Catalogue Essay by Raphael Rubinstein for Solo Exhibition *High Sign*

The first time I saw a canvas by Amy Feldman I knew that I instantly had to make room for an important new development in painting. Her work achieved its powerful effect on me not via any radical break with decorum or through some unusual means of paint application or by adopting a new technology (strategies, it must be said, that often lose effectiveness once their novelty evaporates) but through a process that is much more fundamental, and much more difficult: making paintings that delve back into the medium's history and significantly reconfigure it in response to the sensibility of the artist and the conditions of her time.

One of Feldman's significant reconfigurations is to create forms that constantly evoke the decorative and the cartoony through a working process that, paradoxically, seems to belong to the realm of gestural painting in its purest state. Let's make it clear at once that Feldman has no intention of reviving of gestural abstraction; she is a maker of images not of marks; a painter who courts allusion, whose motifs come tantalizingly close to things the mind already knows, even if they aren't easily nameable. Feldman also joyfully declines all high-production-value, labor-intensive options, instead relishing the virtues of the nonfinito, the provisional, the open.

No matter how large, Feldman's acrylic paintings are always completed in a single session. If she doesn't get it right the first time, she compels herself to redo the entire composition again from the beginning. She almost never revises, touches up or adjusts her initial image; it's pretty much all or nothing. This doesn't mean, however, that she begins her paintings ex nihilo: they are usually based on small drawings and Feldman will often make a few preliminary marks on the white ground to help guide her rapid execution of the image. In this exhibition, the ideology of the autonomous gesture is further complicated by the effects of mirroring and doubling created by two groups of small paintings in the gallery's second room, each of which is similar to the large painting *Killer Instinct*. The slight but continual variations in these paintings display Feldman's fecundity of invention and her interest in the play of repetition and difference.

Feldman's *alla prima* approach introduces a strong performative component into her work, and also a sense of risk, of potential failure, something that was avoided by many painters over a long period of time. After the post-World War II embrace of spontaneity and improvisation (a cultural turn that affected literature as well as in visual art, and was in large part a direct response to the fact of jazz), around 1960 painting began to shun improvisation and became more and more risk-averse. While the rhetoric of the artist-as-existential-hero no doubt needed to be challenged, especially when it was no longer credible in the growing institutionalization, capitalization and academicizing of contemporary art, something went missing from the studio when painters ceased to see the canvas as, in Harold Rosenberg's famous formulation, "an arena in which to act."

In paintings like Feldman's, the artist's handling of the brush is in naked evidence; we see every graceful stroke and every awkward turn. In one sense, the painting is a chronicle of how she reacts under pressure. The question of pressure isn't much discussed in relation to visual art, though it is much more central when we think about, evaluate and enjoy more explicitly physical performances: the pressure felt by a tennis player serving for game point in a grand slam final, the nervousness of a ballet dancer essaying an epic leap, the anxiety of the goalie at the penalty kick. The reason we pay attention to these situations is because it is at such moments that the human body and mind are flung into different orders of being, sometimes attaining moments of beauty, expressiveness, stamina or grace, sometimes failing at the moment of supreme effort. Feldman's paintings involve a level of difficulty that is all the more compelling for being achieved with apparent effortlessness.

Like every serious painter (and, remember, serious painters can be great comedians) Feldman is operating under the pressure of history. The impact of her work is inextricably bound up with the dialogue her paintings initiate with the past, a dialogue that is always surprising and deeply felt. When I look at Feldman's paintings I think about Matisse (bold, sensual, unfussy limning of shape), Guston (quest for the uncanny, speed of execution), Elizabeth Murray (cartoony humor of unwieldy forms), Mary Heilmann (seeming nonchalance), Jonathan Lasker (eloquence of the unadorned graphic stroke), early Ellsworth Kelly (focus on contour and flatness), late Norman Bluhm (ornamental erotics, gesture at the service of baroque designs), Ray Parker (small numbers of large forms, a decline of obvious virtuosity); her work also builds on 20th century virtuosos of curvilinear choreography from Arp and Calder to George Sugarman. By proposing multiple genealogies, Feldman maps out new paths from the present to the past and back again. Equally important, she achieves things you won't find in any of the oeuvres just cited, in particular the insidious twisting of figure/ground relationships that can make Feldman's seemingly reductive paintings so complex and even delirious.

This show is titled "High Sign," a phrase the artist wants to be understood in all its connotations: these are "high" paintings because they require the artist to stretch as she paints (such physicality is crucial to Feldman's work), and "high" paintings because they seek a kind of euphoria. The five big paintings in the show are, says the artist, intended as a kind of "high five," an expression of exuberance and optimism. The title reminds us that Feldman is engaged with making signs, which is how Matisse thought of his painting when he spoke to Louis Aragon in 1942 about wanting to impart "the briefest possible indication of the character of the thing. The sign."

Certain forms and structures run through the paintings in this show, as Feldman seems to give herself the challenge of restating visual ideas in distinctly different ways. Repeatedly, framing devices surround voids, and curving bands and concatenated shapes loop back into each other. Make no mistake, however, there is rich psychological content lurking within the decorative punch of these pictures. In *Killer Instinct*, for instance, the stacked forms (reminiscent of a sculpture by Henry Moore or, maybe better, Charles Long) unleash a narrative of cavities and solids, of separation and attachment, of singularity and doubling that models any number of biological, emotional and social situations. Often, the titles, which employ a kind of condensed poetics and restrained punning that perfectly suits the paintings themselves, point toward this content. In this body of work Feldman's basic compositional unit is the scalloped edge. Again and again, arcs swell and decline, bulge and deflate, stretch and compress, at times evoking drapery or rotund human figures (there are intentional echoes of the *Venus of Willendorf*) or simply—simply?—turn the picture plane into an irresistible spectacle.

It suddenly occurs to me that I've said nothing yet about Feldman's binary palette of gray and white, perhaps the aspect of her paintings that most immediately strikes first-time viewers. *Nota bene*: both the grays and the whites change from painting to painting—in any single canvas the palette may be binary, but across a group of paintings the effects are multifarious and require the viewer to pay close attention to small changes. At the artist's instructions, the walls and ceilings of Blackston have been painted two different grays in order to bring increased attention to the all-important edges of the paintings and to underline Feldman's subtle but crucial spectrum range by introducing a middle value between the grays and whites of paintings.

Gray has frequently been understood a mean of distancing the painter and painting from the emotiveness of color, a cerebral procedure. Feldman's grays are about something quite different. It is not in quest of neutrality and blandness (which are not, let me hasten to add, necessarily bad things, as anyone familiar with Roland Barthes's *The Neutral* or François Julien's *In Praise of Blandness* will know) that Feldman privileges gray. Rather, she endows it with a palpable sensuality, not unlike what designer Charles James did in the 1950s with his sleek gray mohair dress (recently sported by Angelina Jolie in *The Tourist*). Feldman uses gray to intensify the effect of her paintings, to make sure that the viewer misses nothing, not a single drip, not a single slathered brushstroke, not a single positive/negative reversal. This keenly focused palette is one more thing that makes these paintings burn themselves straight into your memory.

Popular Mantra: Amy Feldman  
by Daniel S. Palmer

Amy Feldman is a force within a new generation of painters whose background is traditional (countless hours with masterpieces in galleries, still more hours poring over exhibition catalogues) and yet whose daily lives and art are presided over by our digital world. Thus, Feldman and her contemporaries, fluent in emoji and iMessaging, are not only comfortable circulating work online, but are acutely aware of how the objects they create will look in person—and digitally. As such, their work both responds to this need not only in its creation, but also in its meaning. These artists show our society at a pivotal juncture: How we deal with the weighty legacy of painting in contrast to the increasingly unstable significance of images. It is a conflict that makes Feldman's paintings and her perspective on the nature of simplicity within iteration more relevant—and more powerful—than ever.

Feldman's paintings help demonstrate this cultural shift with an important urgency. Their formal power to instantly impress viewers translates fluidly to the digital sphere: The paintings pack a punch in person and, of course, as .jpgs. Their graphic force—initially read as monumental iconic forms with references to contemporary signs, symbols, and digital ideograms—is intentionally elastic, allowing for infinite interpretations. They offer not merely insights into but also critiques of how we read images in the present technological moment. They speak to the necessity that, in this new digital realm, initial visual impact reigns over all. Yet while Feldman uses the barebones bravado of her paintings to steal her viewers' attention, the intricacies of her work demand a closer look that rewards the viewer with subtleties.

Indeed, the seemingly informal yet carefully composed figure-ground relationship of each painting provides an opportunity for a more embodied experience. When

standing in front her large-scale canvases, one perceives an oscillation between surface, iconography, and geometry previously obscured by the graphic moment of impact. Moreover, her use of image repetition—many of her paintings are playful, precise variations of each other—both mimics and comments on an era of information overload and the ironies of image duplication. The starkness of her forms—loops leaking into more loops, bold bulges, triangular wedges mitigated by her strokes—sate our need to be shocked by something primal, something immediate. The force of the forms is such that the negative space behind and around them grows increasingly in interest. The shapes lurk, perturbing us, giving voice to our contemporary, communal anxiety. In joining the experience of image bombardment with the directness of striking form, Feldman merges the competing impulses of our culture.

In a sense, the act of viewing Feldman's work—like her pressured, performative approach to making it—demands an encounter that is equally rooted in mind and body. She makes each painting in a single, fluid attempt (drips and visible brushstrokes remain as traces of her labor). The stress involved in such an artistic practice—a make-or-break method—emulates the countless stimuli of our daily lives, even while her strokes suggest facility and ease. To me, her work is an argument for how even now, in the hyped hustle of New York City's pulsating metropolis, her paintings can hold us, briefly, still.

## Moon Decorum

Essay by Andrianna Campbell for Solo Exhibition *Moon Decorum*

Amy Feldman's latest work in *Moon Decorum* embodies a world that is both restrained form and wild pathos. Her pristine pearlescent surfaces are a substrate upon which she showcases gesture. This is mark making in two forms. *Moon Decorum*, the painting from which the exhibition takes its title, has both of these forms occurring at once. On the one hand, there are fluid gibbous forms that explode outward and highlight escaping drips akin to the effulgent white drips in the black and white paintings of Willem de Kooning. On the other hand, her marks evidence a reduced seriality, manifesting as a footnote of expression or an acknowledgment of the ironic symbol of gesture—much as in a work by Jasper Johns. Therein resides what could be called a lunar friction in Feldman's paintings, between two divergent cultural interpretations of lunar activity: the moon demonstrates precision and regularity in its rotation, yet epitomizes our primal fears of its transformative power (as in the cultural myth of the werewolf). The darkness of these paintings is analogous to the cold vacuum of space and also to the palpable electricity of fear in the night air: Heideggerian, both *angst* and *furcht*, that is feeling that is abstract and concrete.

It is noteworthy that Feldman titled her exhibition in consideration of the moon with its multiple connotations. We take the scientific and poetic resonance of the moon—its tidal sway, its white and grey modulated surface—as commonplace. We are accustomed to thinking of a stark division between the science of astronomy and the art of painting: the planetary bodies as opposed to the Romantic achievement for instance in the *rückenfigur*s, who sit with their backs to the viewer gazing at a bright hovering orb in the sky and populate the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. The ancients had no such divisions. Plato reasoned the moon revolved with mathematical precision in a musically harmonious motion while at the same time he understood it as being an apparatus of divine retribution where the gods could play out their wrath on humans below. It is this duality that Feldman strikes in her most recent work.

A painting such as *Swollen Omen* alludes to the aforementioned primal anxieties and also recalls the body. The cavities and protrusions of her bulbous shapes simulate viscera. Is it her body? Is it an abbreviation of her movement with the brush across the surface? Is it a thigh or a knee? Feldman's lines are reminiscent but indiscernible, and their allusiveness hardly matters. What does deserve consideration is how these forms activate reminiscence. Feldman creates a biomorphic shorthand that reminds us of a body suspended between the

scientific and the poetic: between the anatomic and the lustful. It is on that line that her rippling forms can activate humor and also serious thought. When Feldman approaches her surfaces, she is this instrument on the milky porcelain finish of her surfaces. You can sense her wildness in a field of restraint: always grey paint upon an always immaculate

light ground. Feldman's greys fluctuate between lighter and darker values, often reading as pewters, slates or concretes. Her greys are tethered to her mark making. I think of their subtlety as akin to clouds casting shadows over the landscape. Forms racing on a surface, but intangible and completely abstract. Similarly, her greys mirror movement, like a shade following a figure. At times faint and at other times dusky, they intimate the trace of her painterly act. Pronounced shifts in her oeuvre are evidenced in her mark making. Her cartoon-like stroke shows the influence of Futurism, of Pop namely Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. But with the Feldmans in this exhibition, I think of a time in art that is so rarely considered, such as in the work of Nicholas Krushkenick, who painted after the heyday of Abstract Expressionism in a style best described as abstract Pop. Unlike Krushkenick, Feldman restricts her palette showing her digestion of all of these iconic painters, but also her improvisation in the current moment. Aren't we in such an era of hyper-commodification, but also of hyper-regionalism, and locavorism? We consume images, products, ideas at a clip, but are almost wistful for a slower time. Feldman's synthesis of an immediate serial form and her judiciously subdued palette manages to locate a contemporary abstraction that navigates beyond irony to a place of sincerity and sharp wit.

*Andrianna Campbell*



*Angel Angle*, 2015, 201 x 201cm. acrylic on canvas