



AMY FELDMAN

Amy Feldman  
*Dark Selects*

June 14th - July 27th, 2012

## Tough Love

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 trceries 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. *Pressure Points* 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. *In & Out* 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 *Scrapple Still Life*, 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 Valerie Brennan in *Studio Critical*, August 9, 2011. <http://studiocritical.blogspot.com/2011/08/amy-feldman.html>

*In & Out*, 2012

Acrylic on canvas

75 x 80 inches



*Owed*, 2012

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 80 inches



*Pressure Points*, 2012

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 90 inches



*All or Nothing*, 2012

Acrylic on canvas

96 x 80 inches



*The Fact of A Door Frame*, 2012

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 96 inches



*Scrapple Still Life*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 60 inches



*Pushed*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

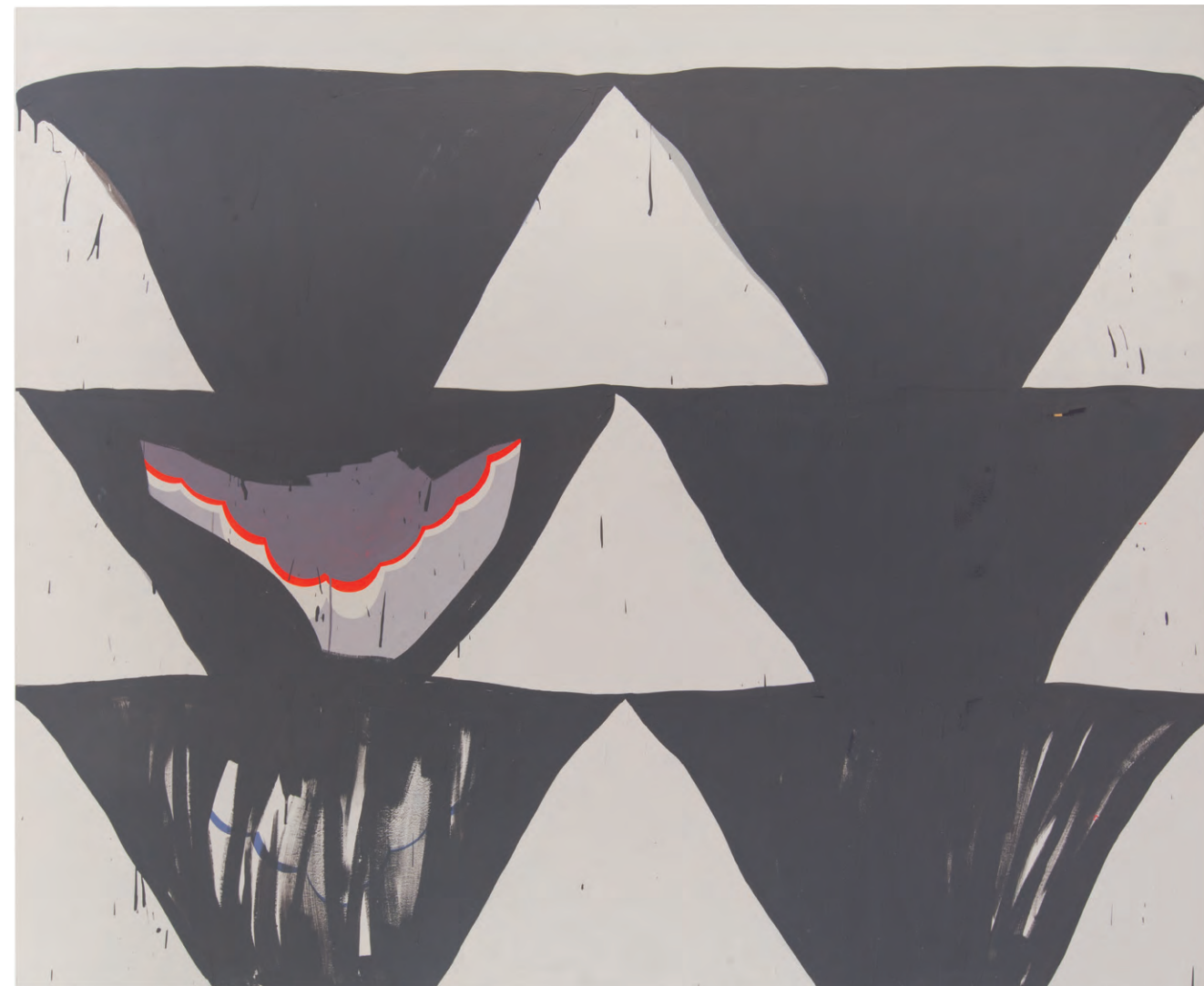
39 x 54 inches



*Landfills*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 96 inches



*Whole*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 96 inches

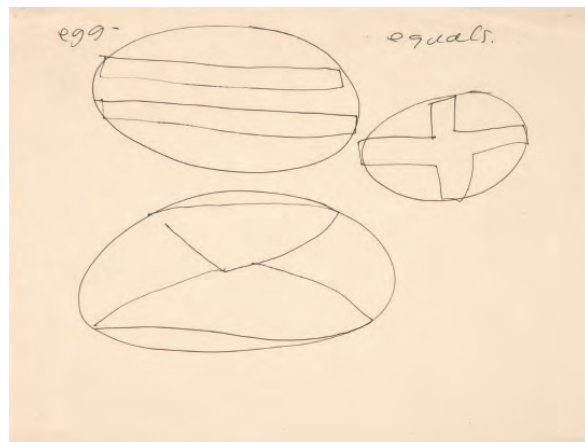


*Target*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas

84 inches diameter

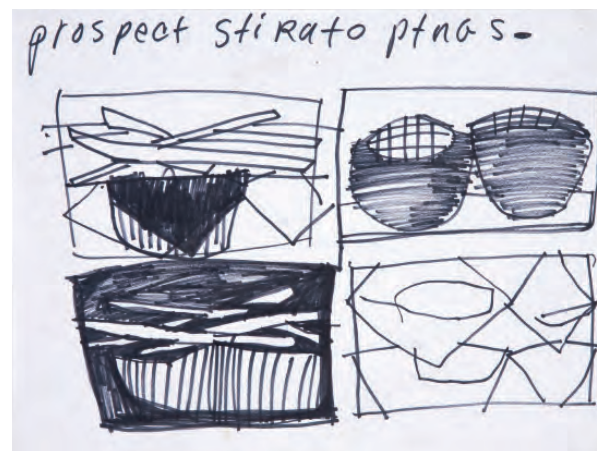




*equals egg, 2011*

Pen on paper

9 x 12 inches



*prospect stirato drawings, 2011*

Marker on paper

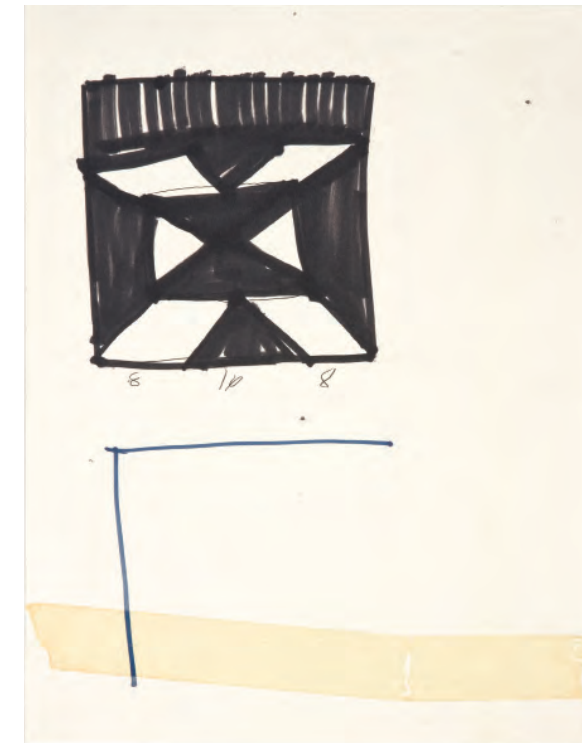
9 x 12 inches



*pretzel teeth, 2011*

Collage, marker and tape on paper

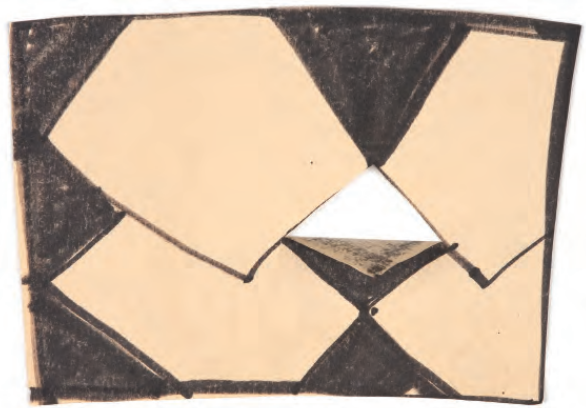
18 x 24 inches



*untitled drawing from Skowhegan, 2009*

Marker, pen, tape on paper

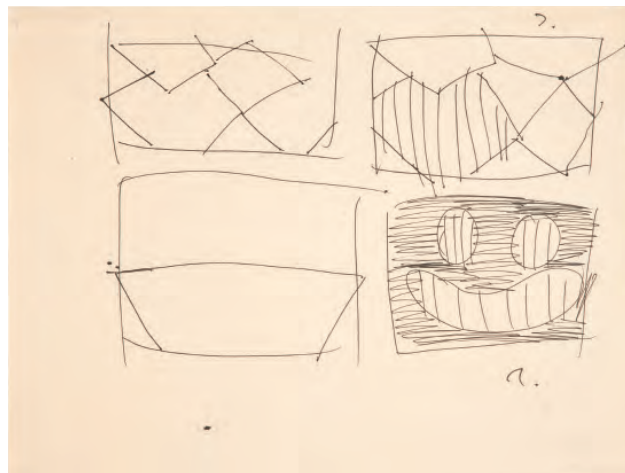
8 1/2 x 11 inches



*untitled flap-down dead-ringers drawing, 2010*

Marker on paper

Approx. 5 3/4 x 7 7/8 inches



*happy face erasure face, 2011*

Pen on paper

9 x 12 inches



*untitled, 2011*

Marker, pencil and masking tape on paper

12 x 12 inches



*moon phase, 2010-2011*

Marker on paper

18 x 24 inches

*Ever After*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 90 inches



*Scaffolding*, 2009

Acrylic, polymer, spray paint on canvas

36 x 35 inches



*Three Tondos to Cure a Working Space Hangover, 2010*

Acrylic and spray paint on canvas

Each 42 inches diameter



*Square Flacker*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

42 x 48 inches oval



*of old of oiled*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

12 x 9 inches





*Oral Order*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

9 x 12 inches



*Of another order*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

9 x 12 inches

*Oh, Omander*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

12 x 9 inches



*Bone Content*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas

9 x 12 inches



Amy Feldman lives and works in New York City.

She exhibits her work in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Berlin, and Sweden. Feldman received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from Rutgers University.

She has been a visiting artist and critic at Lehman College and Wave Hill, and was an artist-in-residence and Visiting Faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Feldman was awarded a New Jersey State Council on the Arts Grant and received fellowships from VCUArts and the Fountainhead Foundation, The Henry Street Settlement at the Abrons Art Center, The MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, the Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Her work has been featured in the Brooklyn Rail, Hyperallergic, NY Arts Magazine, The Art Economist, Saatchi Online Magazine, the Huffington Post.

Photos: Myriam Babin, Jason Mandella, Bill Orcutt