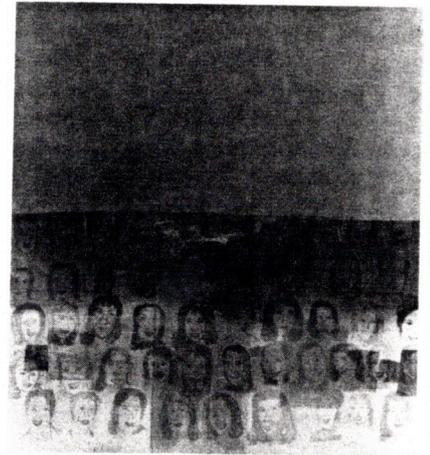


# NEW ART

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## AMY SILLMAN

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Amy Sillman's paintings are beautiful examples of her virtuosity with the medium. The initial glamour of their color and sophisticated paint handling is belied by proletarian, sometimes pathetic subject matter. Anthropomorphic plants, oversized body parts, dog-faced humans, and thousands of teardrops inhabit these paintings, which become stream-of-consciousness musings from a very private world.

*Miss New York* is half-covered with a dense green in homage to Ellsworth Kelly's opaque compositions. Heavy paint is usual for Sillman, who builds delicate layers of glazes punctuated by solid lines and colored shapes. Here, below the green, under a pinkish-red glaze, are rows of faces Sillman transcribed from photos of the Miss Universe contestants—surprising, given their prosaic appearance. A turquoise necklace/spinal cord, remnant of a prior state of the painting, drops down beneath the green and balances the color. The borrowed images and aggressive paint suggest a new and bolder direction.

*Expulsion of Flower and Tree* is a tribute to Masaccio's *Expulsion from Eden*. In contrast to Masaccio's Adam and Eve, who flee in anguish, Sillman's goofy tree boldly chats up a bright-red flower. A hand reaches down from a cloud-like burst of paint

as if to bless the pair; a pink tongue unfurls from an orifice of the plant in a corner. White veils of paint evoke a spaciousness not present in other works. Floating in the white are finely drawn, blue flowers, elegant counterpoints to the sexualized, cartoon-like images.

Though Sillman is clearly exploring new approaches, a uniformity in her doodle-like imagery threatens to become a mannerism that neutralizes the emotional impact of her paintings. Yet their sketchy informality provides a charming, diaristic view of her quirky visual logic. As if to heighten the intimacy, some paintings feature words and phrases, such as "this much" or "forgetting," which invite free association. Sillman's images are most effective when she allows her trademark line to be altered by paint, as in *View From Lake Michigan*, in which a tiny figure staring into space is duplicated then rubbed out, so it both does and does not exist. ~*Elisabeth Condon*