

Julie Langsam: Now(here)

532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel, NYC

April 27- May 25, 2013

This exhibition features several recent paintings from Langsam's long-running series of banded montages that set nearly monochromatic, tightly rendered views of iconic modernist buildings on top of a band of gridded abstract motifs inspired by classic modernist paintings and beneath ominously lit skies that invoke Romantic landscape painting. The skies are, in fact, loose renderings (rather than transcriptions) of skies from Hudson River landscape painting, but they also uncannily recall the pre-Romantic Baroque skies of Giovanni Lanfranco (1582-1647), who himself anticipated Goya in his St. Augustine cycle. This circuitous route of painterly iconography underscores Langsam's own "passion" for painting and Modernism, where even Romanticism is revealed to be a construct with foundations appearing close to two centuries earlier than what is held to be its historical moment.

The three spaces in her paintings are thematically linked and illusionistically self-cancelling. The "landscape" is pure design, the "photographic" Corbusier or Neutra house refuses to be illuminated by either the pattern below or the ominous atmosphere above. Langsam has described this conflicted space as a "'nowhere' – which can only exist in the fiction/reality of painting." For Langsam, this "nowhere" is symptomatic of our desire for unrealizable sublimities proposed by Modernist ideals. At the same time, she regards herself as just a susceptible to these same desires. A lapsing Modernist, Langsam trades a narrow purity for enriching irony, while refusing to relinquish an ambition for a formal beauty and movement. Painting, for Langsam is a visual site for negotiating with her faith and disappointment. Like a good *nouveau realisme* film, her paintings are funny, sad, and grand.

Stephen Westfall