

Traitor Bitch," which gallery staff defines only vaguely as referring to U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, admittedly undercuts this reading. All the same, in the gallery's back room, several boxlike objects lay on the floor, covered in psychedelic patterns like mod gift wrap, an analogue for Rehberger's modest offering to a troubled world.

—Brian Boucher

Amy Sillman at Sikkema Jenkins

Unless I am missing something, Amy Sillman delivered, in her seventh solo show in New York, one wholly abstract painting. Like the nine other works in the show, it is oil on canvas, dated 2006. Its foundation of fanning, roughly horizontal slabs in cadmium red, green and blue-black yields to a buoyant upper region where looping, leafy configurations in luminous orange and ocher play off icy blues and cool grays. The painting imparts a distinct sensation of rising, cresting or dawning. At 80 by 72 inches (the approximate size of most works in the show), it approaches the "heroic" scale and plastic commitment of burly mid-century Abstract Expressionism. It is titled *Big Girl*.

Working in a mode of apparently spontaneous invention that honors intuition and the subconscious, Sillman has long been involved with narrative, albeit elliptical or fractured. It has retreated in recent years, as has, to the work's bene-

fit, an endearing but ultimately tiresome compositional fussiness and stylistic plurality. The impact of the recent work arises more from the formal and material architecture of the paintings than from the skittish critters populating them. These figures often hover at the margins of legibility, prompting a search for iconography that is extraneous, sometimes even distracting. Sillman has a fondness for an armlike protrusion thrusting upward and leftward, ending in a hand or fist that grasps something—a bird, a bundle, a cookie. In *Get the Moon* this component looks grafted to a monsoon of vertical brushstrokes of lemon yellow, pink and a complex dark gray, rather than emerging organically from it. The gorgeous, faceted jumble in humid colors occupying the midsection of *Your Affection* seems fundamentally unrelated to the wide-eyed heads sticking up out of it, and the spindly legs and feet below.

Decisive shaping buttresses *Them*, wherein two or three gummy, big-nosed figures, primarily in purple, occupy the center third of the canvas, between a forlorn girl trundling off stage right and a gauzy yellow-greenish area that pushes forward. Sillman moves blithely from radiant, high-key color combinations to swamps of grumpy grays, and she gets a lot of mileage from the limited palette that oilsticks come in by frequently couching a line amid contrasting but neutralized hues of a similar value.



Amy Sillman: *Big Girl*, 2006, oil on canvas, 80 by 72 inches; at Sikkema Jenkins.

Alert to her process, the artist arrested the development of three of these canvases at an early stage. *A Bird in the Hand* relies on the winning imagery described by its title, but, bereft of chromatic momentum, it looks merely unfinished. A smaller untitled work, 39 by 45 inches, hinging on steely gray, earth green, ocher and a shot of hot pink, implies the pictorial hubbub of the more elaborately articulated paintings with its complex encounter of a few elements (including that funny fist). A paradigm of the exhibition, the painting juggles two varieties of pictorial meaning: linear description and chromatic sensation.

Sillman acknowledges Philip Guston as a major influence, and this painting strongly recalls the humor and anxiety of his late work. Something of Wifredo Lam lurks among the reedy thickets and creeping, startled creatures, as well as a vaguely retro mannerism that puts a slight curl on almost every edge and implies an ironic distance at odds with the guilelessness the artist seems to want to put across. It is hard to tell if this irresolution of sincerity and self-consciousness is a liability, or a source of much of this intriguing work's undeniable tug.

—Stephen Maine

sons in 1967, Cohen has been a presence on the London art scene since the early 1960s, when his work was included in two of Lawrence Alloway's three "London now" exhibitions alongside such fellow abstractionists as Robyn Denny, Richard Smith and Harold Cohen, his brother. He showed in Documenta 3 (1964), and eight years later the Hayward Gallery mounted a retrospective exhibition. Cohen's mature work begins in 1963-64 with paintings in which a complex matrix of linear elements vies for

Bernard Cohen: *About Now*, 2005-6; at Flowers.

