

MORGAN LEHMAN

535 West 22nd Street, New York, New York 10011

AMY PARK | 1200'



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SUITE 1



1



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PALE BLUE, BLUE-GREEN, AND BRICK

What was it like to take high tea with William Butler Yeats?

Berryman: He said, “I never revise now... in the interests of a more passionate syntax.” Now that struck me as a very good remark. — John Berryman in an interview with Peter A. Stitt, *The Art of Poetry No. 16*, Paris Review, Winter 1972

This quote weaves together the sentiments of poets John Berryman and William Butler Yeats as they seek to give words to the clichés of life, art and inspiration; generalized stuff in which all artists dwell. Poetry and watercolor share a sincere and profound kinship. Both forms can suffer from too much light or too much ambiguity. And, both are admirably risky, careening ever-so-close to unforgivable clichés and banal motifs.

The quote has another purpose: it addresses editing, revising, and re-examination, processes integral to

notions of improvement and refinement. Revision is fundamental to the betterment of most forms of communication; especially innate to the written word. In the visual arts, the basic proposition of drawing accommodates revising. The long drying time of oil paint allows for working and re-working, correction and modification. Watercolor does not. Once the liquid pigment touches the paper, it's absorbed into the paper fibers. Re-working is impossible, because the paint is married to the support. You can't remove, push, or adjust watercolor because it doesn't sit on the surface the same way other liquid media do. Watercolor has more in common with fabric dyeing than it does with oil painting.

In old age Yeats found the ability and the bravery to forego editing in “...the interests of a more passionate syntax.” Committed to watercolor, artist Amy Park has also chosen to forgo the ability to edit, a risky engagement for a painter who is dedicated to subjects and compositions vastly more complex than the diaphanous still-life or the dreamy landscape, subjects for which the medium is known. Poetic nonetheless, Park's work has always entangled the tangible volumes of architecture with the chimerical qualities of modern reflective surfaces. Thus, the critical reference at work in Park's paintings is the doing and undoing of Modernism, and its contempt of illusion. The cultural subjects of her work enthusiastically evoke Modernism's celebration of the progressive: the new and the abstract. Park's paintings seductively picture examples of our human capacity to create and reshape environment. However, her recent compositions suggest a density





which can no longer be sustained by these ideals. There is a gravity and a weight to her architectural perspectives that remains true, even when the paintings' surface-planes dissolve in reflective light. Geometries and patterns populate her paintings, stacked and layered accurately into the three-dimensional spatial grid of Midtown Manhattan. Park's spaces are thick, and horizon lines are rare. She presents us with surfaces of patterns that co-mingle into a beautiful, impenetrable structure at the near physical breaking point.

Additionally, her perspectives are haunted with invisible social hierarchies that often belie the soaring verticality of the city. Not only do we witness the ordering of massive geometries, but we understand the congestion of the space below and from within. Park presents us with an objective middle view, not from the street, nor from above. And, she commits us to a relationship with architectural space similar to the way that she commits herself to the act of painting with watercolor. There can be no corrections here, regardless of the discrepancies between glorious and failed examples of Twentieth Century architectural design.

In *Love Lies Sleeping*, poet Elisabeth Bishop describes what she sees from her city window:

an immense city, carefully revealed,
made delicate by over-workmanship,
detail upon detail,
cornice upon facade,

reaching up so languidly up into a weak white sky,
it seems to waver there.
(Where it has slowly grown
in skies of water-glass

from fused beads of iron and copper crystals,
the little chemical "garden" in a jar
trembles and stands again,
pale blue, blue-green, and brick.)

Of her work, poet William Benton writes: "In Bishop's poems, decorative surfaces exist here and there but — like the use of traditional genre and rhyme — remain formal decisions tied to specific contexts and not an overall literary intention. Her eye discriminates a hierarchy of values. Much of what is visual in her poetry happens at a structural level; it is a part of the poem the way consciousness of sight is a part of sight."¹

Amy Park is as familiar with the structural and formal context of her subject, and the directness of her medium, as Bishop was with the language of poetry. What results is a system of luminous watercolor notations directly committed to paper, and dynamic compositions at the brink of capacity.

— MICHELLE GRABNER

¹William Benton, *Exchanging Hats: Elizabeth Bishop* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), p. XV.



SUITE 2

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COVER

You Are Here, 2013

watercolor on paper
27.5 x 22"

SUITE 1

You Are Here #1-#5, 2013

watercolor on paper
27.5 x 22" each

PLATES 1-5

1200' #1-#5, 2014

watercolor on stretched paper
60 x 48" each

SUITE 2

You Are Here #6-#9, 2013

watercolor on paper
27.5 x 22" each

PLATES 6-9

1200' #6-#9, 2014

watercolor on stretched paper
60 x 48" each

PLATE 10

One New York Plaza (Lescaze and Kahn & Jacobs), 2013

watercolor on paper
28 x 20.3"

Amy Park's large-scale watercolor paintings take Modernist architectural facades as their point of departure. Grids are laboriously constructed through repetitive pencil marks and precise watercolor strokes, creating enormous, optically charged fields that mirror the order, layering, scale, and density of information of the urban experience. Amy received a BFA in 1999 and an MFA in 2003 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and also studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Ox-Bow Summer Art School. She was a recipient of a Marie Walsh Sharpe Space Program Award in 2007-2008, and an Artist-In-Residence at the

Serenbe Institute in 2012. Her work has been exhibited widely in the US, including Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, NY; Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects, New York, NY; The Suburban at Project Row House, Houston, TX; The Poor Farm Experiment, Manawa, WI; and Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. Her work is in the permanent collections of Fidelity Investments; The Cleveland Clinic; Deloitte and Touche USA; Microsoft Corporation; The College of DuPage and the Drawing Center's Artist Archive at the Museum of Modern Art. She lives and works in Long Island City, NY.





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