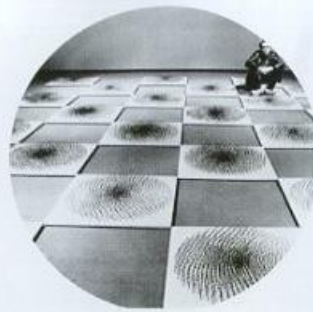


# ARTFORUM

DECEMBER 2009

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



BEST OF 2009



PURE BEAU



HOLLYWOOD

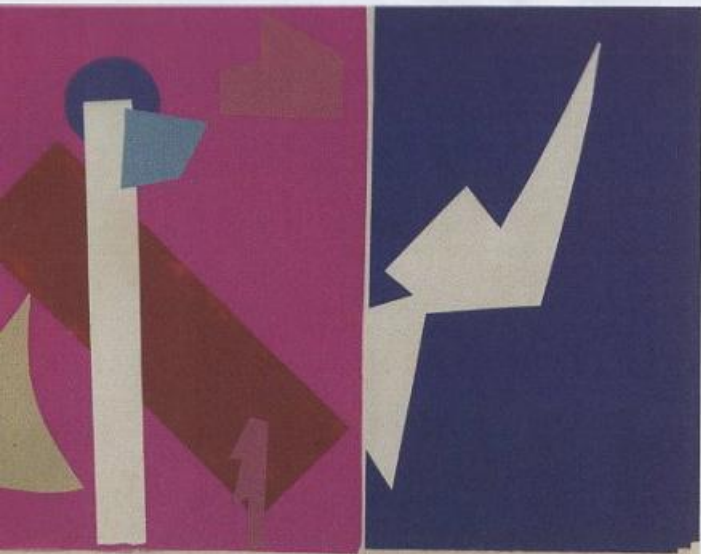


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# Amy Sillman

AMY SILLMAN IS AN ARTIST WHO LIVES IN BROOKLYN, NY. SHE SPENT MOST OF 2009 IN GERMANY ON A GRANT FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY IN BERLIN. WHILE THERE, SHE STAGED A SHOW AT CARLIER GEBAUER; HER NEXT SOLO SHOW IN NEW YORK WILL BE IN APRIL 2010 AT SIKKEMA JENKINS.



Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Universal War* (detail), 1916, collage on construction paper, 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" . © 2009 Estate of Aleksei Kruchenykh.

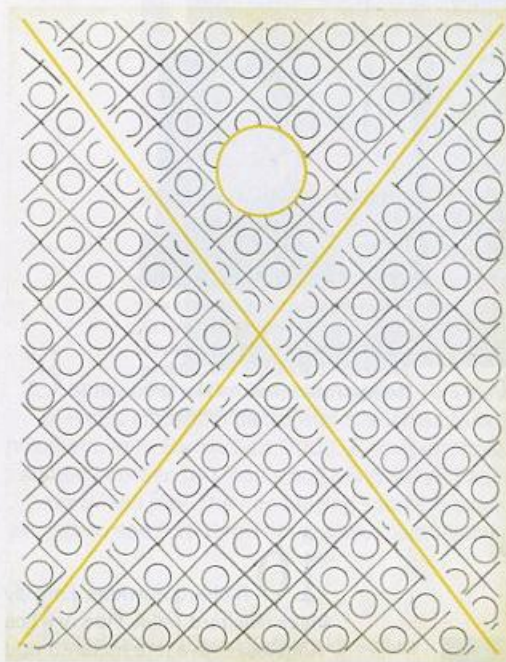
**3** **Mark von Schlegell, *Realometer: Amerikanische Romantik* (Merve Verlag)** A "realometer" is a fictional device imagined by Thoreau, a machine that you stick into the mud to record not just what's real but the fictive dimension of facticity. Von Schlegell's usual beat is science fiction, but in his new book he plunges his own realometer into the heart of America and its ecstatic nineteenth-century literary traditions. By his account, all the shimmering uncertainties that we think we learned from postmodern theory were already lurking atomically in the words of Dickinson, Poe, and

Melville more than a hundred years ago. The book's inauguration was an incantatory hour-long lecture by MVS at Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt, which already looks like a giant Moby-Dick. It was unreal. The book is in German, but an English edition is due out from Semiotext(e) in 2010.

Cover of Mark von Schlegell's *Realometer: Amerikanische Romantik* (Merve Verlag).



**1** **The books and collages of Aleksei Kruchenykh** Aside from inventing (with Velimir Khlebnikov) *zaum*, the radical sound poetry of Russian Cubo-Futurism, Kruchenykh also cobbled together dozens of artist's books in tiny editions, using materials purloined from his day job at a railway office. They're like little cannonballs—powerful kernels of "explosivity," to use one of his words. And they explore not only language but collage: One of Kruchenykh's books from 1916, *Universal War*, features cut-paper collages that anticipate Matisse's paper cutouts but contain more overtly political overtones. These have been on view at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne since last spring as part of their "Russian Avant Garde" series (there, they are attributed to his collaborator Olga Rozanova, but recent scholarship indicates that these visionary works are actually by Kruchenykh).

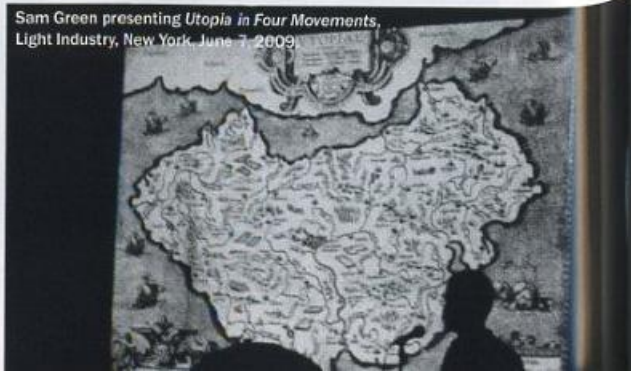


Stuart Sherman, *Untitled*, n.d., ink on paper, 11 x 8 1/2".

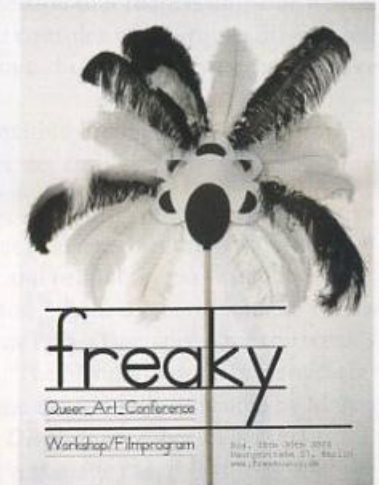
**2** **The diagram (Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon, Stuart Sherman)** I've become obsessed with the idea of the diagram as a way to explain painting. What a diagram actually is is a mercurial problem in itself, but by any account, it is the ultimate format for the representation of rupture and time—and therefore of modernity. My favorite diagrammatic concept is the explosive Deleuzian model (indebted in turn to the philosopher C. S. Peirce), in which a diagram is a necessary portal through which an artist must pass in a state of catastrophic transformation during the making of a work. I know of no better description of how the process of painting feels than this theory, set out by Deleuze's book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Bacon (and his Met show) should therefore get my award for Diagram Artist of the Year, but he was trumped last-minute by the incredible Stuart Sherman, whose current solo show at NYU's 80WSE Gallery (other work by the artist is also on view at Participant Inc.) is schematic rendering at its most inventive, tender, and melancholy.

**4** **The experimental film programs of Basso and Light Industry** The divergence between continental and analytic philosophy is comically rendered by the difference between the film programs of Berlin's Basso and Brooklyn's Light Industry. Basso is like taking a hit of acid with Emma Goldman and some ancient Greeks, while Light Industry is more like having a beer with Walt Whitman and the Shakers. Basso is hedo-anarchistic; at Light Industry, they set out a neat grid of folding chairs for a more deliberate form of mayhem. But both are miniature social utopias of their own making.

Sam Green presenting *Utopia in Four Movements*, Light Industry, New York, June 7, 2009.



Invitation card for "Freaky: Queer Art Conference," organized by Renate Lorenz, Berlin, August 28–30, 2009.



## 5 Shannon Ebner, *The Sun as Error* (coordinated by Dexter Sinister; Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

The design of Ebner's new book is deceptively straightforward; its clean, large white pages are laid out in something like a chronological grid. But *The Sun as Error* also opens with a quotation by the poet Francis Ponge, which immediately ushers you into the book's prismatic complexities by proposing a simple but deft scale shift: the world as a page for an imaginary reader. Ebner takes up this audacious formulation by remaking the relative sizes of the world at large. She begins by inverting the scale of the sun with that of a tiny asterisk, and from there she goes on to blow up all the world's various signs. Finally, a reader feels that, rather than a book, she is holding in her hands the scaffolding for a transformed world.

Book launch for Shannon Ebner's *The Sun as Error*, White Columns, New York, March 6, 2009.

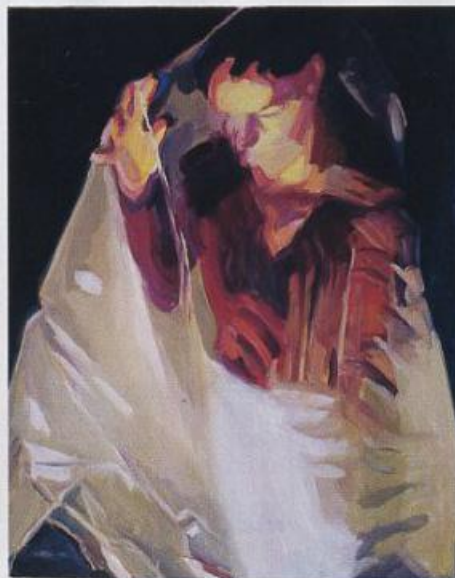
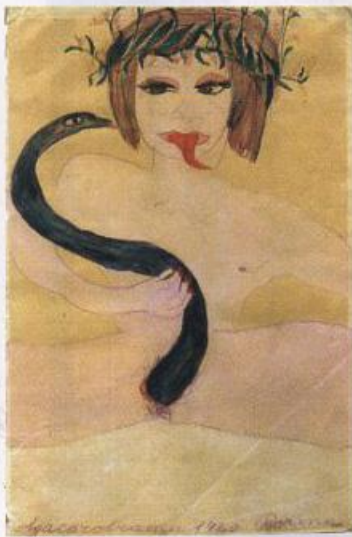


## 6 *Freaky pedagogy*

Announcing that you're starting a school or holding a seminar these days is like cranking the party up to twelve. Night School, the Jack Smith conference in Berlin, Bruce High Quality Foundation . . . the list goes on. Among my favorite recent educational events are two that specifically took up the idea of the freaky. "Freaky" was a conference organized by artist Renate Lorenz last summer in Berlin, during which a packed house pondered issues of queer art and knowledge production for three days in an old ballroom. Meanwhile, in New York, the Friends of the Fine Arts have ratcheted up the possibility of freakiness at the easel by sponsoring a series of roving, newfangled life-drawing sessions in various surprising locations—inside a tent colony, for instance, or out on a pier.

## 10 *The Size Queens, Reading Rosalind Krauss*

The video for the Size Queens' song "Reading Rosalind Krauss" (directed by Patrick Hillman) is a wiggly mash-up of art-history jokes as thick as the hand-knit phallus wielded by the video's large male protagonist (I suppose it could be called his punctum). This item's partially knitted owner lollygags around, reapplying his lipstick in a Mylar mirror like a feminist Olympia and enjoying himself and a nudie calendar—which seems to be open to Mr. October, since the pinup guy sports a big pumpkin. The cheery refrain to the song goes, "My ahistorical friends / Have come to see me again / They're turning out the gallery lights . . ." □



## 7, 8, 9

Carol Rama (Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin), Maria Lassnig (Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and MUMOK, Vienna), and Dorothy Iannone (New Museum and Anton Kern Gallery, New York) If a Fauve is a wild color painter, is there a special name for a wild-old-lady painter? A smorgasbord of corporeality by women of a certain age was on display this year. Rama's show in Berlin last summer resembled a minisurvey of prurience, running the gamut from early illustrative scenarios (such as a kiss between a woman and a pornographic, swanlike snake that emerges from her vagina) to her later collages and reliefs in tarry black hues, in which more sublimated kinds of boob-eye forms do suggestive, anthropomorphic things. Lassnig's drawings and paintings, seen this year at the Museum Ludwig and MUMOK, feature all manner of surprising copulations and encounters in acid-etched outlines. And Iannone's sirens performed burlesque acts of female pleasure on the walls at the New Museum and Anton Kern Gallery in New York this summer.

From left: Carol Rama, *Dorina*, 1940, watercolor and pastel on paper, 7 1/4 x 5". Maria Lassnig, *Spell*, 2006, oil on canvas, 49 3/4 x 39 3/4". Dorothy Iannone, *I Begin to Feel Free*, 1970, acrylic and collage on canvas, 74 3/4 x 59".

The Size Queens, *Reading Rosalind Krauss*, 2009, still from a color video, 4 minutes-14 seconds.

