

### A Grid to Tame the Chaos of Urban living

*Amy Park*

#### Interview

*What determined your interest in modernist architecture?*

My interest in painting modernist architecture began when I was living in Chicago after graduate school. I had a job that required me to commute in my car a few hours a day. Stuck in traffic on Lake Shore Drive, a renown location for Modernist architecture, I'd stare out my window or sunroof at the incredible buildings that overlooked Lake Michigan. I decided to start taking photos from my car and soon after I started the first paintings of architectural facades. I will always remember painting the first one in 2004, "Lakeview Windows," a Mies van der Rohe apartment building.

*How important is scale when talking about repeated elements?*

I don't actually think about scale much. I am able to make a large painting with tiny repeated elements and the opposite, a small painting with larger areas of repetition. In the studio I look at photos I have taken and am drawn to ones that have a dynamic composition and light.

*Whilst some of your work abstracts context and looks at the architectural elements as subject, other focuses on the Architecture as a whole. Which of the two do you have more fun in depicting and why?*

I love painting and don't have a preference between abstracting elements and creating whole buildings within the frame. There is always a little of one in the other, and I try to use what I know about both methods in every painting I make. It creates a more dynamic painting if I am able to do both. Sometimes it is not very obvious to the viewer that I have considered abstracting elements within a work.

*To what extent is the urban experience dominated by grid and or chaos? How do the two come together?*

Living in New York City, there is a grid structure that underlies daily existence. The streets and avenues create the fixed grid and the buildings rise from it. The chaos of life in the city courses through this pattern. Most large urban buildings have a grid themselves, comprised of facade or fenestration; internal engineering; floors and floor plans. For me, the grid helps tame the chaos of urban living; it's useful and necessary.

*How and to what effect does one structure determine the scale and identity of the other?*

In my work I always use the architecture that is actually in the city. For my 2014 exhibition, 1200', at Morgan Lehman Gallery, I took areas of the skyline and collaged them to create a twenty-foot long installation. Each of the five panels had a different section of the city, but within that frame, all the architecture was realistically placed.

*How could the building be seen as the artifact within the context of the city as museum?*

Cities are museums and buildings along with public artwork, parks, bridges and even cobblestone or brick streets are the artifacts. Architecture begins as a vision of the future but becomes history. The Seagram building was avant-garde when Mies van der Rohe designed and built it on Park Avenue in NYC; it was a first. Now, we see its lessons as beauty and a place to move forward from. Today, we have a Calatrava

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train station, grand and like nothing our city has seen before. In time it will represent the year 2016, in a specific physical location with memories attached to it. The cycle continues.

## About:

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 (Oak Park, IL) 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 Drawing Center's Artist Archive at the Museum of Modern Art. She lives and works in Long Island City, NY with her partner, artist Paul Villinski and their 3-year-old son, Lark.

<http://www.amypark.us/index.html>

