

## AMY HILL

Future Presidents

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FORTNIGHT INSTITUTE

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Amy Hill works in conjunction with historical frameworks, invoking Botticellian strangeness alongside the naïveté of Henri Rousseau. She also infuses her portraits with a hint of "Boterismo," as inflated features and distorted realism recur throughout these compositions. Hill time travels with ease, intent upon picking up themes and conceits from each era of interest. Her collection of antiques are adapted to serve contemporary demands in an effort to clean out older generations and make room for new ones.

The artistic conceits of the Renaissance have been a constant touchstone for Hill, as she pursues this particular beauty via her own reinterpretations of form and content. What do the symbols of this bygone genre represent today? How can these images be improved upon? Hill's secular figures worship consumer goods rather than the religious icons that were prominent during Europe's "rebirth." The desire to possess motivates Hill's ongoing fascination with the conceits of Renaissance masterpieces. Beauty is also a compelling force by way of inspiration and pursuit.

These paintings are a continuation of what Hill has been pursuing since 2015, when she transitioned to a new mode of image making. She has always been interested in updating historical precedents in an effort to sustain a dialogue with painters past, however, she updated this endeavor by introducing new source material into the mix. By observing artists from the early American folk art tradition, she absorbed their consistent portrayal of families and the presupposed innocence of childhood. In accordance with her findings, she came to focus on the promise of youth, the imagined futures that children could occupy.

The standard conventions of the folk genre include flattened perspective and neat compositional organization. Joshua Johnson's linear portraiture and Rufus Porter's sentimental landscapes reflect the project of folk art, and wield great influence over Hill's painterly methods. She thus plods forth with precision and delicacy, in keeping with a craftsman-like concern for details. Hill's marriage of folk perspective and a metropolitan context are laid out clearly in *Young Woman in Outdoor Elevator*; a planate composition in which the New York cityscape looms beyond the image's protagonist.

The objects that denote a contemporary context are largely tangential to the resonance of Hill's images. They are merely vestiges of a context. However, the humor and irony she employs subvert the romance of earlier epochs and frame subjects within a postmodern landscape. The folk art fantasy of a return to some pastoral fantasy is dashed by Hill's urban sensibility. She routinely depicts urban backgrounds in opposition to the natural world of the folk tradition - the future, after all, appears to be made of steel and glass as opposed to salt and earth.

Cut to *now*, when Hill imbues these archetypes with new vitality by way of contemporary logics. In *Messenger* a neutral figure stands in front of a brick building, grazing a green Citi Bike with her right hand. *Two Women on their Phones* alternatively presents its titular figures enmeshed in the digital age, with one woman pressing a device against her cheek, the other standing further back clinging to her own cell. The artificial glow emanating from these tech objects mirror the natural one bouncing from the moon above, this is techno-culture abutting environmentalism.

Her figures are consistently decorated in retro garb, as a reflection of her nostalgic disposition. Hill understands childhood can be condemned by corrosive potential or else alighted by the drive to change things for the better. Wrought with obscure and conspicuous references alike, these compositions are fueled by Hill's medley of ideas. She sustains her energetic current by engaging with meaningful figuration that presents the viewer with interwoven epochs and Hill's expressive impulses. - Text by Reilly Davidson

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Amy Hill grew up in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She studied commercial art at Carnegie Mellon University. After graduating, she moved to New York City and worked as an illustrator for such publications as *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times* and Penguin Books. The first solo exhibition of her paintings took place in the East Village in 1989.