

Martha Diamond at Independent NY
September 9-12, 2021

Cipriani South Street
at the Battery Maritime Building
10 South Street, New York, NY 10004

For the 2021 edition of the Independent NY art fair, Magenta Plains presents a solo exhibition of historical works by New York-based painter, Martha Diamond. On view is a selection of monumental oil paintings alongside an installation of small-scale preparatory studies on masonite that have not been exhibited for forty years.

Made during a decade when the city was bustling with creativity while simultaneously recovering from its recent near-bankruptcy, Diamond's exuberant cityscapes capture the derelict and dazzling moment that came to exemplify both the fear and hope of urban space while channelling the rich cultural vitality of the history of New York painting. Capturing the essence of delirious New York itself with its soaring skyscrapers, Diamond's visceral canvases are rooted in the city's profound legacy of gestural abstraction.

Diamond's experience of growing up in the city was undoubtedly formative. Living on the eleventh floor of an apartment building, her window views exposed various exteriors and the top floors of buildings. She was fascinated by the expanse of space, and became interested in the magic of simplicity. Travelling into Manhattan from Queens while accompanying her father on work trips became an early artistic exploration for Diamond. The shapes in the forms of bridges, highways, cemeteries, generating stations, chimneys and tanks were visually stimulating. As she describes it, "I have a vague taste for simplicity—whether it's a pyramid or boxes of unpackaged, loose light bulbs in piles—buildings, cubes, light, apartment complexes... These are forms of simplicity."

As Stephen Westfall wrote for her 1988 exhibition at the legendary Robert Miller Gallery, "Martha Diamond's paintings draw on a tradition of realism influenced by the New York School. When she slaps a wet gesture of paint across a pictorial surface it will 'stand' as a shadowed side of a building, or a cloud bank thousands of feet above and behind a skyline. This is the matter-of-fact painterly realism of Porter, Welliver, and Katz returned to the ecstatic velocities of de Kooning and Kline and the massive physical presence in the gestures of Guston. Diamond brings these two traditions together with a wallop equalled by no other artist."

For five decades Diamond has developed an unmistakable personal language from the forms and sensations of the city. Having lived and worked on the Bowery since 1969, her signature approach is energetic and rigorous, sharply observed and freely lyrical. It is with great enthusiasm and excitement that we present these rare works at a time when New York City—and urban centers across the globe—yet again face extreme insecurity and vulnerability brought on by the global pandemic. We believe that these important paintings not only shed historical light on an important decade but also bring hope and inspiration to the future.

Artist Biography

Martha Diamond
Born 1944, New York, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY

Martha Diamond received a BA from Carleton College in Minnesota and an MA from New York University in the 1960s. After a brief time abroad in Paris, she moved back to New York and frequented poetry readings at the Poetry Project's St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, which emerged from various coffeehouse gatherings on the Lower East Side in the 1960s. The church has since become a crucial venue for new and experimental poetry, and has been the site of memorial readings for Paul Blackburn, Allen Ginsberg, Michael Scholnick, W.H. Auden, Frank O'Hara, Ted Berrigan, and so many others. Diamond's deep personal relationships with many of these poets created a rich environment and context for her work within the New York School.

In the 1970s, Diamond began exhibiting in New York and elsewhere, most notably at Hallwalls Center for Contemporary Arts, Buffalo, NY, Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT, and Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, IL. Diamond eventually joined Brooke Alexander's roster from 1976 to 1985, and received her first New York Times review in 1983. As the critic Grace Gluck described, Diamond's wild and fresh Expressionist paintings were developed "using big, brushy strokes, and [laying down] colors in juicy textures, bathing her anonymous edifices in the violent tones of New York light, from flaming sunset red to the glowing yellow hues of morning. The unpeopled buildings lean vertiginously into one another."

Diamond exhibited with the legendary Robert Miller gallery from the late 1980s until 1994. Throughout the 1980s, Diamond work was regularly exhibited alongside her contemporaries Louise Fishman, Mary Heilmann, Richard Bosman, and Bernard Piffaretti. In 1988 Diamond mounted her first museum show at Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, ME, and has since maintained a relationship with Maine, exhibiting there over the past few decades. That same year, Roberta Smith wrote of Diamond's work in The New York Times, "Ms. Diamond's whole approach to painting is deceptively simple, full of hidden skills and decisions that only gradually reveal themselves, along with a good deal of humor and very little pretension." In 1989, Diamond was included in the Whitney Biennial curated by Richard Armstrong, Richard Marshall, and Lisa Phillips.

Recent solo exhibitions include Martha Diamond: 1980–1989 at Magenta Plains (2021); Cityscapes at Eva Presenhuber (2018); Broad Strokes at Harper's Books (2017); Recent Paintings at Phil Alexandre Gallery (2016); and Martha Diamond: Paintings at John David Gallery (2014). Her work has been included in recent group exhibitions such as In Her Hands, curated by David Salle at Skarstedt (2020) and Downtown Painting, curated by Alex Katz at Peter Freeman Inc. (2019) as well as historically important exhibitions METAMANHATTAN, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1984) and New Abstract Objects, Hallwalls Center for Contemporary Arts, Buffalo, NY (1978).

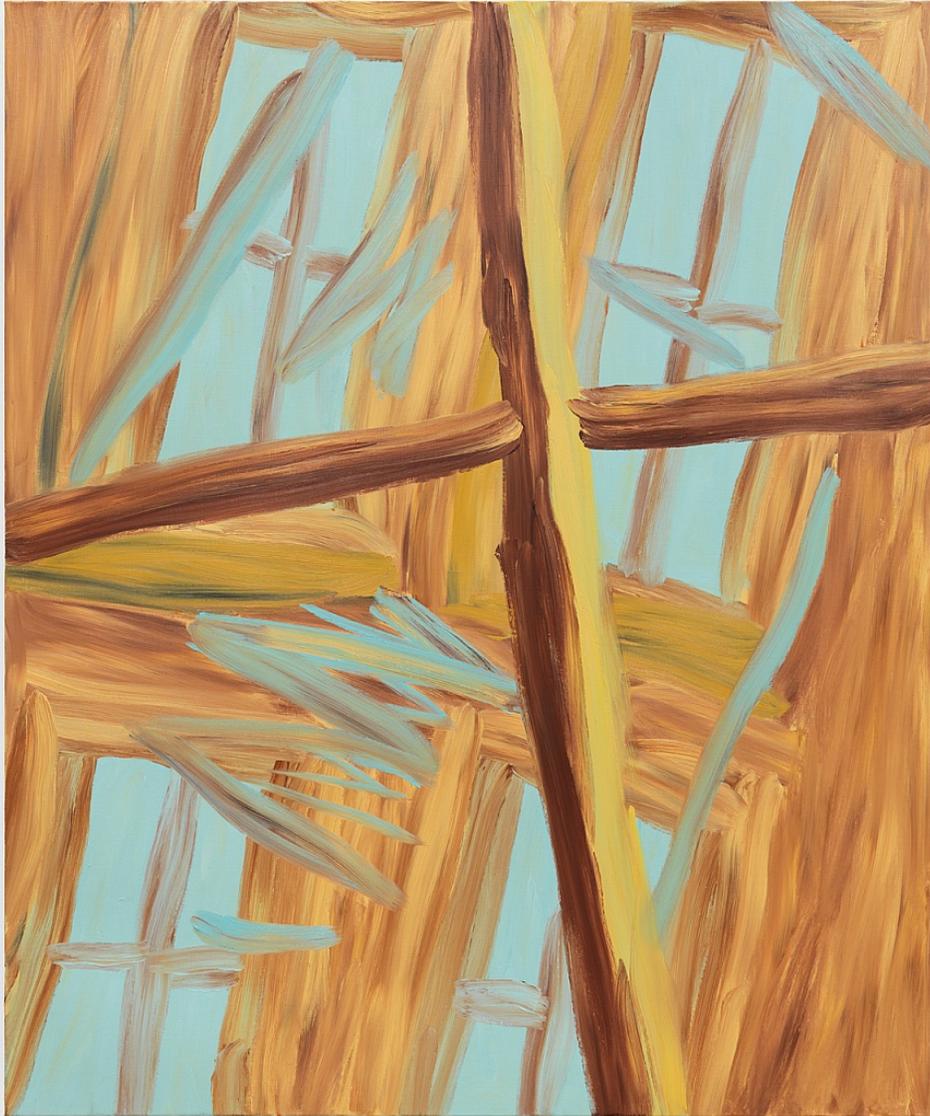
Her work is in the permanent collection of numerous institutions, including Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY; Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston, MA, and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany, among others.



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c. 1980s
Oil on linen
90h x 60w in
MDi_154



Martha Diamond
Cityscape, 2000
Oil on linen
96h x 48w in
MDi_174



Martha Diamond
Windows, 1984
Oil on linen
72h x 64w in
MDi_167



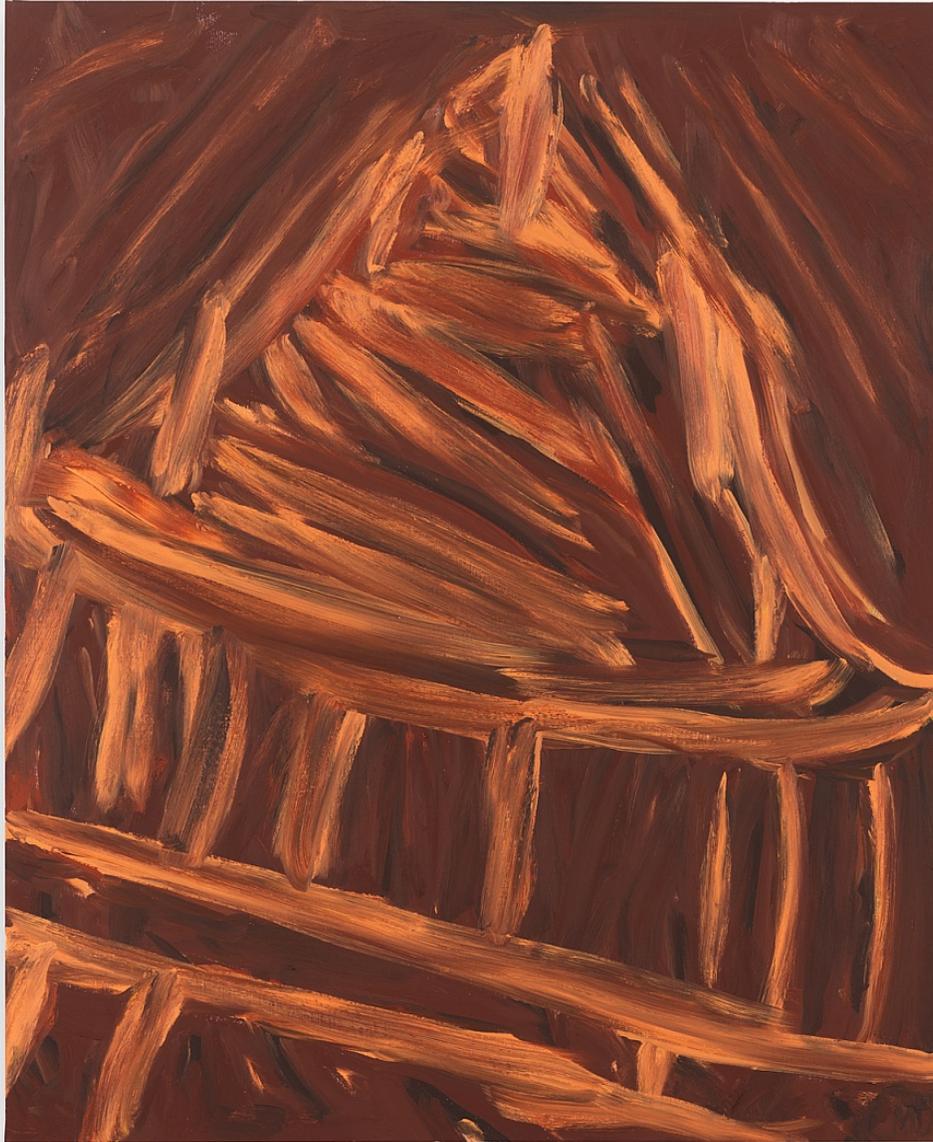
Martha Diamond
Pale Blue Construction, 1985
Oil on linen
72h x 60w in
MDi_115



Martha Diamond
Green Cityscape, 1985
Oil on linen
90h x 72w in
MDi_101



Martha Diamond
Untitled (Swirl), 1990
Oil on linen
72h x 48w in
MDi_119



Martha Diamond
Structure, 1993
Oil on linen
60h x 49w in
MDi_125



Martha Diamond
6, c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_044



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
8.25h x 6.25w in
MDi_131



Martha Diamond
Untitled 16, 1987
Oil on Masonite
8h x 6w in
MDi_017



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
8.25h x 6w in
MDi_133



Martha Diamond

Untitled, 1987

Oil on Masonite

9h x 6w in

MDi_137



Martha Diamond

24, c.1980s

Oil on Masonite

9h x 6w in

MDi_042



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
8h x 6w in
MDi_136



Martha Diamond
43, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_141



Martha Diamond
45, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_138



Martha Diamond
Untitled, 2011
Oil on Masonite
8h x 6w in
MDi_037



Martha Diamond
32, 1989
Oil on Masonite
12h x 8w in
MDi_034



Martha Diamond
15 (*Balance*), c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
8h x 6w in
MDi_028



Martha Diamond
42, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_134



Martha Diamond
11, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_144



Martha Diamond
Untitled, 2011
Oil on Masonite
7.75h x 5.88w in
MDi_196



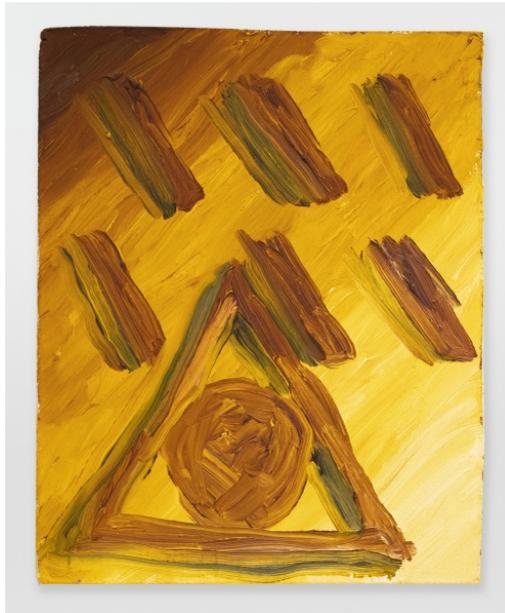
Martha Diamond
37, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_142



Martha Diamond
16, 1989
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_143



Martha Diamond
Untitled, 1988
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_191



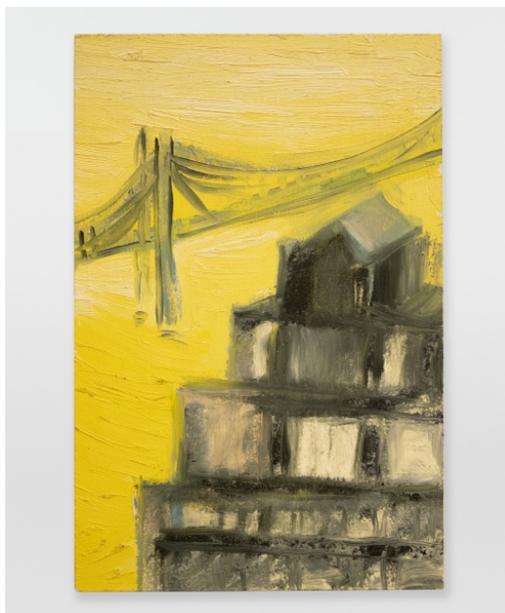
Martha Diamond

Untitled, 1988

Oil on Masonite

9h x 7.25w in

MDi_177



Martha Diamond

Untitled, c. 1980s

Oil on Masonite

9h x 6w in

MDi_195



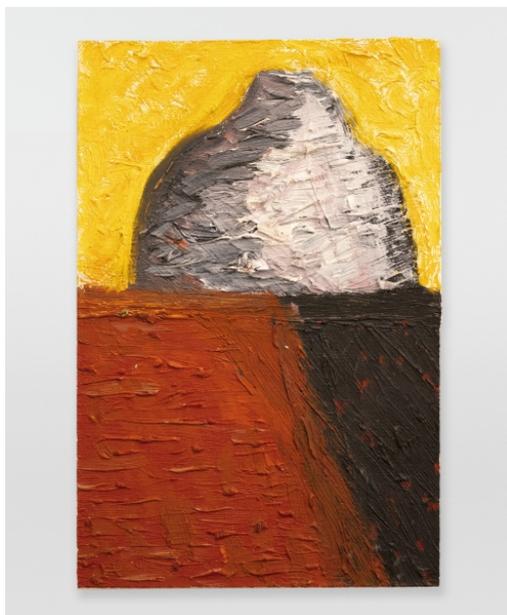
Martha Diamond
Untitled, c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
8h x 6w in
MDi_198



Martha Diamond
Untitled
Oil on Masonite
6h x 9w in
MDi_202



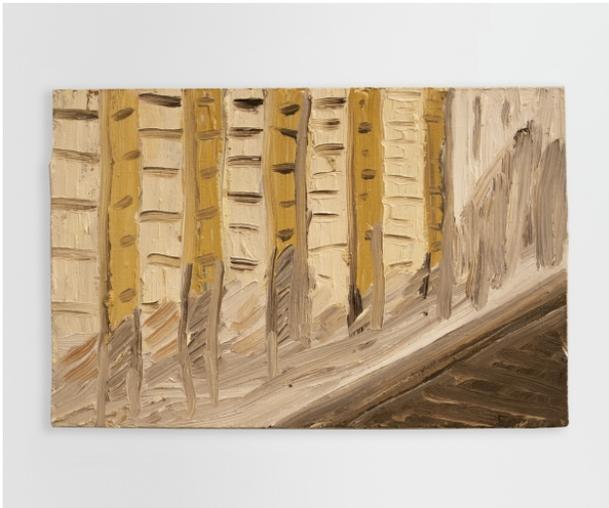
Martha Diamond
Untitled, c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_204



Martha Diamond
23, c. 1980s
Oil on Masonite
9h x 6w in
MDi_128



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
6h x 9w in
MDi_189



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
6h x 9w in
MDi_188



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
8h x 5.50w in
MDi_184



Martha Diamond
Untitled, 1988
Oil on Masonite
9h x 7.38w in
MDi_182



Martha Diamond
Untitled, c.1980s
Oil on Masonite
6h x 9w in
MDi_200



Martha Diamond
Untitled, 1987
Oil on Masonite
6h x 9w in
MDi_199

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