



JUNE

STRAUSBERGER PLATZ 19, 10243 | CAMILA@J-U-N-E.EU | WWW.J-U-N-E.EU

**PRUNELLA CLOUGH**

*A small thing edgily*

**with works by Amy Sillman,  
Hayley Tompkins and Merlin James**

curated by Camila McHugh

September 9 - October 30, 2021

Wednesday - Saturday, 12-6pm

and by appointment

Prunella Clough (\*1919-1999, London) set out to “say a small thing edgily,” an approach to painting that guided her practice, from her figurative representations of ports, lorries and pockets of industrial wasteland in mid 20th-century England to her decisive shift to abstraction in the early 1960s. This exhibition at June, the first presentation of Clough’s work in Germany, focuses on her shape-shifting abstraction, bringing together paintings made between 1960 and 1993.

To say a small thing edgily is to make a compressed statement, to remain open to contingency, to pay attention to the scraps and fragments that litter everyday life. Clough likened the shapes that she sifted from her surroundings—debris on a beach, a rusted padlock, plastic toys, a stain on a concrete wall—to “burrs stuck in the brain,” transmuting these vaguely abject forms in paint. Through persistent experimentation, Clough developed an ever-evolving system of signs: they’re cumbrous, precarious, wayward, aloof. She played with mark and texture, sometimes gritting the surface of the canvas with marble powder or ash, and usually worked in muted, earthen tones. Her careful compositions push at the boundaries of balance; they’re on the verge.

Prunella Clough’s abstraction developed largely out of step with any artistic movement or milieu: impervious to the advent of Pop, she was more taken by the Minimalism of Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt, which may have accentuated her sense of restraint. Amy Sillman calls Clough “a “conceptual painter” avant la lettre”, Merlin James emphasizes how she “anticipated many traits in post-modern painting.” Awarded the Jerwood Painting Prize in 1999 shortly before her death, and recognized with significant solo exhibitions at Annely Juda Fine Art Gallery (1989), the Camden Arts Center (1996) and a posthumous Tate Britain retrospective (2007), Clough’s legacy remains bogged down by emphasis on her early figurative works, tethering her innovative abstraction too tightly to an industrial origin story. The smattering of shapes here is lifted from that context—punctuated by works by contemporary abstract painters Amy Sillman (\*1955, Detroit), Hayley Tompkins (\*1971, Leighton Buzzard, England) and Merlin James (\*1960, Cardiff, Wales)—repositioning Clough’s edgy, idiosyncratic project as something radically understated and subtly expansive.