



Portrait by Theo Fleig

SALLY SILBERBERG

American, b. 1945, Syracuse, NY
lives and works in Hudson, NY

In 1969, fresh out of college and with a baby in tow, Sally Silberberg made a bold decision to transform an empty storefront in Park Slope, Brooklyn, into a ceramics studio and tiny store, aptly named The Clay Pot. Embracing a life philosophy that “adversity is the agent of change,” Silberberg has navigated a dynamic artistic career spanning over five decades and various mediums.

In 1974, Silberberg and her husband Bob relocated their studio to Plainfield, MA but kept The Clay Pot to sell their work. They established a successful wholesale pottery business, selling to notable retailers such as the original Pottery Barn and Neiman Marcus.

In 1980 a fire destroyed their studio, prompting them to change the nature of The Clay Pot to include other crafts, allowing Sally to explore different directions in ceramics. She stopped making functional stoneware and began throwing translucent porcelain objects.

Fascinated by the challenges of the material, she pushed its boundaries, throwing impossibly thin, light-filled vessels, and then thought it might be possible to use this same dense porcelain to create a structured block of clay that could be carved as if it were soft stone. Two of these sculptures are now part of the prestigious Smithsonian and Brooklyn Museum collections.

A return to Brooklyn in the late 80s fractured the momentum of the sculpture series, and so Silberberg decided to paint. The first paintings referenced the graphic structure and tonal gradations found in the sculptures.

Once color was added, the focus of the paintings shifted to the control of light value. The small color studies evolved into large paintings, transforming theoretical exercises into the work itself.

The drawings were created after her return to Western Massachusetts in the 2010s, and are a response in two dimensions to the energy of the forest’s random repetitions, complicated space, shadow, and light.

Throughout her journey, Silberberg has explored clay, paint, and pencil with an open mind. By defining a framework of rigor without rigidity, these materials have revealed themselves in unexpected ways, allowing her to create a body of work that embodies both place and process.



Black Striae, 1988-2019