

Ruby Palmer *Assembly*

May 13 – June 18, 2021



Morgan Lehman is very pleased to present “Assembly”, Ruby Palmer’s third solo exhibition with the gallery since 2004.

Ruby Palmer’s new wall constructions and cut paper pieces occupy her favorite format: the liminal space between painting and sculpture. Though decidedly three-dimensional, Palmer’s works never quite leave the flatness of the wall, for reasons the artist attributes to her formal education as a painter who learned to see and depict within the limits of two dimensions. That training informs but never quite dictates her approach, which also pays special attention to surface, materiality, and the dynamics of light and shadow. Palmer’s hybrid pieces deliberately engage with both pictorial space and actual space, asking viewers to experience them from different vantage points and distances.

In her studio, Palmer utilizes an improvisational methodology to assemble, modify, reassemble, redact, and reassemble again, relying on a spirit of play and exploration to fuel each studio session. The organic way in which Palmer’s artwork takes shape brings to mind the sorts of generative processes that occur in the natural world, including crystallization and plant growth. Like branches sprouting from branches, each assemblage is born of parts that interconnect and affect each other, an associative network of forms.

Though her work relies on repeated forms and is often inspired by ornamental motifs and artifacts from human history, Palmer resists the decorative by insisting on the structural. Each construction is a matrix that relies on the ingenuity of its own engineering to literally stay on the wall and support itself. Further, the artist’s interest in pattern-based architectures has less to do with some notion of perfect repetition (Fibonacci’s sequence, e.g.), but rather, considers the exciting possibilities of what happens when glitches or hiccups are introduced into such systems. Instead of geometry we encounter off-geometry, instead of rigidity, expressiveness. In this way, Palmer’s work rejoices in the idiosyncratic and imperfect, finding beauty in wonkiness and playful delight in the process of making itself.

Ruby Palmer was born in Boston, MA and grew up in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Trained as an abstract painter at Hampshire College (BA 1988-92), she started experimenting with sculpture and installation at the School of Visual Arts in NYC (MFA 1998-2000). In 1999 she was awarded a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors. In March 2020, several of Palmer’s large constructions were included in a group exhibition at the Albany International Airport (NY). Ruby has exhibited her work at the Woodstock Byrdcliff Guild, (Woodstock, NY); Opalka Gallery (Albany, NY); LABspace (Hillsdale, NY); Jeff Bailey Gallery (Hudson, NY); The Samuel Dorsky Museum (New Paltz, NY); Morgan Lehman Gallery (NYC); Page Bond Gallery (Richmond, VA); Geoffrey Young Gallery (Great Barrington, MA); Instar Lodge (Germantown, NY); and Smack Mellon (Brooklyn, NY). In 2016, the artist founded ARTalks, an artist lecture series held at the Morton Memorial Library in Rhinecliff, NY. Palmer has worked and lived in Rhinecliff since 2011.