

## Raymond Saá

### *The Blue Bird*



June 1 – June 30, 2023

Morgan Lehman is pleased to present “The Blue Bird”, an exhibition of recent paper collages by Raymond Saá. This marks the artist’s first solo show with the gallery.

The works on display are individually monochromatic, each hue derived from the 1974 Joan Miró painting, “*L’Oiseau Bleu*”. In that piece, Miró painted blocks of brightly saturated, red, blue, yellow, and green, and pitted these colors against bold black linework and voids. The end result is a graphic, playful image that feels somewhere between the representational and the abstract.

Saá creates his collages by hand painting sheets of paper, cutting them up into shapes, sewing these shapes together into postcard-size substructures, and then finally combining the discreet shingles to form a larger amalgam of color and pattern. The artist’s process is intuitive and allows for a composition to take shape slowly in real time. With his keen attention to the acts of stacking and assembling, and the compositional potential of both positive and negative spaces in, Saá considers himself more a “builder” than a painter. The artist’s X-Acto blade serves as the primary drawing implement in his practice, and his sewing machine facilitates the construction of the works’ architecture. Saá builds out each artwork from the bottom to the top: this one-way directionality does not allow for correction, inviting a certain degree of risk with each move.

Saá thinks of the forms in his work as a “deconstruction and reconstruction of natural elements”. Like Miró, Saá uses an abstract visual language that still feels rooted in the concrete, the observational. The motifs he deploys are often recognizably botanical but also reference the artist’s Cuban roots. Saá’s mother was of the generation who relied on an ever-present sewing machine to make clothes for the family and textiles for the home. This informed the artist’s unique approach to collage, with its reliance on sewing rather than gluing. More broadly, Saá is inspired by the vitality and diversity of culture itself, drawing on music (especially Cuban Jazz), as well as fashion and theater, all of which celebrate ideas of persona and identity. By tapping into culture and cultural nostalgia, and by engaging with an organic studio process that mirrors the vine-like, instinctual growth of plants, Saá allows the unexpected to seep into his compositions, giving each work a distinctive life of its own.

**Raymond Saá** is a Cuban-American artist born in New Orleans and raised in Miami. He graduated from the New World School of the Arts in 1991, received his B.F.A. from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1995, and studied at the Kunstakademie Dusseldorf in 1996. In 1997, he earned an M.F.A. from Parsons School of Design. Selected exhibitions include White Columns, the Islip Museum, Wave Hill, the Museum of Art Puerto Rico, and El Museo del Barrio. Saá received a 2019 Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, in addition to awards from Public Art for Public Schools, the Pollack Krasner Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, and New Jersey Fellowship in Art. The artist lives and works in New Jersey.