

## Ruby Palmer

### *Shift*

June 1 – June 30, 2023



Morgan Lehman is pleased to present “Shift”, an exhibition of new paintings and drawings by Ruby Palmer. This marks the artist’s fourth solo show with the gallery.

The works on display are discreet visual systems comprised of a multitude of internal components. These parts draw on decorative designs and patterns from real-world sources including rugs, textiles, and architecture, and are woven together intuitively to produce dynamic, intricate wholes. Palmer relies on a loose structure of horizontal layers to assemble her pictorial worlds. This lattice-like framework “holds everything together”, the artist describes. Interestingly, the compositional approach proves more liberating than constraining for Palmer, who plays freely and improvisationally with the act of filling space within her predetermined parameters.

An almost kaleidoscopic mirroring is at work in Palmer’s images. They are nearly-but-not-exactly visually balanced, and invite the viewer to notice the irregularities from side to side, top to bottom. What is the underlying logic of each image? What is anchored and what is mutable? The mirroring reflects the grounding balance that the artist seeks in her own life, as well as the raising of her fraternal twin daughters, who parallel each other while embodying their own individuality as people.

Palmer began this body of work in late 2021, after moving into a larger, brighter studio and experimenting with a new brand of handmade paper and lightfast acrylic paint markers. These materials encouraged the artist to let loose and embrace her inner doodler, drawing playful shapes and patterns. Equally influential, her spaciously luminous studio space inspired Palmer to rapidly scale up her new vocabulary; she felt immediately compelled to create big paintings with a commanding visual impact. Palmer wants these works to exude a feeling of weightlessness, the joy of a great pop song, the pure pleasure of color, of strange visual combinations and associations.

Along the way, the artist has drawn on a range of visual influences: American folk art including Shaker drawings, tantric paintings by anonymous Indian artists, Moroccan rugs and their intrinsic structures and irregularities, the canvases of Hilma Af Klint and Agnes Pelton, and Bauhaus textile designs. The works in “Shift” bring together many of the compositional lessons that Palmer learned over years creating her wall-based sculptural constructions and larger installation work, but they present her idiosyncratic abstract language in the heightened pictorial space two dimensions. In spending time with Palmer’s recent paintings and drawings, we are given a glimpse of the beauty of imperfect structures.

**Ruby Palmer** was born in Boston, MA and grew up in rural Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Trained as an abstract painter at Hampshire College (BA 1992), she started experimenting with sculpture and installation at the School of Visual Arts (MFA 2000). She was awarded a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors 1999. Exhibitions venues include the Albany International Airport (Albany, NY); The Samuel Dorsky Museum (New Paltz, NY); Morgan Lehman Gallery (NYC); Woodstock Byrdcliff Guild, (Woodstock, NY); LABspace (Hillsdale, NY); Jeff Bailey Gallery (Hudson, NY); Page Bond Gallery (Richmond, VA); Geoffrey Young Gallery (Great Barrington, MA); Instar Lodge (Germantown, NY); and Smack Mellon (Brooklyn, NY). Palmer has worked and lived in Rhinecliff, NY since 2011.