



Liza Lou, *Into the Mystic*, 2021. Glass beads, stretcher frame, aluminum frame
69.5 x 83.38 inches (176.53 x 211.79 cm)

Liza Lou: *Desire Lines*
September 16 – November 6, 2021
London

Lehmann Maupin London will present *Desire Lines*, an exhibition of work by Los Angeles-based artist Liza Lou. The artist's fifth exhibition with the gallery will feature 10 works that poetically illustrate Lou's engagement with the natural environment, abstraction, and her own oeuvre spanning 30 years. From the very beginning of her career in the early 1990s to today, Lou has established a rigorous exploration of materiality and beauty in a labor-intensive practice that melds elements of both fine art and craft. *Kitchen* (1991-1996), Lou's first major and most widely recognized work, is a room-sized sculpture that she began in her mother's home in the suburbs of Southern California. The pioneering sculpture is made entirely of glass beads and represents five years of individual labor, placing Lou at the forefront of artists engaging with this craft *métier*. This exhibition showcases Lou's most recent innovations alongside key works from the past that exemplify her transformative use of material and inform the work she is making today.

Desire Lines—the title of the exhibition—is a term commonly used in landscape architecture planning to name the egress that occurs naturally as people (or animals) move instinctually through an environment, creating unplanned paths. Lou has engaged this concept since 2010, beginning with her *Solid | Divide* series that was made in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa where the artist maintained a studio from 2005-2020. *Carbon Gunmetal | Divide* (2012) is a bichromatic composition that evokes the horizon line of the Indian Ocean. This bead-woven canvas is marked by varied horizontal streaks, the result of natural oils transferred from the hand of the artist and her assistants through constant holding, touching, measuring, and sewing. Over time, the threads that comprise the warp and weft of the work became stained, altering the perceived color of the glass beads and creating spontaneous veins and variations—conceptual and material “desire lines.” For Lou, these

pigmented paths created by the oil of the skin have become part subject and part medium of her closely woven paintings and installations.

Since 2019, the artist has divided her time between Los Angeles and Joshua Tree, California. The diverse landscapes offered by (and between) both of these sites can be identified throughout a new series of paintings in both palette and sculptural form. Whereas many of her earlier works were tightly woven and uniformly controlled, recent shifts find the artist cutting apart her pure color fields and repurposing them in new formal gestures. In *Into the Mystic* (2021), white beaded sheets hang in a grid formation, providing a monochrome ground for strips of effervescent blue, silver, and white that are draped in rhythmic waves, some pulled taught, some hanging low and disrupting the grid. These wave-like patterns mimic the tide lines left in the sand at the water's edge, drawing a conceptual connection to landscape and become pictorially charged with changes in natural light over the course of the day. *Here Comes the Sun* (2021), similarly features grids of white beaded ground upon which painted beaded strips hang in inverted arches that stretch across the work's surface. The clay-like color of each band is stained in colors ranging from blues, to yellows, to purples, to greens, recalling the richness of the desert topography in Joshua Tree. Three square sections are left blank, uninterrupted by the strips of painted beads, offering a visual pause that allows the viewer to consider the relationship between form, color, and line. Lou's woven paintings present an exploration into all the parts of her work that have come before, and in both *Into the Mystic* and *Here Comes the Sun* the artist teases out specific elements—cutting, stripping, smashing, draping—engaging them as unique gestures that move freely across the canvas in poetic synchronicity.

Lost Highway (2021) exemplifies Lou's ability to consistently push the formal and conceptual nature of her practice. This densely layered and highly pigmented work is an explosion of color, line, and texture. Rows of white beads are marked with thick, tonal gray, cut apart and then layered on top of one another, charting paths across the composition that resemble tread marks. Bright pops of pink, green, yellow, blue, and orange are interspersed throughout, punctuating the spaces between the dense black splashes of oil paint. In this work, subtle nods to past inventions and explorations can be identified. Painted cloths are cut into strips, hammered areas expose the underlying thread work, and painterly gestures resemble a magnified view of the meditative and repetitive marks of Lou's *Drawing Instrument* series and the seductive, lush pigmentation found in her large-scale painting, *Desire Lines* (2019) as well as her monumental installation *The Clouds* (2018), among others. Providing a much-needed respite from recent events, this exhibition creates a conceptual space for contemplation and meditation. By offering the concept of desire lines as a poetic and metaphoric possibility, Lou's process-driven work reveals how a single art material can be ever expanded upon, developed, teased apart, and made new.

About the artist

Liza Lou has had over forty solo exhibitions in museums and galleries around the world including Lehmann Maupin Seoul, Korea (2019), New York, NY (2018), and Hong Kong (2017); Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art, Cape Town, South Africa (2017); Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, Austria (2016); Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY (2015); Wichita Museum of Art, Wichita, KS (2015); White Cube, London, United Kingdom (2014); Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA (2013); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2011). Recent group exhibitions include Nassau County Museum of Art, "Heroines of Abstract Expressionism," Nassau County, New York (2021); Museum Voorlinden, "Listen to Your Eyes," The Netherlands (2021); *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950-2019*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2021); *Less Is a Bore: Maximalist Art & Design*, Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, MA (2019); *Lexicon: The Language of Gesture in 25*

Years at Kemper Museum, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO (2019); *We the People: New Art from the Collection*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2018); *Screens: Virtual Material*, DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA (2017); *No Place Like Home*, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel (2017); *Women's Work*, National Gallery, Iziko Museum, Cape Town, South Africa (2016); *Home Land Security*, FOR-SITE Foundation, San Francisco, CA (2016); *Stories of Espai 10 and Espai 13*, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain (2014); *The Artist's Museum*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2010); *Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection*, New Museum, New York (2010) and *19th Century and Modern Art*, Metropolitan Museum of Art (2010).

Lou's work is in numerous international public and private collections, including the National Gallery, Washington, DC; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, The Netherlands; Cleveland Museum of Art; Cleveland, OH; DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; François Pinault Foundation, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy; La Fundación Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Rizzoli published the first comprehensive monograph of the artist's career in 2010 and a new monograph is forthcoming Fall 2021. Liza Lou is the recipient of the 2013 Anonymous Was A Woman Award and the 2002 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

About Lehmann Maupin

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach and Taipei.

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