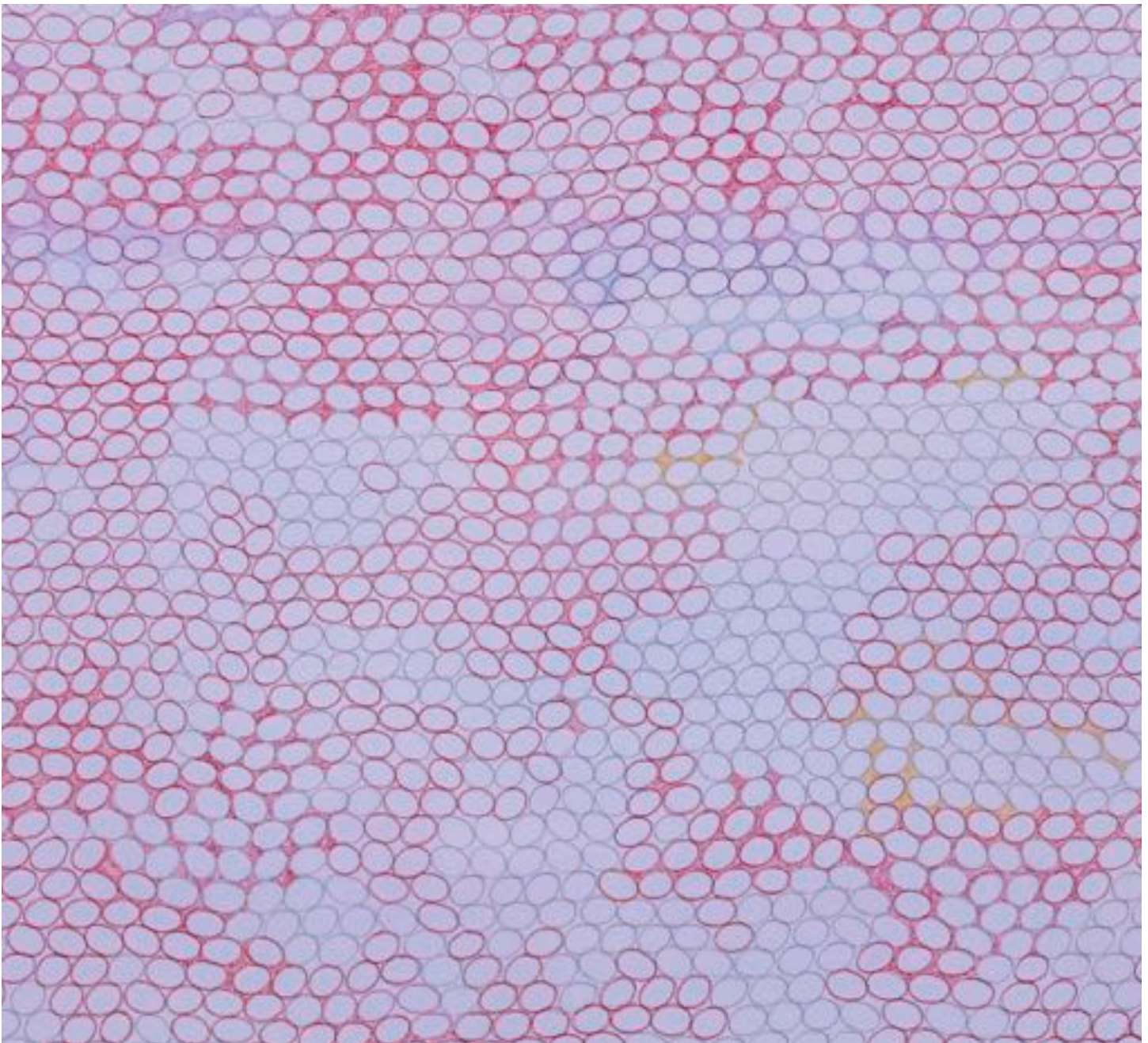


Liza Lou

Woven

January 26 – March 2, 2024

New York, Gallery 3



Liza Lou, *though failure is*, 2024 (detail)

Lehmann Maupin announces *Woven*, a presentation of new and archival work by Los Angeles-based artist Liza Lou. This *In Focus* exhibition highlights paintings and drawings that foreground Lou's decades-long investigation into process, labor, and the essence and poetic possibility of glass beads. *Woven* precedes the artist's forthcoming solo exhibition in New York, opening this September, in which Lou will debut a new body of work spanning the entirety of the gallery's 24th Street location.

Forging an original, Feminist-inflected vision from the very beginning of her career, Lou has consistently challenged and expanded the boundary between the fine and applied arts. She has created figurative, room-sized installations, brightly chromatic sculptures, and mesmerizing minimal canvases, all of which render labor radically visible on both formal and conceptual registers. Over the past fifteen years, the artist has turned her focus to abstraction and repetitive processes to engage with art history while exploring the conceptual and metaphoric potential of certain abiding dualities, from presence and absence to cohesion and disintegration. Each of the works in *Woven* highlight Lou's engagement with repetition and focus, as well as her deep understanding of materiality. In particular, her paintings and drawings use pen and graphite to "weave" cloth-like structures on a flat canvas—investigating the possibility of the two-dimensional format for making visible the thought process within repetitive labor.

Anchoring the exhibition is *though failure is*, a new 100 by 102 inch rendering of a bead-woven cloth, constructed from row upon row of ovals. Working alone in a deeply contemplative process, Lou drew each oval or "bead" by hand on a ground of monochromatic oil paint. Each mark was subsequently gone over again, with Lou circling the "good ones" in red pencil. Finally, the interstices were filled in, becoming gestural in aggregate and creating a portrait of labor. In *though failure is*, Lou's serene and meditative surface gives way to nervous ripples and disturbances, flowing through the entire work in intricate networks or tributaries that mirror the neural networks of thought process itself. From a distance, the painting appears atmospheric, with the minute variations in color creating a

remarkable sense of depth and perspective. At close range, however, any outside associations give way to the immersive and seemingly endless bead-like ovals. While the repetition and iterative use of primary form recalls foundational tenets of Minimalism, Lou's matrix shifts organically, exceeding the confines of the grid.

Considered a primer to this exhibition, *syllabus* is a tile-like cloth woven with white glass beads that were subsequently hammered off. In contrast to *though failure is*, which underscores the oval gesture by repetitively tracing the same mark, the beads in *syllabus* are shattered away to reveal the deep burgundy threads underneath. Here, Lou uses a subtractive, rather than additive method to draw attention to the work beneath the work.

The exhibition also features eight works on paper composed of pointillist dots or tightly drawn circles that merge together into rhythmic forms. Some resemble Lou's *In Medias Res* series, with circles within a circle (evocative of the end of a glass bead) clustered into groups, as piles of beads might appear on the artist's work table. Others take on dynamic, almost biological shapes, where Lou has connected each point with a thin line to create a geometric net that seems to map an invisible topographical surface.

Lou's title, *Woven*, poetically ties each of the works in the exhibition together, despite differences in medium. "I'm thinking about the way in which works can be woven with the sharp end of a needle or the sharp point of a pencil," the artist explains, "I am drawing a bead, which is also to say I am drawing focus." Lou's practice, though closely identified for many years with her use of glass beads, has consistently centered on the process of making, sustained attention, and meditative, even spiritual, repetition—whether by threading beads with a needle or hand drawing thousands of repeated forms. All of Lou's works—from large-scale paintings, to bead-woven canvases, to intimate monochromatic drawings—are monuments to their making, both reflecting and containing time.

Liza Lou (b. New York, NY; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) is an artist who, for the past thirty years, has made sculpture, paintings, drawings and room-size environments that induce states of wonder, beginning with the groundbreaking *Kitchen* (1991–1996) – a solid beaded room-size environment now in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and other large scale sculptures, such as *Back Yard*, (1996–1999), in the collection of Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, which consists of over 250,000 handmade blades of grass made of beads. From 2005-2020 the artist lived and worked in Durban, South Africa, where she founded an art studio which included a women's advocacy program—the first of its kind to combine social practice within an art studio setting.



Examples of the wide range of the artist's work includes *Offensive / Defensive*, (2008), a monumentally scaled prayer rug which breaks down into lush abstract pattern and was included in the group exhibition *Less is a Bore*, ICA Boston, (2019). Another sculpture, *Continuous Mile* (2008) is a mile-long rope comprised of meticulously woven glass beads was included in the exhibition *Less is More*, Museum Voorlinden, the Netherlands (2019.) Written and performance work includes the solo film *Born Again* (52 min. 2004), *Durban Diaries*, written by Liza Lou (Published by White Cube, 2011), and *Drawing Instrument* (2018), a single channel video which records the harmonics of the artist's drawing and meditation practice.

The artist has had numerous solo gallery exhibitions around the world, including Thaddeus Ropac, Paris, France (2023); Lehmann Maupin, London, (2021), Seoul (2019), New York (2018), and Hong Kong (2017); Galerie Thaddeus Ropac, Salzburg (2016), Paris (2014 and 2010); White Cube, London (2014, 2012, 2006); L&M Arts, Los Angeles (2011), New York (2008). Solo museum exhibitions include Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art, Cape Town, South Africa (2018); Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY (2015); Wichita Museum of Art, Wichita, KS (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA (2013); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2011); Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany (2002), and Bass Museum of Art, Miami, FL (2001).

Group exhibitions include *The Interior Life*, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2023); *Fired Up: Glass Today*, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT (2022); *Women's Work*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, NY (2022); *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950-2019*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2019-2022); *We the People: New Art from the Collection*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2018); *Pulling at Threads*, Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa (2018); *SUPERPOSITION & Engagement*, 21st Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia (2018) and 19th Century and Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY (2010).

Liza Lou is the recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and an Anonymous Was a Woman Award. Rizzoli Electa recently published their second comprehensive monograph on the artist's work with essays by Glenn Adamson, Cathleen Chaffee, Elisabeth Sherman, Carrie Mae Weems, and Julia Bryan-Wilson.

Artist portrait by Mick Haggerty.

**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, Taipei, and Beijing.

NEW YORK

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