

# ART SPIEL

January 23, 2025 by Will Kaplan

## Prayer / Pattern / Prayer at Morgan Lehman



Installation view of *Prayer / Pattern / Prayer*

*Prayer / Pattern / Prayer* at Morgan Lehman offers a mesmerizing view of patterns as a deeply seated human instinct. Fittingly, a radial symmetry unfolds from the vertex of the L-shaped room. Yet curator Jan Dickey balances this evenness with a syncopated rhythm of paired artworks and bold standalone pieces. In creating a pattern of patterns, this show offers a metonymic view of artists running with different strands from the fabric of a species-wide impulse toward order and adornment.

In its assertion of pattern as a timeless tradition, the show grounds itself with artworks that look ancient and earthen. Beck Lowry's primary-colored duo, *Burning Red* and *Resilience*, resemble tools of a lost civilization: irregular fans or shields, complete with beak-like handles. But it's the dense linear inscriptions that imbue these works with a sense of mystic purpose.

In its neighboring artwork, *Puka Komo 'Ekahi: Portal to Grant Permission*, artist Lehuauakea offers a welcoming message in Hawaiian, framed within geometric motifs. The concentric rectangles coil around

each other truly like a portal, but to and from where? To the customs of Lehuauakea's homeland: the artist harvests their own earth pigments and paints on kapa—a Hawaiian bark-cloth—that they make themselves. The work's beat echoes with the traditions of deep time.



Beck Lowry's *Burning Red* and *Resilience* (left) and  
Lehuauakea's *Puka Komo 'Ekahi: Portal to Grant Permission* (right)

The show includes a pair of painters: Aya Uekawa, who uses patterns as a spatial element in figurative works about femininity and myth, and Richard Tinkler, who hand-paints geometric fractals into wet oil for a gauzy dimensionality.

Inversely, another two artists deconstruct canvas to embrace its textile properties. In his practice, Miguel Arzabe makes two separate abstract paintings, then slices each one into thin strips and weaves them together into a single work. The process yields a sharp checkerboard of gently swaying colors, which breathes with the weaving. His piece, *Cumpleaños*, pulls viewers to the far end of the gallery.

At the opposite end of the room, the sweeping symmetry of Myles Bennett's *Matter of Hanon #11* anchors the show. Pulling from his architecture background, the artist will draw and paint lines across raw linen and then proceed to unweave the canvas. By removing the weft, he leaves a matrix of parallel threads, ghostly colored by his initial marks. When folded over on itself, it shimmers with a holographic illusion.



Installation view of *Prayer / Pattern / Prayer* featuring works from Aya Uekawa (left), Myles Bennett (center), Miguel Arzabe (right), and Ingrid Yi-Chen Lu (far right)

Nearby, a playful installation from Ingrid Yi-Chen Lu hugs the room's protruding corner. While she interrupts some unprimed canvases with hand-knit patches, other surfaces and objects burst with color or polka dots. Relying on wide breaths of negative space between the pieces, the arrhythmic arrangement strikes a balance between Minimalist restraint and Maximalist impulse. Mini-Max, I call it.

Towards the gallery door, Lilian Shtereva's floor sculptures stand tall as greeters or guards. Atop structures of repurposed wooden furniture, swell bulbous cushions stitched together from Bulgarian textiles. Like Lu's work, Shtereva's irregular patchwork of printed pieces create an apatterning from the patterns compiled.

In circulating the room, I was reminded of a Virginia Woolf quote on "...the rapture I get when in writing. I seem to be discovering what belongs to what... From this, I reach what I might call a philosophy...that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art." Indeed, *Prayer / Pattern / Prayer* succeeds in arranging this meta-motif. By choosing to repeat visual elements, each of these artists embed themselves in unique larger traditions—which are in turn, part of the overarching pattern of pattern.



Installation view of *Prayer / Pattern / Prayer* featuring Ingrid Yi-Chen Lu's installation (center) and Miguel Arzabe's *Miguel Arzabe Cumpleaños* (right)

All images courtesy of Morgan Lehman

**About the writer:** Queens based artist Will Kaplan combines different mediums, techniques, and text to probe boundaries. In addition to his studio practice, he reviews new music and documents the city's art scene. Kaplan has had several solo shows in venues such as Bob's Gallery in Bushwick and on Governors Island. His work has appeared at Spring/Break Art Fair, the New Art Dealers Alliance, and Pete's Candy Store. He has written for *Passing Notes* and *Foofaraw Press*.

***Prayer / Pattern / Prayer* at Morgan Lehman**  
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