

Līnea XIII by Mary Early
A Visual Analysis by Joumana Moukarim



Līnea XIII is site specific, vertical sculpture in beeswax by Washington, DC artist, Mary Early. It is the thirteenth in an ongoing series of installations of vertically hanging beeswax lines, which Early began in 2017. The most striking formal elements of *Līnea XIII* is its size (life size) and composition (geometric), medium (beeswax), and the space it occupies (a residential garage). The combination of these visual elements results in an art piece that exudes a gentle, organic, vibrant, and immersive presence, which I will also describe as a tad unsettling.

The artist uses beeswax to make *Līnea XIII*. The material is organic, naturally yellow, and smells like honey. The artist melts and pours the beeswax into long, triangular molds, which once cooled, result in individual beeswax lines. Each line is

18 inches long and ½ inches wide. The artist uses a total of 175 individual beeswax lines to make this installation. She outfits each of her lines with two cotton strings and uses the strings to tie the beeswax lines together in simple knots. Once connected, the beeswax lines hang in a vertical, stacked manner from the ceiling rafters down towards the floor. Five individual beeswax lines connected by their strings make up each hanging column. The artist uses simple, utilitarian pins to hang each set of vertically hanging beeswax lines to the ceiling rafters.

The lines are straight and relatively smooth adding to the visual symmetry and beauty of the piece. The color of beeswax adds a gentle organic glow. A pattern of small, rhombus shapes emerge between the paired knots that tie the individual beeswax lines together. The repeated knots, tied so casually by the artist, accentuates the sculpture's organic and human appeal.



Līnea XIII occupies an unusual space, a residential garage in Washington, DC, outfitted with two free standing white walls that obscure two sides of the garage's concrete walls. The third wall, unobscured concrete, holds the garage tools. And the fourth is the garage door that opens onto the alley.

In determining the size and composition of her sculpture, the artist responded in part to the architectural demands or constraints of the garage space in which it was constructed. The relatively intimate size of the garage led, for example, to the human and approachable size of the installation. The available

space on the ceiling rafters determined the number of rows of hanging beeswax lines possible in relation to the artist's vision. Interacting with the constraints and demands of the space, the artist decided her composition.

The result: 175 individual beeswax lines installed in five graduated rows, narrowing in width with each row forming the shape of a gently rounding trapezoid that takes up around 1/3 of the garage space. The first row of beeswax lines closet to the white wall at the back of the space is the widest at 9 columns. The next row hangs at 8. The third 7, the fourth 6, the fifth 5. The set of beeswax lines in each row hang in a vertical and equidistant manner by a pin from the garage rafters down to the floor but not touching the floor. The strings at the ends of the lines dangle a few inches away from the floor.



The space, a residential garage, is utilitarian, like the tools stored in it, some of which the artist chose to keep in place. The sculpture made of a delicate, organic material stands in stark contrast to the space it is in. It is not durable or utilitarian like the concrete garage and the tools in it. The contrast is compelling. Each set of slender beeswax lines hangs from chunky rafters precariously held by small pins.

Handmade knots, casually tied by the artist - a few already visibly loose - add to the sense of unease. The space is not intended for a fine art sculpture, but for a car. The beeswax sculpture occupies the space, but temporarily. It will soon be removed. The temporal element adds to the cloud of unease. These formal choices

are effective. Combined they create a beautiful yet slightly unsettling vibe to the work.

Standing in front of *Līnea XIII*, walking around it, I am aware of the sculpture's beauty and order, the organic glow and natural fragrance of beeswax. As I walk between the long, vertically hanging columns of beeswax lines, I experience visual shifts and surprises at each angle, my eyes bounce off each side of the triangular lines, glide and dance in the negative spaces between the lines. I see the pattern of rhombus shapes. I see the flimsy knots. I see the garage tools against the concrete wall and am briefly reminded of where I am. The sculpture holds the space. The space holds the sculpture. Together they transform the physical space and my internal space with it. I find myself moved into silent reverence and contemplation.

Līnea XIII exists in relationship to the space it was constructed. The work and the space interact to create a new space, a space within a space; they are unlikely bedfellows, but the artist's choices allow them to coexist in relative harmony but for the noted formal elements that remind the viewer of inherent tensions.

Līnea XIII by Mary Early is a compelling installation. It satisfies our human desire for symmetry, beauty, and harmony but also addresses our lizard brain and its engrained discomfort with and general aversion to risk.