

FORMERLY WAS

## LĪNEA XIII

Mary Early

Sept 22 – Oct 27, 2024

Formerly Was gallery is pleased to present LĪNEA XIII, a solo exhibition featuring a new site-specific, vertical sculpture in beeswax by Washington, DC artist, Mary Early.

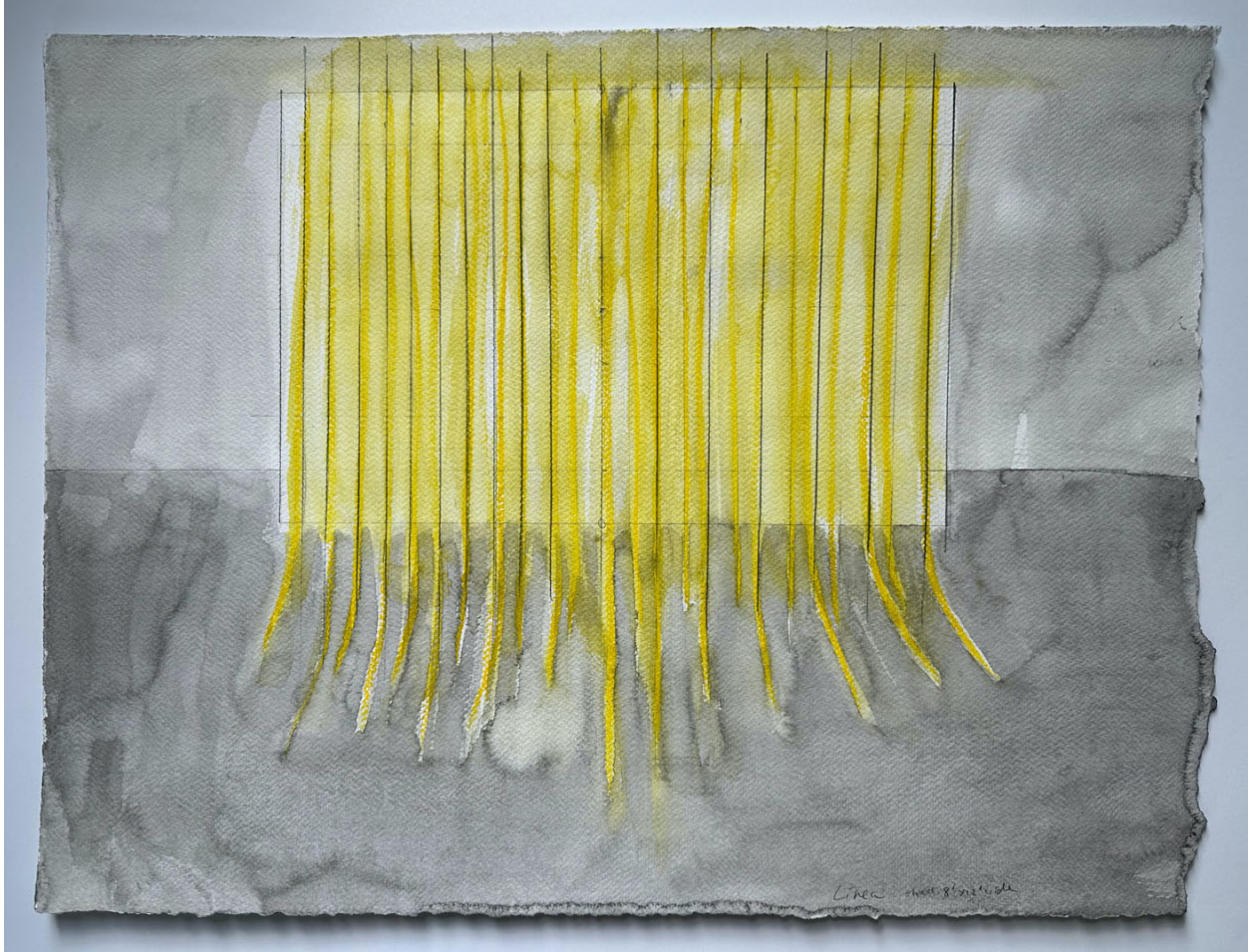


MARY EARLY

Linea XIII, 2024

beeswax and cotton

dimensions variable; each component 18" in length, #175 individual elements installed in five graduated rows, narrowing in width with each row, hanging from the rafters to the floor in front of a wall measuring 8' feet high x 12' feet wide. 2024.012



MARY EARLY

Study for installation at Formerly Was gallery - Línea XIII, 2024, graphite, wax crayon, and sumi ink wash on paper, 16" x 21.75"

2024.008

LÍNEA XIII is the thirteenth in an ongoing series of installations of vertically hanging beeswax lines, which Early began in 2017. Each work in the series results from the architectural demands or constraints of the space in which it is constructed. The current installation at Formerly Was is guided by “the scale and intimacy of an unusual space - a residential garage outfitted with white gallery walls” (Mary Early Artist Statement, 2024).

This exhibition is on view in person and by appointment, only. To schedule a time to see the exhibition or for any questions, please email Joumana Moukarim at [formerlywas@gmail.com](mailto:formerlywas@gmail.com).

## MARY EARLY ARTIST STATEMENT

Over the last decade, I have developed a method of casting slender beeswax lines to create an inventory of objects that I use to create an array or field. This array may occupy a space to its limits or alternatively create a space within a space. Each space demands a different orientation or configuration, and each installation is tasked with subverting the viewer's perception of the space, challenging the eye, and working with instinctual perception and preconceptions to alter the experience of a space. The beeswax lines and their natural yellow color create a glow as they assemble and converge to fill a space.

The production, or "pouring," of beeswax elements has become a meditative process that is integral to my art practice, serving as an observation of time, materials, and space. The raw beeswax I use has taken its form at the end of a long series of natural processes followed by a manufacturing process, and once it is in my hands, the studio becomes a factory. I apply my own methods of transforming the material by casting the beeswax into three-dimensional forms. Once I have fixed both a place and a time in the future for a potential installation, I begin to determine how the beeswax lines will take their aggregated shape in that space and, simultaneously, how many lines might be manufactured for that particular space in the amount of time available.

Two works presented at the American University Museum in Fall 2017 were conceived in response to the contour of the museum's building and the planes of the vertical wall space. When I began to consider the site, my overwhelming sense of the space was that of the curve of the building rotating around the anchor of its center column. I envisioned a radiating array of lines extending from one gallery opening to the other, creating a horizontal field of lines resting directly on the concrete floor (*Untitled [Curve]*). The museum's site and architecture present both literal and figurative circles. The circular shape of the building and the traffic circle it sits on are distilled from ancient building practices that generate radial plans extending from hubs of human activity. I see a direct line tracing back through generations of exploration and development that led to the establishment of a city on a river that became the nation's capital, the construction of a campus bound by Pierre L'Enfant's diagonal plans intersected by circles and, two centuries later, the founding of the museum on this site reflecting the circular and diagonal conditions echoing the city around it.

Over the previous year I created the first in a series of vertical linear works suspended in air, first in my studio and then in a temporary installation [Kunstlerbund Tubingen – *Līnea II, III*]. The dramatic shift from seeing my works only occupying the floor to suddenly being suspended in space added to the versatility of my basic component of the beeswax line. The concept of *Līnea IV [Curtain]*, a two-story installation of hanging lines extending down from the third to the second floor of the museum, evolved through moments of spatial experience, combined with this shift in process, and could have only occurred organically. I have since presented vertically hanging works in spaces at the Sun Valley Museum of Art, Sun Valley Idaho, Gallery B. Bethesda, MD, Art Enables, Washington DC, *Līnea XII* at Gallery 2112 in Washington DC in 2022, and the current variation *Līnea XIII* at Formerly WAS Gallery in Washington, DC. The installation at Formerly WAS is guided by the scale and intimacy of an unusual space – a residential garage outfitted with white gallery walls.

The question, "why wax?" is often posed. Traditional sculpture processes include the use of wax as a modeling or casting material, often in order to create an intermediary object to be cast in metal. Wax has a full range of fluid properties ranging from liquid and hot to firm and cool; these properties and their potential for change hold a certain attraction. When heated, the wax becomes liquid and can be poured, brushed, or carved at various temperature stages. My fascination lies with the transformation of materials, and over the years, I have worked with different armatures and structures to support the wax. Now I have abandoned armatures in favor of a component that can be infinitely deployed, re-melted, and recycled for future use.

The objects I create are activated by the spaces they inhabit, and no single work exists outside of the place it resides. The viewer, the architecture, and the historical and geographical context introduce the vital elements of scale, perspective, and experience.

*About Drawing:*

Recent works on paper and wood panel developed from schematic floor plan drawings for installations of beeswax lines. Through my sculptural installations I devise ways to divide and demarcate space, inviting the viewer to a new way of experiencing space. Multiplying intersecting lines coalesce around a perspective point or rectangular grid, their increased or decreased density creating a highlight or a concentration point.

When preparing a drawing surface, whether on paper or wood panel, I begin with a light set of marks to create a grid – this grid provides a matrix for the placement of lines. I work in series, with the idea that an infinite number and combination of elements exist. Through drawing, I am able to plan complicated installations in advance and visualize the different possibilities offered by a single space.

While my sculptural installations are wholly temporary, these schematic drawings serve as a durable and lasting precursor to the installation process, from conception through completion. A drawing is a suggestion of what might happen, and the transformation occurs during the installation process when the space and materials begin a conversation.

- Mary Early, Washington DC, 2024

**MARY EARLY BIOGRAPHY**

Mary Early (born 1975, Washington, DC) lives and works in Washington, DC. She studied visual art, film, and video at Bennington College, and her work has been exhibited at the United States Botanic Garden, Washington Project for the Arts, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Second Street Gallery (Charlottesville, VA), Hemphill Fine Arts (Washington DC,) Gallery 2112 (Washington DC), the Austrian Cultural Forum (Washington DC), Galerie Im Ersten (Vienna, Austria), Kloster Schloss Salem (Salem, Germany), Kunstlerbund Tubingen (Tubingen, Germany), the American University Museum (Washington DC), and the Sun Valley Museum of Art (Ketchum, ID) among other regional and national galleries.

Her early work incorporated formed concrete, tarpaper and paraffin wax, fabricated wood structures, and, increasingly over the years, surfaces coated with wax as a method of preserving or concealing an object within. Recent works have relied solely on solid forms cast in wax, abandoning the use of any permanent armature. Temporary installations are guided by schematic drawings and plans, which then serve as a permanent record.

In 2014 she exhibited her first large-scale installation of wax lines at Second Street Gallery in Charlottesville, VA, followed by temporary installations in response to various historical sites in Salem, Germany (2016) and Tubingen Germany (2017). In 2017 she participated in the exhibition “Twist-Layer-Pour” at the American University Museum, which included *Untitled [Curve]*, an installation of thousands of beeswax lines assembled on the floor of the museum. In 2018 she was commissioned to create a temporary installation at the Sun Valley Museum of Art, Sun Valley Idaho. This work took the form of two intersecting curtains of hanging beeswax lines bisecting a 12’ foot x 18’ foot room, providing an immersive and enclosed viewing space. Recent exhibitions include *Līnea XI* at ArtEnables, Washington DC (2021) and *Līnea Studies*, a survey of recent works on paper accompanying a site-specific installation at Gallery 2112, Washington DC (2022). In Fall 2024 she will present the next installation in the ongoing *Līnea* series at Formerly WAS Gallery Project Space in Washington DC.

Early’s work is included in the collections of the US Department of State/Embassy of Panama and Embassy of Jordan, the District of Columbia Art Bank, the District of Columbia Wilson Building Art Collection, the American University Museum (Corcoran Collection) among other public and private collections. She is a recipient of the Artist Fellowship Grant from the DC Commission on Arts & Humanities, Washington DC (2024, 2023, 2022, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2011, 2009, 2007).

**FORMERLY WAS**  
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