

HANNAH HOFFMAN GALLERY

Olga Balema

Loon

April 8 – May 13, 2023

Opening reception on Saturday, April 8th from 6 to 8 pm.

Olga Balema works from a space that is searching, intuitive and imaginative, relying on the visual rather than narrative as a guide. Formal integrity and rigor are at the core of her process and meaning emerges gradually. The sculpture develops through self-referentiality and visual association: a particular aspect of one work might reappear and be reworked in the next one. Outer edges – the way they're constructed, layered over with varied materials, heat-sealed, broken, and glued again – may, for example, become the basis for a future body of work. The sculptures in *Loon*, made from transparent material, follow a trajectory that Balema has pursued intermittently for several years.

Balema's sculpture also evolves in response to space, especially the exhibition spaces where her work is shown. The feeling or parameters of a given environment, its visual and aesthetic registers, are manifested in the works themselves. The work often deals with the floor, inducing a looking-in-motion that is reminiscent of how one explores a landscape or discovers things on the sidewalk. It's a posture that requires the engagement of the whole body and that prompts different degrees of recognition as one approaches and backs away.

The results of this self-referential process, acutely attuned to the particularities of time and space, are works that are quiet, contemplative, and frequently disorienting. Balema's practice tends to integrate unappealing qualities resulting in a body of work that can be brutal, abrasive and harsh. Notions of permanence and ephemerality are always at play. She's drawn to materials and configurations that change over time, such as latex or envelopes of water that shift in hue as steel rusts within them. The longevity of a given work is often in flux, and some may disappear completely with time.

Loon is Balema's second solo show with the gallery.

Olga Balema (b. 1984, Ukraine) is an artist living and working in New York. She received her MFA in New Genres from UCLA and subsequently attended the Rijksakademie as a resident, as well as Skowhegan. Balema is the recipient of a 2023 Guggenheim Fellowship for Fine Arts and a 2017 and 2021 recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. Balema has held solo exhibitions at venues including Camden Art Centre, London (2021); Bridget Donahue, New York (2019); Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles (2017); Swiss Institute, New York (2016); and Kunstverein Nürnberg, Nürnberg (2015). She has participated in national and international group exhibitions in venues including Haus der Kunst, Munich (2018); Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Sankt Gallen (2018); High Art, Paris (2017); Croy Nielsen, Vienna (2017); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2016); and in exhibitions including The Baltic Triennial 13, Vilnius (2018); 2015 Surround Sound Triennial, New Museum, New York (2015); and is a participant in the 2019 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.