

Julia Rommel  
*Staples*  
April 19 - May 18, 2024

*I've been searching for similar surprises to thwart my own hand ever since.*

-Julia Rommel

Bureau is pleased to present Julia Rommel: *Staples*, from April 19 - May 18, 2024, in its new Tribeca location. Bureau's sixth solo presentation of Rommel's work will include a number of new, large-scale paintings made in the past year.

Rommel's new paintings could be called sure-footed if painting's ground weren't so permanently shaky. Some seize on color theory, deploying an Albersian exploration of greens, reds, blues across an almost architectural expanse. Some forefront the painterly mark, with gestural scribbles scrubbed rather than brushed onto patches of ground; others perform the inverse operation—almost wholly obscuring the gesture with a flat, smooth field of color that sits on linen like a hardened candy shell. But each work remains rooted in the most fundamental of painterly tasks—the stretching and priming of the substrate. The deeply habitual labor of this common activity still anchors and propels Rommel's work after over a decade of playful investigation. Her earliest abstractions turned the corner of the stretched canvas into a compositional unit and since then, staples, seams, folds, and corners have played as figures in what could otherwise be described as color fields. Her work has always made a gentle joke of the modernist obsession with the picture plane. In an inversion of perspectival logic, what is wrapped-around becomes flattened; a volume becomes a plane; and the very edges of the painting are repurposed as painterly marks. Rommel's paintings feel like walking backward down the hallway of pictorial history—reversing the progression from flatness to depth.

The paintings in *Staples* introduce a new compositional unit; Rommel creates 'lines' on her paintings with a subtly raised ridge that she generates by stretching linen around a wooden column. She primes the linen on these bulky boxes, with gesso making a low peak at the corner where it's been applied, sanded, applied, sanded again, then removed and re-stretched. As light rakes across this relief, a gradient invokes other media—photography, photoshop, or airbrush—then reverts back to physical presence. In some paintings, the ridgeline demarcates areas of color; in others, it's a geometric register across a gestural surface. Tension registers at the juncture of this smoothly painted skin with rough, pigment-soaked linen.

Rommel has often spoken of her search for a way of painting that is fresher, less worked, more immediate. But again and again, she has returned to the studio's functional labor as her choreographic script. Every elegant moment has been coaxed into being through the execution of all the layers hidden beneath it: a dance between 'doing' and 'allowing'. In their improvisational approach, her paintings synthesize intention, happenstance, and material fact. Here, practice doesn't make perfect; practice makes mistakes, and mistakes make form.

-Mamie Tinkler, 2024

**Julia Rommel** (b. 1980 in Salisbury, MD; lives and works in Brooklyn, New York) received her BS from the University of Richmond, VA; and her MFA from American University, Washington, D.C. Solo and two- person exhibitions include *Just a Splash*, Standard (Oslo), Oslo (2022); *Uncle*, Bureau, New York (2022); *Long Leash*, Overduin & Co., Los Angeles (2020); *Fall Guy*, Standard (Oslo), Oslo (2019); *Candy Jail*, Bureau, New York (2019); *Twin Bed*, Bureau at Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2018); *Stay-at-Home Dad* with Mathew Cerletty, Standard (Oslo), Oslo (2017); *Man Alive*, Bureau, New York (2016); *A Cheesecake With Your Name On It*, Overduin & Co., Los Angeles (2016); *Two Italians, Six Lifeguards*, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield (2015). Her work is in the collection of the Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; KADIST, Paris and San Francisco; Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway; Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.