

SENSITIVE FORMS

LUAM MELAKE

January 30–March 27, 2021

Parker Gallery is proud to present the debut solo exhibition of New York-based artist Luam Melake, simultaneously marking the artist's first presentation on the West Coast. The exhibition features a group of wall-based textile sculptures handwoven on the loom and a modular furniture set made during the artist's 2019 residency at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska.

This exhibition will coincide with Melake's inclusion in *Objects: USA 2020* at R & Company, New York, which revisits the groundbreaking 1969–1973 traveling survey that introduced innovators of the American studio craft movement to a broader audience, helping to establish new positions within the art world, including those by Sheila Hicks, Lenore Tawney, Anni Albers and Ron Nagle.

Combining her extensive knowledge of materials with her background in architecture and design, Melake's objects are infused with the textures and feelings of our surroundings. Commonplace industrial materials—polyurethane foam, rubber tubes, latex—chosen for their affective qualities are woven together to elicit an emotive response. Some are densely layered, pairing natural and synthetic fibers, hard and soft textures, taut and droopy silhouettes.

In *Talismanic Quilt* (2020), Melake shrink wrapped sentimental objects in plastic and combined them with well-loved patches of old clothing, creating a quilt narrativizing fond memories and distinct moments in time. As the artist notes, “the work is inspired by a West African practice of packaging found objects that have specific cultural meaning and stitching them to tunics, to create a specific ‘energy formula that propels the wearer towards action.’”

Melake's furniture practice employs the same level of experimentation as her textiles. *Better Together Table* (2019) belongs to the artist's ongoing *Optimisd* series—a wordplay on optimist and optimized. In this example, a combination of two tables and two chairs can be organized in multiple configurations, each offering an opportunity for direct social engagement among its users.

Luam Melake (b. 1986 in San Diego, CA) lives and works in New York, NY. Solo and two-person exhibitions include *Luam Melake's Curious Hybrids*, Versant Sud and Artskop 3437, France (2020) and *Without Qualities*, Luam Melake and Tariku Shiferaw, Addis Fine Art and Private View Gallery, New York, NY (2018). Recent group exhibitions include *Objects: USA 2020*, curated by Glenn Adamson, Abby Bangser and Evan Snyderman, R & Company, New York, NY (2021), *Transatlantico*, curated by Edoardo Monti, Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ (2020), *Sumegne / Ngaparou 2*, Fondation Blachère, Apt, France (2020), and *Pazzo Palazzo*, Palazzo Monti, Brescia, Italy (2019).