

rachel uffner



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reginald Madison
Lucid Dreamer

October 25, 2024 - January 10, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, October 25, 6 - 8pm

Why don't you make a mistake and do something right.
- Sun Ra

Reginald Madison's (American, b. 1941) paintings and sculpture are exercises in trust; the artist tries to "disappear" in the process, entering a psychic space that he rarely recollects. Try asking him about specific decisions, and the answer is "the materials insisted." Making art doesn't seem like a choice for Madison, but a foundational need. What manifests in and on his heavily worked canvases, panels (often prepped with roofing tar), and found wood sculptures is the result of a singular style refined over decades of experimentation in technique, travel, and vast collecting practices.

Madison has perfected a palette that embraces bold color (lime greens, salmon pinks, bright blues), toned down to an earthy—and always matte, he abhors sheen—hue. Texture is achieved through an assortment of mark-making materials, from rags to the palms of his hands to his collection of brushes. He mixes his colors directly on the walls of his studio. There are a number of abstract forms, some with biomorphic qualities, that consistently appear in Madison's work. Various intricate patterns are developed, perhaps a nod to his collection of textiles. Suprematism as well as the free jazz improvisation of Sun Ra and his Arkestra and others have influenced Madison, as he imbues spontaneity into each of his mediums.

As a teenager, Madison found a box of paint supplies in a garbage can under the 57th Street viaduct under Lake Shore Drive in Chicago, thus beginning his self-taught career. He later worked at the US Steel Southworks, taking on extra shifts to save up money to take his young family to Europe for a year, where he visited the museums of Paris, Munich, and Madrid. In 1968 he had his first public showing of his artwork, at Art & Soul in Chicago, where he won third place in a competition juried by artist Richard Hunt and curator Jan van der Marck, founding director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. This formative exhibition experience gave him the confidence to further pursue his artmaking, and he traveled east to New York City and then western Massachusetts, before finally being drawn to Hudson, where he currently lives and works.

Lucid Dreams comprises both paintings and sculptures, spanning over twenty years. *Ohmm* (2024) is made of old chair parts from the Hudson-based LB Furniture Industries, which existed from 1982 until closing due to bankruptcy in 2008. Madison has used these salvaged materials for numerous sculptural works. *Ohmm* is reminiscent of *The Joyful Noise* (2015), in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art, which depicts a figure from Sun Ra's Arkestra. Here,

Rachel Uffner Gallery
170 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064
info@racheluffnergallery.com
racheluffnergallery.com

rachel uffner

the fanned chair parts act almost as halos for a chorus of angels. Madison has honed a stenciling technique using found lace doilies and tablecloths to create patterns on the largest pieces of wood. It is unusual for him to use color of any kind in his sculpture, as he finds the “wood itself has integrity that gets lost with color.” He made an exception in this case for the resulting texture.

Hot House (2005) and *Hot House 2* (2006/2024) tell a fascinating story of Madison’s process, giving a sense of the meticulous detail which was involved in what may seem like breezy improvisation. The smaller work was made first, and, engrossed by the forms, Madison decided to increase the scale. A flood in his then-studio prevented him from finishing the larger painting, and he did not return to it until recently. He worked to merge the palettes of the two works, not an easy undertaking when the custom colors are separated by almost twenty years. *Hot House 2* is a stunning exhibit of Madison’s patternmaking and interaction of biomorphic forms. More symmetrical than the first, *Hot House 2* also shows the artist’s use of unusual paint application techniques, including balled up rags. The title, as with many of the works, comes from jazz. In this case, a song by Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker.

Madison grew up listening to his parents telling stories of the music they would hear at Chicago’s Club DeLisa, where Herman Blount (later to become Sun Ra) got his start. Free form jazz opened Madison to unique forms of process from a young age, and in the words of philosopher Philip Alperson “in improvisational activity, freedom seems to be on display.”

Text By Katherine Pill, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL

Reginald Madison (b. 1941, Chicago, IL) is an American painter and sculptor who came to prominence in the emergent art scene of the Black Arts Movement in Chicago (1965-1975). Self-taught, he has studied art independently in Paris, Venice, and Copenhagen. After moving to Western Massachusetts in the 1970’s, Madison was represented by Phyllis Kind Gallery. Madison’s work has been exhibited at the experimental art center Art & Soul (1969), 57th Street Art Fair, Phyllis Kind Gallery, NYC (1975-2009), Ace Hotel Chicago, Smart Museum of Art at University of Chicago (2018), SEPTEMBER Gallery, Historic Hudson Hall, CR10 Arts, False Flag Gallery, and Rachel Uffner Gallery, among others. Madison’s work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Times Union*, *Upstate Diary*, and *Whitehot Magazine*. In 2020, Madison curated *Art & Soul*, an exhibition at Historic Hudson Hall that included the work by David Hammons and Tschabalala Self. He organizes *Melodius Thunk*, a Jazz Music Festival in Hudson, NY. Madison is a 2021 recipient of the NEA Artist Residency at Basilica Hudson. His work is in the collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody, Vinny Dotolo and Michael Sherman, Museum at UC Santa Barbara, Museum of Fine Arts St. Petersburg, and The Baltimore Museum of Art. Madison currently lives and works in Hudson, NY.

Image: Reginald Madison, *River Blue*, 2006-2024, oil on canvas, 90 3/4 x 77 1/2 x 2 1/2 in

Please call +1 (212) 274-0064 or email info@racheluffnergallery.com for more information

Rachel Uffner Gallery
170 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064
info@racheluffnergallery.com
racheluffnergallery.com