

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

523 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011 Tel: 212-243-0200 Fax: 212-243-0047

artcritical

the online magazine of art and ideas

Thursday, April 8th, 2021

Making Modernism Her Own: Rebecca Warren at Matthew Marks

by Robert Taplin

Rebecca Warren: V at Matthew Marks Gallery

March 18 to May 1, 2021

22 West 22nd Street, between 10th and 11th avenues New York City, matthewmarks.com

The nine relatively small bronzes in Rebecca Warren's current exhibition hold the generous spaces at the Matthew Marks Gallery with remarkable authority. Warren has taken the traditions of modernist sculpture and turned them to her own purposes. The bronzes are roughly modelled and painted in a manner reminiscent of Giacometti or more recently, Bryan Hunt or William Tucker. The shapes are mostly a loosely planar leaf or pod suspended from a stem or trunk. The primary shape droops or waves or slumps with an extra support and, in one case, has a hole in it. Several of the pieces look like a placenta still on an umbilical cord or a piece of underwater plant life. They are all energetically painted on the raw bronze with lots of blues, white, and sparing amounts of red and green, often employing drippy vertical lines in contrasting colors and an occasional crude circle or oblong. One piece, titled "A Glyph," has what could be read as a snowy landscape with a door or window painted on one side.



Rebecca Warren, *The Territory*, 2020. Hand-painted bronze on painted MDF pedestal, 83% x 88¼ x 25% inches, 1 of 2 casts, each painted uniquely. Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery

Warren has also adapted Brancusi's innovation of giving the pedestal nearly equal status with the sculpture. Each of her pieces has a precisely designed pedestal, constructed of MDF and painted in pastel shades of salmon or in one instance a deep brown. The pedestals are like miniature stages or desks, with sometimes a small step in front or a backslash in the rear. They set the piece at a precise height and assert their frontality, while encouraging a backstage view. As with David Smith, the edge view is active but subordinate. Two pieces are doubles, using two identical or similar casts set side by side. To this viewer's eye, they are less successful but they do help to round out the show and hold the space.

As Postmodernism recedes in the rearview mirror, it is quite thrilling to see a sculptor forthrightly embrace the modernist tradition and make it her own, and in such a stylish fashion. "The only way out is through" rings true.



Installation shot of Rebecca Warren V at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 2021.