

Smack Mellon

92 Plymouth Street @ Washington Street, Dumbo, Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tel: 718.834.8761 | smackmellon.org | Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 12-6pm
Contact: Jessica Holburn jholburn@smackmellon.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Luisa Caldwell
A Cat in God's Garden

September 29–November 4, 2018
Opening Reception: September 29, 6–8 PM
Artist Talk: October 4, 6:30–8 PM



Image: Luisa Caldwell, *Sentinels*, 2018, re-imaged stoneware ceramic, 19 1/2" x 9 1/2" x 9 1/2"; Drawings from *The Tree of Life* series, 2018, pen and marker on cardstock, 11 x 8 1/2" each. Courtesy of the Artist.

Luisa Caldwell is a mixed media artist working in drawing, collage, and sculpture from small, intimate works to installations that are architectural in scale. Often integrating found objects and reclaimed materials into her work, she finds wonder in the mundane. For instance, she has transformed fruit stickers into multitudes of flowers and cellophane candy wrappers into dramatic sunsets. With bold color and clear form, she elevates the discarded and overlooked into charming evocations of joy.

Caldwell's exhibition at Smack Mellon encompasses personal interests that have spanned her childhood and adult life: cats, gardens, and art books. Her project is inspired by flowers and plants that she grows and nurtures in her Brooklyn garden, as well as the stray cats that come and go from her yard. On the gallery walls are hundreds of Caldwell's botanical drawings illustrating fantastic flora. The kitty imagery refers to the current cat craze in digital media (cat memes and videos, for example), which the artist relates to worship, recalling ancient deities such as Bastet, the Egyptian cat-headed goddess of protection. Along these lines of adoration, flowers are often given as an offering during times of great importance or remembrance.

Smack Mellon

92 Plymouth Street @ Washington Street, Dumbo, Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tel: 718.834.8761 | smackmellon.org | Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 12-6pm
Contact: Jessica Holburn jholburn@smackmellon.org

In the gallery, Caldwell has also created an installation of found porcelain and stoneware vases that have her own feline and botanical imagery etched in the surface. Rather than exhibiting these vessels on traditional bases, she displays them on stacks of art books that refer to the influences that spill into the content of her work. Interspersed within each stack are handmade ceramic books, which the artist attributes to personal references on which there are no books written; inspirations from her grandmother and other family members are honored in these objects. Inside a handmade vase will be a bouquet of fresh flowers from Caldwell's garden, bringing together the natural and the representational, the outdoors and the domestic. In the spirit of sharing offerings to the public, included in the exhibition will be a free poster with one of Caldwell's line drawings printed on it. Visitors are welcome to pick one up and color it in at home. While Caldwell's exuberant installation might appear to be a paean to flower power and kitty kitsch, for the artist, it represents the importance of surrounding oneself with the items that bring us happiness.

Caldwell currently lives and works in Brooklyn. Recent solo exhibitions and projects have been presented at such venues as Long Island University's Humanities Gallery in Brooklyn, MSB Gallery at NYU Langone Medical Center, and Bertrand Delacroix Gallery in New York. She has executed several temporary and permanent public art projects, most notably the award winning East 180th St subway station, for which 15 of her designs were commissioned by New York City's MTA Arts & Design, translated into mosaic, and permanently sited in this designated historic landmark station. Caldwell is currently Artist-in-Residence at Hunter College Ceramics. In September 2018, she is creating a temporary site-specific collage installation for Arts Prospect in St. Petersburg, Russia. She earned a BA at the University of Iowa and studied in its MFA sculpture program.

This exhibition is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, New York City Council Member Stephen Levin, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and with generous support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Robert Lehman Foundation, Iorio Charitable Foundation, Select Equity Group Foundation, many individuals and Smack Mellon's Members.

Smack Mellon's programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and with generous support from The New York Community Trust, The Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund of The New York Community Trust, The Roy and Niuta Titus Foundation, Jerome Foundation, The Greenwich Collection Ltd, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Inc., Brooklyn Arts Council, and Exploring The Arts.

The artist thanks Materials for the Arts and Thomas Hunter Artist Residency Program, Hunter College ceramics Department, for their support.

Space for Smack Mellon's programs is generously provided by the Walentas family and Two Trees Management.

PRESS CONTACT:

Jessica Holburn, jholburn@smackmellon.org