

Smack Mellon

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Katie Bell: *A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place*
Austin Ballard: *Shadow Lake*

March 9–April 21, 2019
Opening Reception: March 9, 6–8 PM
Artist Talk: April 4, 6:30–7:30 PM

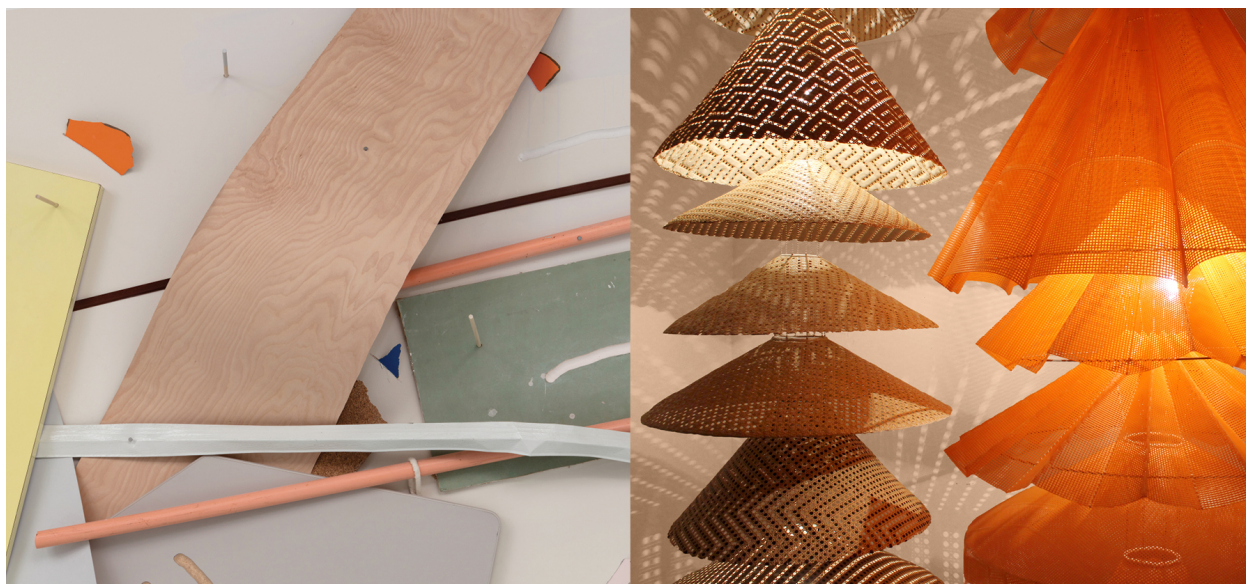


Image left: Katie Bell, *Loudspeaker* (detail), 2018, acrylic, laminate, aluminum, foam, rubber, wood, and nails on drywall, 180" x 120" x 16". Courtesy of the artist.

Image right: Austin Ballard, *Shadow Lake* (detail), 2019, vinyl canvas, cane webbing, brass chain, epoxy clay, plastic, and electrical components, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

Smack Mellon is pleased to announce two solo exhibitions, **Katie Bell: *A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place*** and **Austin Ballard: *Shadow Lake***, opening concurrently on Saturday, March 9, 2019. Both artists create work inspired by the designed and built environment but adopt their own unique approaches. **Katie Bell** takes discarded and readymade objects to construct immense assemblages that match the industrial scale of Smack Mellon's building. **Austin Ballard**, on the other hand, turns his focus onto household objects, specifically light fixtures and lampshades, to create a more intimate setting that resembles a suburban domestic interior. In both of these projects, however, the artists call attention to the way that architecture and design objects shape—whether dramatically or subtly—how we see and respond to the world.

Katie Bell

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place



Image: Katie Bell, *Loudspeaker* (detail), 2018, acrylic, laminate, aluminum, foam, rubber, wood, and nails on drywall, 180" x 120" x 16". Courtesy of the artist.

Katie Bell is interested in revealing the residue of everyday life, employing objects that are soiled from use and disuse. For her work, she collects materials, such as old cabinets and columns, scavenged from dumpsters or scrap yards. These discards become the artist's medium, creating new sculptural compositions by cutting, sawing, tying, stacking, and assembling the pieces together.

The sculptures in Bell's site-specific installation, *A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place*, act as marks, strokes, and fields of color, creating a painting language in architectural scale. Smack Mellon's industrial interior—24-foot-high wall, steel columns, and cement floor—serves as the support for this sculptural painting. The work is also inspired by the dramatic setting of the DUMBO neighborhood, including the dominant scale of its bridges, the East River, and the flotsam that washes up on its banks, where chunks of foam have been worn away to resemble gravel. Made up of found, manipulated, and crafted objects, Bell's work questions what comprises our visual landscape and how the artificial is often disguised as natural to give it an aura of

grandeur. Included are discarded hot tub fragments clad in faux marble and fake rocks from a department store window display. In this immense rubble, the artist imagines what future ruins might look like, an environment in which the natural and the fabricated have become so inextricably merged that stone, fiberglass, and plastic are no longer distinguishable from one another.

Born in Rockford, IL, and currently based in Brooklyn, Bell has had solo exhibitions at Penn State University; St. Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, NH; Locust Projects in Miami; Space Gallery in Portland, ME; Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Mixed Greens in New York, among other galleries. Her work has also been featured in group exhibitions at venues such as Nudashank in Baltimore, MD; Knockdown Center, Queens, NY; BRIC, Brooklyn; LVL3, Chicago; and DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA. She has received a Saint-Gaudens Memorial Fellowship, New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, Space Program residency at Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation, and other honors. She earned an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design and a BFA from Knox College, Galesburg, IL.

Austin Ballard
Shadow Lake



Image: Austin Ballard, *Shadow Lake* (detail), 2019, vinyl canvas, cane webbing, brass chain, epoxy clay, plastic, and electrical components, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

Combining contemporary themes with handicrafts, Austin Ballard's work conflates innovation and tradition, manmade and natural materials, high and low art to subvert societal and cultural assumptions about gender and labor associated with textiles. Through visceral, yet restrained handcrafted objects and installations, Ballard explores the influence that domestic space, familial relationships, social anxiety, memory, and loss have on our lived experiences. Raised in North Carolina, where the textile industry historically played a fundamental and utilitarian role, he is committed to making art approachable and accessible. With an interest in furniture and home decor, Ballard creates vividly-patterned sculptures out of natural materials such as cane from the rattan palm. Utilizing traditional techniques of textile pattern-making, natural dyeing and ceramic slab-building, he creates works in which the artist's hand and labor process are revealed, contrasting the manufactured polish of high-end, modern design.

For his project *Shadow Lake*, Ballard draws from childhood recollections to create an installation of floating light sculptures and venetian blinds. Often traveling between parents and grandparents growing up, his grandmother's house in Charlotte, NC,

became a symbol of stability because of the way she organized her home. However, attempting to conjure the experience of this domestic space became a disorienting exercise for the artist. As Ballard placed each light sculpture according to hazy recollections of the floor plan, the layering of lampshades in the installation develops into a metaphor for fallible memories. The shadows cast from the woven shades onto the gallery walls further heightens the feeling of distortion, as one might experience during a flashback. Through repeated patterns and fragmentation, Ballard's work calls attention to the lag, slippage, and reinterpretation of even our most cherished memories.

Born in Charlotte, NC, and now residing in Ridgewood, Queens, Ballard has had solo exhibitions at Wave Hill, Bronx, NY; Hudson D. Walker Gallery, Provincetown, MA; Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT; Napoleon Gallery, Philadelphia, PA; and Handwerker Gallery at Ithaca College. He has received numerous awards, including a Joan Mitchell Foundation Sculpture Fellowship, Windgate Foundation Fellowship, and Kenneth Stubbs Endowed Fellowship. Ballard has participated in residencies at the Museum of Arts and Design; Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown; Ox-Bow School of Art in Saugatuck, MI; Vermont Studio Center; Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop in Scotland; The Wassaic Project in Wassaic, NY, and McColl Center for Art + Innovation, Charlotte, NC. Ballard earned an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and a BFA from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

These exhibitions are 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.

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place is sponsored, in part, by the Greater New York Arts Development Fund of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, administered by Brooklyn Arts Council (BAC).

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