

Smack Mellon

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bonnie Collura: *Prince*
Rachelle Mozman Solano: *Metamorphosis of Failure*

January 12–February 24, 2019

Opening Reception: January 12, 6–8 PM

Artist Talk: February 9, 4–5 PM



Image left: Rachelle Mozman Solano, *I had wished for a long time to make a portrait of my neighbors*, 2016, digital pigment print, 20" x 15 3/4". Courtesy of the artist. Image right: Bonnie Collura, *Crash Test/Dubble Bubble/Sebastian* (detail), 2018, steel, wood, hydrostone, machine plastic, expandable foam, chair section, fabric, inner tube, bracelet, zip ties, 74" x 44" x 44". Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Amirmasoud Agharebparast.

Smack Mellon is pleased to announce two solo exhibitions, ***Bonnie Collura: Prince*** and ***Rachelle Mozman Solano: Metamorphosis of Failure***, opening concurrently on January 12, 2019. Both artists create installations that challenge male-dominated narratives, portraying their male subjects from their positions of creative prowess. **Bonnie Collura** constructs several versions of a male surrogate out of disparate materials, flipping the gender roles of artist/creator and model/muse. **Rachelle Mozman Solano** takes on iconic artist Paul Gauguin by casting him as a self-doubting disappointment in his own biographical story, seeking affirmation from the ambivalent women who he aims to dominate. By putting forth alternative narratives, Collura and Mozman Solano envision women as empowered protagonists of their own storylines.

Rachelle Mozman Solano
Metamorphosis of Failure



Image: Rachelle Mozman Solano, *Child pose*, 2016, pigment print, 15 3/4" x 20". Courtesy of the artist.

Starting often from her biography and family history, Rachelle Mozman Solano explores the ways in which culture shapes individuals and how environment conditions behavior. She works between New York and Panama, the country of her maternal family. Informed by her clinical work in psychoanalysis, Mozman Solano's art is concerned with the intersection of mythology, history, economics, and the psyche through photographs and films that confound fact and fictional narrative. Through her work, the artist reveals narrative to be both inherent to our humanity and easily influenced by perception.

For her film and photography project *Metamorphosis of Failure*, Mozman Solano takes as a point of departure the Museum of Modern Art's 2014 exhibition of Paul Gauguin's works on paper that he made in the South Pacific toward the end of his life. Mozman Solano was impressed by the mythology perpetuated by the museumography and curation of the exhibition, particularly the narrative about Gauguin's work based on identity transformation during his immersion in Polynesian culture. Rather than rehashing this account, Mozman Solano instead explores the history of Gauguin's mixed background (French and Peruvian). The work probes

Gauguin's obsession with racial purity, which she speculates may have stemmed from his multiethnic identity and created a conflicted sense of self. Mozman Solano's film is based on fantasies of Gauguin's five-week stay in Panama before his journey to Polynesia. The story satirically examines his search for subjects, "primitive" life, and "pure" racial identity as described in letters to his wife and his book *Noa Noa*, within a diverse Caribbean topography. In her project, Mozman Solano playfully reimagines the stories of the women who were Gauguin's muses. She cleverly empowers these women by imagining an alternative narrative that exposes Gauguin's internal conflict and the desires that he projected onto his subjects.

Mozman Solano grew up in New York to immigrant parents. She is a Fulbright Fellow and has had solo exhibitions at Arteconsult, Panama City, Panama; Voelker Orth Museum, Flushing, NY; The Camera Club of New York; and Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago. Her work has been featured in major group exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC; the Americas Society, New York; National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque, NM; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; El Museo del Barrio, New York; DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA; the Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA; Instituto Cultural Itau, São Paulo, Brazil; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile; Centro Cultural de España, Mexico City, Mexico, and IX Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador. She has participated in residencies at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace, Smack Mellon, The Camera Club of New York, and Light Work. Mozman Solano earned an MFA from Tyler School of Art at Temple University and a BFA from Purchase College at SUNY. She also has 12 years of psychoanalytic training from the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis, New York, and has worked as a clinical psychoanalyst from 2010 to 2017.

Bonnie Collura
Prince



Image: Bonnie Collura, *Crash Test/Dubble Bubble/Sebastian* (detail), 2018, steel, wood, hydrostone, machine plastic, expandable foam, chair section, fabric, inner tube, bracelet, zip ties, 74" x 44" x 44".
Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Amirmasoud Agharebparast.

In her highly intensive studio practice, Bonnie Collura sees herself as part director, part fabricator, and part weird scientist. She slides between these roles, working from a medley of signifiers, physical material, and cultural references while questioning presumed hierarchies from art history, pop culture, politics, and consumerism. Bonnie Collura's sculptural installation *Prince* is part of an ambitious, episodic project that started in 2005 with funding from a Guggenheim Fellowship. Since then, *The Prince Project* has taken the form of single sculptures and large-scale installations that critique our culture's pattern of repeating iconic characters, gestures, and polarizing traits to create heroes. Inspired by mythological characters and symbols from classical antiquity to Mary Shelley's 19th-century novel *Frankenstein*, Collura gives these stories contemporary relevance by subverting the restrictive gender roles of the artist/creator legend. As a sculptor, she works with carved and cast pieces that are fitted or sewn together, combining disparate parts to make a formal and conceptual whole that is evolving yet cohesive.

In her ongoing project, Collura creates incarnations of a surrogate being, which she calls the Prince figure and has developed through a non-linear narrative. As the artist of this sculptural personification, Collura takes the role of creator, flipping the gender relationship of the

Pygmalion and Galatea myth from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in which a male sculptor desires an ideal female that he has made as an ivory statue. Collura interprets the Prince as an amalgamation of four archetypal male characters from history, religion, and popular culture: Jesus, St. Sebastian, C-3PO (the droid from *Star Wars*), and Abraham Lincoln. A unifying thread among these four figures is that each was left with an identifiable hole in his body, an opening that is associated with their martyrdom and reveals their fragility. At Smack Mellon, four solid, mixed-media sculptures represent each of these individuals as they gesture in response to four translucent counterparts that are made of sewn, silk organza and suspend from the ceiling like gossamer sheaths. By building both their bodies and shedding skins through sewing, the artist aims to rebuke tropes of the heroic male sculptor, as well as constructs that create patriarchal icons. Attempting to transcend her own personal impetus, Collura intends the work to evoke feelings of our collective hope, heartbreak, and history.

Collura lives and works in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. She has had solo exhibitions at Kustera Projects, Brooklyn; 'sindikit, Baltimore; Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York; Claire Oliver Fine Arts, New York; and Susan Inglett Gallery, New York. Collura has been featured in recent group exhibitions at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT; Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, WI; Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, OR; Trestle Gallery, Brooklyn; Flag Art Foundation, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Mixed Greens Gallery, New York; and Palmer Museum of Art, University Park, PA, among others. She is the recipient of a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, and an Emerging Artist Award from the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art. Collura is currently an Associate Professor at Penn State University, teaching in the School of Visual Arts. She received an MFA from Yale University and a BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University.

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