

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

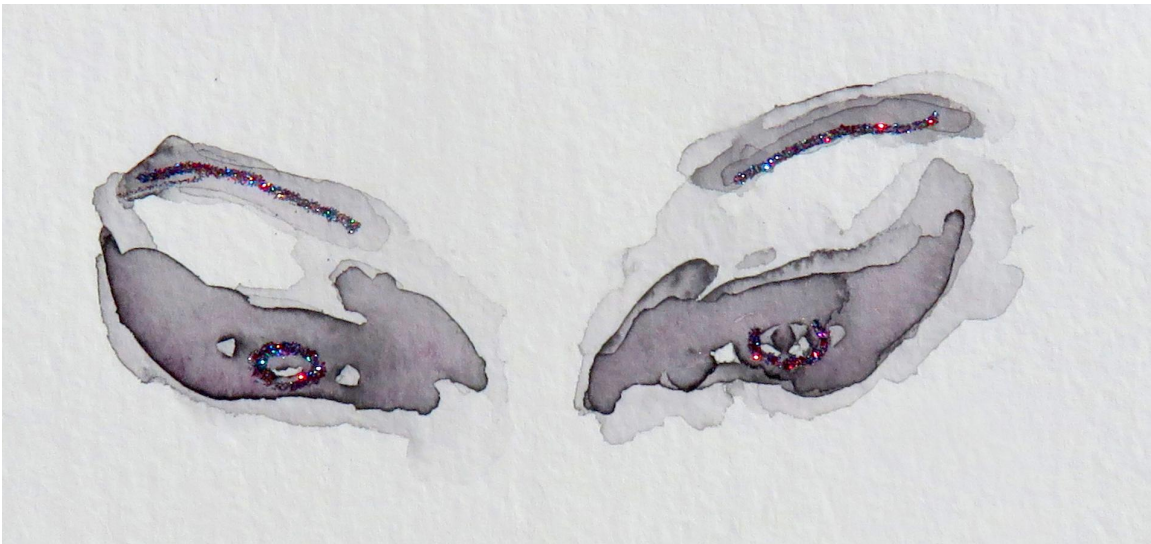
***Idol Worship***

**Curated by Emily Colucci**

**November 16–December 29, 2019**

**Opening Reception: November 16, 6–8PM**

**Rebecca Baldwin, Loren Britton, Anna Campbell, Liz Collins,  
Alexandria Deters, Jamison Edgar, Jason Elizondo, Cara Erskine,  
Caroline Garcia, Patty Gone, Kris Grey, Tatyana Gubash,  
Michelle Handelman, Tenaya Izu, Aaron Krach, Phoenix Lindsey-Hall,  
Emily Lombardo, Helina Metaferia, Sophia Narrett, Jennifer Quinones,  
Brice Peterson, Gwen Shockey, Pacifico Silano, Anna Skarbek,  
Tiffany Smith, Ariella Tai, and Conrad Ventur**



Tatyana Gubash, *Cookie Mueller* (detail), 2019, ink and glitter on watercolor paper, 7 x 7 inches. Courtesy the Artist.

Dear role models, muses, mentors, problematic faves, and last but certainly not least, filth elders,

It's you. It's you. It's all for you. You are our sources of possibility, creativity, courage, subversion, self-fashioning, and sometimes transgression.

# Smack Mellon

In honor of you, our idols, Smack Mellon is pleased to present *Idol Worship*, a group exhibition celebrating the ongoing cultural, social, and political significance of role model adoration as an essential survival strategy. In particular, self-identified women are often overlooked as figures to be emulated, exempt from the label of “genius” so readily bestowed upon men. Curated by **Emily Colucci**, the exhibition brings together 27 artists in diverse disciplines that are engaging with and fawning over their women and women-identifying idols.



Pacifico Silano, *I am Fucking Crazy But I am Free*, 2019, silkscreen on American Flag, 3 x 5 feet. Courtesy the Artist.

Partially inspired by John Waters’s *Role Models*, a pseudo-autobiography through his own influences or what he calls, “filth elders,” the artists in *Idol Worship* use their work to create conversations—both actual and imagined—with their role models. While teens’ fanatical impulse to paper their bedroom walls with imagery of their favorite stars is presumed as merely an adolescent phase, identification with idols becomes especially significant for those alienated from dominant social institutions, whether the biological family, history, or mainstream culture.

In the exhibition, the designation of idol encompasses a wide range of formative figures. Some artists celebrate pop superstars, including **Tiffany Smith**’s video mash-up of Cardi B, **Pacifico Silano**’s patriotic salute to Lana Del Rey, and **Emily Lombardo**’s cassette rerecording of Madonna’s 1983 self-titled album.

**Cara Erskine** pays respect to sports icons such as Billie Jean King and

Caster Semenya, while **Brice Peterson** honors Golden Girl and de facto queer icon Bea Arthur. While literature is represented by **Patty Gone**’s cinematic dedication to prolific romance novel extraordinaire Danielle Steel, fictional characters also make appearances as heroes, including **Ariella Tai**’s recontextualization of Black female vampires such as Aaliyah’s posthumous role as Akasha in *Queen of the Damned*.

However, not all the artists engage with universally recognized celebrities. Instead, they look toward underground influences, such as Cookie Mueller, Edith Massey, and Ivy Nicholson, and artistic forebears, including Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Bridget Riley, and Yoko Ono. Activism also emerges as a significant theme, forging intergenerational and sustaining connections within marginalized communities.

This includes **Gwen Shockey's** portrait and oral history conversation with lesbian activist, therapist and Identity House co-founder Lee Zevy, **Helina Metaferia's** juxtaposition of contemporary Black women with archival imagery from Black Panther newspapers, **Phoenix Lindsey-Hall's** tribute to the founders of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and **Anna Campbell's** sculptural disco ball and battering ram evocation of the stalwarts of queer liberation— Stormé DeLarverie, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera.

As John Waters asserts, “Life is nothing if you’re not obsessed.”

All forms of devotion are encouraged: prayer, ugly crying, supplication, etc.

With all our love (*do you love me like I love you?*),

Your biggest fans



Helina Metaferia, *Headdress 5*, 2019,  
collaged paper, 35 x 18 inches.  
Courtesy the Artist.

# S m a c k M e l l o n

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Smack Mellon presents an annual group show dedicated to new work by emerging local and national artists. Each year, an emerging curator organizes this exhibition, selecting artists from both an open call and a curatorial process. Guest Curator **Emily Colucci**'s proposal for *Idol Worship* was selected through a curatorial open call, and this exhibition includes a combination of emerging artists chosen from another open call, as well as established artists selected by the curator.

**Emily Colucci** is a writer, curator and co-founder of *Filthy Dreams*, an award-winning blog analyzing art, culture and politics through a queer lens and a touch of camp. In 2016, she was awarded the Creative Capital | Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for *Filthy Dreams*. In addition, Colucci has contributed to exhibition catalogues, most recently for Devan Shimoyama's *Cry, Baby* at the Andy Warhol Museum, artist books and online and print magazines, such as Condé Nast's *them.*, *VICE*, *Salon*, *LA Review of Books* and more. She has previously curated *Night Fever* at Pittsburgh's Future Tenant, and co-curated *Party Out Of Bounds: Nightlife As Activism Since 1980* at New York's La MaMa Galleria with Visual AIDS, as well as its satellite installation *Courtship Disorder* by John Walter in London's White Cubicle Toilet Gallery at the late George & Dragon Pub.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

*Happy Endings*, performance workshop, Saturday, November 23, 2–5 PM

In this intimate performance workshop, artist/writer **Patty Gone** (author of *Love Life*) and writer/yoga instructor **Claire Donato** (author of *Burial*) will guide participants through the fiction of love, drawing inspiration from its oracle, Danielle Steel, the best-selling American novelist of all time, as well as romance's infinite cultural tendrils.



Patty Gone, *Dating Game*, 2019, video still, single channel video. Courtesy the Artist.

*Oral Worship: Documenting LGBTQ+ Oral Histories*, Thursday, December 5, 7–9 PM

Exhibition artists **Rebecca Baldwin** and **Gwen Shockey**, along with **Jamie Magyar** from the NYC Trans Oral History Project, will discuss their projects recording queer oral histories, as well as the necessity, joys and challenges of preserving LGBTQ+ experiences. Led by curator **Emily Colucci**.

# S m a c k M e l l o n

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*Horizontal Idol Conversation*, exhibition tour, Sunday, December 15, 3–5:30 PM

*Horizontal Idol Conversation* draws on a format derived from exhibition artist **Loren Britton**'s studio practice, centering collaborative knowledge production and learning from multiple perspectives as the primary mode of study. For this program, they will invite people from across disciplines to respond to idols and acts of worship. *Horizontal Idol Conversation* will include guest curator **Emily Colucci**, and exhibition artists Britton, **Caroline Garcia**, **Tiffany Smith**, and other interdisciplinary invited guest collaborators.

*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 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., and Exploring The Arts. In-kind donations are provided by Materials for the Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs/NYC Department of Sanitation/NYC Department of Education.*

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

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