

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

SEPTEMBER 24, 2021 BY ETTY YANIV

Tamara Kostianovsky – Between Wounds and Folds at Smack Mellon

Featured Artist



The artist at Smack Mellon, photo courtesy of Rachel Vera Steinberg

Between Wounds and Folds, Tamara Kostianovsky's solo exhibition at Smack Mellon, features sculptures which link issues of gender-based violence, personal memory, and ecological destruction through consumption into a complex and speculative ecosystem. Her dimensional forms, both soft and brutal, combine discarded fabric with industrial materials, often drawing their shape from mutilated fauna and flora in various states of decay, including tree stumps, cow carcasses, and birds of prey.

Tell me a bit about the genesis of this exhibition.

At the invitation of then-curator Gabriel de Guzman, in 2019 I accepted an offer to exhibit my work at Smack Mellon's 6,000 sq. feet gallery in a large and ambitious solo show, my first exhibition of this scale in NYC. As time went by, I became familiar with the space and started having conversations with the new curator Rachel Vera Steinberg, who took over the position in 2021, and with Smack Mellon's Director Kathleen Gilrain. We decided to plan for four interlocking but independent installations that will be configured to respond to Smack Mellon's unique space, an industrial building built in the 1880s, creating an exhibition that wouldn't just focus on my latest work but would rather present diverse bodies of work simultaneously.



Between Wounds and Folds, installation view



Between Wounds and Folds, installation view

Overall, the sculptures in the exhibition combine discarded fabric with industrial materials to address the increasingly urgent social and ecological concerns of material consumption and waste. I've always felt at ease in the symmetry of the Medieval galleries at the Met Museum, and I kept that configuration in mind when thinking of the exhibition design for this space. Although we've mostly replaced saints with carcasses, we strived to give a sense of religiosity to my sculptures of the flayed body.

One of the installations includes my well-known "Meat" sculpture series that uses my own clothing to visually transform the violence of slaughter in reference to femicides in Latin America. It's refreshing to me to be able to present these works in a completely new configuration compared to previous exhibitions, taking advantage of the triple height of the gallery space. Another installation presents sculptures of "Birds" made from decorative and floral upholstery fabrics that are

mounted on an extremely large wall. I'm excited also to exhibit the floor sculptures of my "Tree Stumps" series, a body of work that I love because they pay homage to my late father by using his clothes as material. And finally, I am introducing a kinetic installation of "Tree-Carcasses", taking shape as rotating, life-size cow carcass cavities that host vignettes of rich vegetation and populated by sculptures of exotic birds.

This exhibition draws together threads from distinct series of works for the first time, offering an alternative to the notion that the only way out of the ecological crisis is through behavioral changes that at times appear punishing. Can we rebuild a new type of ecology using the remnants that material culture leaves behind?



Between Wounds and Folds, installation view

Tamara Kostianovsky was born in Jerusalem, Israel in 1974, and grew up in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her work has been exhibited at El Museo del Barrio, NY; The Jewish Museum, NY; Fuller Craft Museum, MA; Urban Institute for Contemporary Art, MI, and many others. Kostianovsky is the recipient of a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and grants from New York Foundation for the Arts and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Her artwork has been reviewed in publications such as The New York Times, The Boston Globe, WBUR, Art Spiel, El Diario, and Hyperallergic. Kostianovsky graduated from the National School of Fine Arts in Argentina (BFA) and from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA (MFA).

A monograph on the artist's work entitled "Rapacious Beauty" will be published by Hirmer in December of 2021 to coincide with her solo exhibition "Between Wounds and Folds" at Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY.

All photos courtesy of the artist unless otherwise indicated.

**Tamara Kostianovsky , Between Wounds and Folds at Smack Mellon 92
Plymouth Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, September 25 – October 31, 2021**

Opening Reception: Sat. September 25, 4-7PM

**Artist-led Tours: Sat. October 9, 3-4:30PM Book Launch for Tamara
Kostianovsky: Rapacious Beauty (Hirmer Publishers): Wed. November 3,
6:30-8PM (via Zoom) featuring a panel discussion with Gonzalo Casals and
Tatiana Flores Closing Reception: Sun. October 31, 12-6PM**

 **FEATURED ARTIST**

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