

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Close Readings
Exhibition Series

We are pleased to announce the first iteration of the *Close Readings* series. Once per year, Smack Mellon will present a new commission by one under-recognized, early to mid-career artist in Gallery One along with an accompanying exhibition in Gallery Two that uses the central commission as a curatorial framework. This program extends our support for interdisciplinary artists by building conversations around their practices in addition to facilitating the realization of ambitious, site-specific projects.

[Gallery One]

Luba Drozd
The Tenacity of a Fluid Trace

September 24–November 6, 2022

Smack Mellon presents Luba Drozd’s first large scale solo exhibition in New York City in conjunction with the launch of the *Close Readings* exhibition series. In a sprawling installation comprising construction materials—drywall, steel beams, and sheet metal—and motors attached to piano strings and tuned to various frequencies, Drozd uses the tension between these materials to produce a complex sonic landscape that unfolds across the main gallery space. The installation combines natural light with projected animation of false shadows to illuminate various corners while abstracting the building’s unique architecture. Several mimosa pudica plants, commonly known as “sensitive plants,” which respond to physical contact, are also incorporated into the installation, underscoring the tactile nature of the sound produced exclusively through vibrating materials without translation or amplification.

The installation explores links between empathy, humanity, and the primordial composition of the universe through the artist’s deep investigation of matter. It centers sensory experience to consider how humans are flexibly and intuitively connected on a molecular level through the reliance on elements linking terrestrial life to the Moon, planets in the solar system, and, most importantly, each other.

The title of this exhibition refers to the first written account of a volcano’s eruption, documented by Francesco Serao, in which he coined the term “lava.” In this text, Serao probed the properties of molten rock, including its reverberation, density, thermal resistance, and color, to understand the limits of its materiality. Similarly, Drozd’s installation practice has developed over years through deep observation, listening, and coaxing sonic information out of her materials.

[Gallery Two]

The Dissolution caus'd by Fire is in all Bodies

September 24–November 6, 2022

**Artists: Leah Beeferman (with soundtracks by
Byron Westbrook, Olli Aarni, and Bryce Hackford),
Mimi Park, Paul Strand, Charisse Pearlina Weston**

Smack Mellon presents a group exhibition featuring works by Leah Beeferman (with soundtracks by Byron Westbrook, Olli Aarni, and Bryce Hackford), Mimi Park, and Charisse Pearlina Weston, in addition to a photographic print by Paul Strand. This exhibition accompanies a large-scale commission by Luba Drozd in Smack Mellon's main gallery, *The Tenacity of a Fluid Trace*. Both exhibitions take their titles from a historical text written in 1743 by Francesco Serao detailing his observations of Mount Vesuvius shortly after a devastating eruption. It was in this text that Serao coined the term “lava” and pushed for an understanding of volcanic eruptions as a living function of the earth as opposed to fire and brimstone.

This exhibition takes cues from the resonant and material transformations that are present within the sonic, architectural, and abstract forms of Drozd's installation—specifically, how these elements impact bodily experience. Beeferman, Park, and Weston expand on these resonances, asking: what are the physical conditions necessary to establish what we understand to be “alive”? By what means can these conditions be perceived and communicated? And what are the tactile connections between experience and representation? Together they propose nuanced perspectives of physical bodies without explicit representation. Using discarded materials and robotics, representations of palm fronds, landscapes, bodies of water, and architecture, the works are activated by subtle movements and language to become surrogates for bodily empathy. The exhibition's title unites these materialities, serving as a reminder that all things physical, sentient or not, have the capacity to vibrate at a frequency so high that they will, in fact, burn.

Artist Bios:

Luba Drozd (born Lviv, Ukraine, 1982) is an installation artist working with site-specific sound, 3D animation, and sculpture. She is the recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, NYSCA/NYFA Fellowship in Digital and Electronic Arts, MacDowell Fellowship, Yaddo Residency, Millay Colony Residency, Pioneer Works Technology Residency, BRIC Media Arts Fellowship, New Work Grant from Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site. Her installations are commissioned and exhibited at such institutions as Dat Bolwerck, Zutphen, Netherlands, the Hessel Museum of Art, Hudson, NY; Knockdown Center, Queens, NY and Bronx Museum of Art. She will be a recipient of the 2023 Sound Art + Experimental Music residency at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art. She received a BFA from Pratt Institute and an MFA from Bard College.

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Leah Beferman (b. 1982) works with video, digital image-making, text, and sound. She explores what emptiness and density — concepts important in quantum physics, which studies the smallest of scales — mean in landscapes on Earth, at a planetary scale. She has had solo exhibitions at Rawson Projects, New York; Arcade on Stadium, Utah; and Sorbus, Helsinki. Recent two-person or group exhibitions include Helsinki Art Museum, Finland; Fiskars Village Biennial, Finland; Sirius Arts Centre, Ireland; SOLU, Helsinki; The Anderson, Richmond.

Beferman has participated in many residencies, including LMCC Workspace, New York; The Arctic Circle, Svalbard; Tiputini Biodiversity Research Station, Ecuador; ArsBioarctica, Finland; Mustarinda, Finland; Digital Painting Atelier, OCAD, Toronto; and Sirius, Ireland. Her work has been discussed in publications including BOMB, Objektiv, Temporary Art Review, Art in Print, Taupe Magazine, and ArtPulse. In 2016 she published an artist book, *Triple Point*, with Lodret Vandret, Copenhagen. She received an MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and a BA from Brown University and was the recipient of a Fulbright Scholar Grant to Finland (2016–17). Beferman is now based in Providence, where she is an Assistant Professor at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Mimi Park (b. 1996, Seoul, South Korea) is an interdisciplinary artist who makes site specific installations of kinetic sculptures currently living and working in New York. Park primarily takes inspiration from life's various cyclical patterns, which includes microcosms, soft circuitry and beyond in order to build diminutive yet fantastical new worlds. The sensorial realm occupies a central role in her work, as she is interested in the ways that neurodivergent forms of communication can often be misconstrued, something that she has experienced firsthand. She has exhibited internationally, most notably a recent solo show “Dawning: dust, seeds, Coplees” at Lubov Gallery in New York; “High Jump” at New Works Gallery, Chicago; and in the group exhibition “A Drawing: A Secret” at Projektraum145, Berlin. Her work has been featured in publications such as *Art in America*, *The Art Newspaper*, and *Artforum*.

Charisse Pearlina Weston (b. 1988, Houston, TX; lives and works in Brooklyn) is a conceptual artist and writer whose work emerges from deep material investigations of the symbolic and literal curls, layerings, and collapses of space, poetics, and the autobiographical. She deploys the fold, concealment, and repetition within her work as tactics of conceptual abstraction which posit Black interior life as a central site for Black resistance. She holds a BA in Art History from the University of North Texas, a MSc in Modern Art: History, Curating and Criticism from the University of Edinburgh's Edinburgh College of Art and a MFA in Studio Art, with Critical Theory emphasis, from the University of California, Irvine. She is an alumna of the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program (2019-2020).

She has exhibited in group shows at Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (2020), Jack Shainman Gallery's The School (2022), and the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College (2022). She exhibited in solo exhibitions at Abrons Art Center (2020), Project Row Houses (2014, 2015), Recess (2021), and the Moody Center of the Arts at Rice University (2021). She will present her first solo museum exhibition at the Queens Museum in October 2022. She has received awards and fellowships from Artadia Fund for the Arts (Houston, 2015), the Dallas Museum of Art (2014), the Dedalus Foundation (MFA Fellowship,

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2019), the Harpo Foundation (2021) and the Graham Foundation (2021) and the Museum of Art and Design (Artist Fellow, 2021). In 2021, she received the Museum of Art and Design (MAD)'s 2021 Burke Prize. She will be a Fields of the Future Fellow at Bard Graduate School in Fall 2022.

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