

Martha Russo's first solo museum exhibition opens at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art



Martha Russo, *nomos*, 2007, 18 x 10 x 8 feet. Porcelain, wood, Styrofoam, paper, pigment.  
Photo by Oren Eckhaus. Courtesy Claudia Stone Gallery, NYC, and Goodwin Fine Art, Denver, CO and the artist.

**BOULDER, CO.-** *coalescere* brings together 25 years of work by the sculptor and installation artist Martha Russo. The artist's first solo museum exhibition, *coalescere* will explore the progression of Russo's work, highlighting sculptural pieces created over the course of her artistic practice as well as a series of new works and large-scale, site-specific installations.

The exhibition title, which is from the Latin "come together," reflects Russo's interest in bringing together her diverse body of work, allowing visitors to explore the themes and forms that carry throughout her career. The title also speaks to the nature of her newest works, which feature thousands of individual elements pieced together to create unexpected and surprising new forms.

Russo's organic, abstract sculptures and installations push the boundaries of clay. She playfully references a multiplicity of sources and processes, including anatomical, botanical, and oceanic elements, and notions of growth and decay, particularly on a cellular level. Early small-scale, visceral works, such as *chicken* (1994) and *trickle* (2000) shed light on Russo's study of developmental biology and psychology.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is *nomos*, a large-scale, curvilinear installation that Russo has been working on for the past 25 years. Featuring over 20,000 abstracted porcelain tendrils, the work encourages viewers to look closely at the varied forms, textures, and colors. Like many of Russo's works, *nomos* brings to light the artist's interest in creating an experience for the visitor that invites a closer look and deeper exploration, a method at the heart of her studio and exhibition practices. Her most recent work, *lightness of being (settled)* (2016), an ethereal, intricate, monochrome installation, offers an initial impact as a large-scale panorama from afar, and elicits a closer look to observe the many details. As we start to see individual elements of the immersive and initially unrecognizable environment, we find the detritus from our everyday lives—vacuum bags, egg cartons, cardboard, old socks, waffles, burnt toast, among many others—has been encased in porcelain slip. Russo has transformed the materiality of the objects, giving new significance to what might have been thrown away.

*coalescere* ultimately presents a process of discovery for both the viewer and exhibiting artist. The exhibition looks both backward and forward, and most importantly, is a catalyst for defining and shaping Russo's future work.

Martha Russo (b. 1962, Connecticut) earned her BA in developmental biology and psychology from Princeton University in 1985. A world-class athlete, she suffered a career-ending injury in 1984 while vying for a spot on the United States Olympic Field Hockey Team. After recovering from surgery, Russo was attracted to the physical nature of sculpture. She studied studio arts in Florence, Italy in 1983 and continued studying ceramics at Princeton University. In 1995, she earned her MFA at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Russo's work has been exhibited nationally, most recently at The Santa Fe Art Institute, Denver Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and with the Allan Stone Gallery, New York. Through the social and politically based art collective, Artnauts, Russo has shown her 2-dimensional works in 230 exhibitions in 17 countries. Russo lives in the mountains northwest of Boulder, Colorado with her husband and two children. In addition to her studio practice, Russo is currently a Visiting Lecturer at University of Colorado, Boulder and taught Fine Arts at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design in Lakewood, Colorado for 19 years. Russo is represented by the Claudia Stone Gallery in New York and Goodwin Fine Art in Denver.

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