



## Exhibition | Tendrils of Martha Russo Works Invite and Push Away at BMoCA

**BOULDER, Colorado** — Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA) presents *coalescere*, the first museum solo exhibition by abstract sculptor and installation artist [Martha Russo](#). On view March 31–June 12, 2016, *coalescere*, Latin for “come together”, explores the progression of Russo’s work, with sculptural pieces created over the course of the past 25 years, as well as a series of new works and large-scale, site-specific installations.

Russo's organic abstract creations push the boundaries of clay — shattering expectations and denying the realities of their heavy and fragile medium. She says, "I am not interested in the durability of clay but rather in the edge of its existence." Many of the works on view in *coalescere* seem to barely hold on to their materiality, and even to their existence, as they tenuously cling to the walls or crawl along the floor. Her works allude to the fecundity and precariousness of life.



Martha Russo, *phagocytosis*, 2016; porcelain casting slip, paper clay, glaze materials, metal, dragon skin, paint, Styrofoam, paper, acrylics. Photograph by Jeff Wells. Courtesy of the Claudia Stone Gallery and Goodwin Fine Art.

Russo goes on, "I am infinitely interested in the psychology of space and how it conjures up memory, emotion, and the rawness of who we are." The tension between attraction and repulsion is a central and compelling facet of the work, as well as Russo's desire to activate the autonomic nervous system, which is responsible for the "flight or fight mechanism." These investigations permeate the artist's singular sculptural objects and large-scale installations.

*nomos* (2016) is an immersive installation of over 20,000 abstracted porcelain tendrils that quiver and undulate along 47 foot long curvilinear wall. Growing and morphing over the last 25 years, *nomos* beckons the viewer closer while simultaneously pushing them away.

The sculpture *phagocytosis* (2016) is made of thousands of roughly hewn ceramic spheres infused with a plethora of metal elements. The sculpture simultaneously evokes cellular proliferations and the remains of a meteor. The collision and hybridization of natural worlds, both micro and macro, create a dissonance that prolongs the viewer's interactions with the work.

*yon* (2000) is a 16 foot long pale yellow sculpture which slithers and creeps along the floor. The sinuous strand alludes to both interior of the body-intestine, stomach, vein- and to animal and plant worlds- worm, snake, root.



Martha Russo, Installation view ("*Nomos*" and "*Yon*"). Photograph by Jeff Wells.

The pointed obscurity is fertile ground for many intertwining interpretations.

Russo's work has a spirit of experimentation reminiscent of Eva Hesse, the meanderings about the body harken to early Kiki Smith, and a sense of materiality, gravity, and mystery akin to Petah Coyne, Liz Larner, Cornelia Parker.

*coalescere* ultimately presents a process of discovery for both the viewer and exhibiting artist. With all the pieces, whether towering overhead or small enough to fit in a hand, Russo creates the time and space to let the work quietly unfold.

The sculptures and installations allow the viewer to become part of the psychological landscape that range from visceral reaction to curious wonder.

Martha Russo exhibits her sculptures and installations nationally, most recently at the Santa Fe Art Institute, Denver Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and Allan Stone Gallery, New York. In addition to her studio practice, Russo is currently a Visiting Lecturer at University of Colorado, Boulder in the Fine Arts and Mechanical Engineering Departments. She also taught Fine Arts at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design in Lakewood, Colorado for 19 years.

By Bill Rodgers

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