

FUN HOUSE

MADELINE DONAHUE'S FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION IN BOSTON

On view April 22, 2021 through May 23, 2021
313A Harvard Street, Brookline, MA 02446



Artist's Talk: Madeline Donahue with Curator Michelle Millar Fisher

April 26, 2021 at 7 pm ET

Register [here](#) for the Zoom session

(March 22, 2021 -- Brookline, MA) -- How did a working artist mother of a newborn and a pre-schooler manage her studio practice in the year of the Covid pandemic? In *Fun House*, Madeline Donahue's first solo exhibition outside of New York, and the first solo exhibition to concurrently feature her ceramics and painting practices, motherhood is depicted as a topsy-turvy and often humorous contortion of bodies, spaces, and emotions. Praise Shadows Art Gallery, itself a gallery borne from a working mother pivoting during the Covid-era, is thrilled

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to celebrate the complexities and joys of motherhood vis-a-vis Donahue's idiosyncratic style. The exhibition opens on April 22 and closes May 23.

The public is invited to join a talk between the artist and curator Michelle Millar Fisher, the Ronald C. and Anita L. Wornick Curator of Contemporary Decorative Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as well as a co-founder of Designing Motherhood. The event will take place on Zoom on Monday, April 26 at 7 pm EST. Registration is free and available [here](#).

For Donahue, the pandemic hitting in March 2020 created a shift in her practice. The residency program she had started at Artshack Brooklyn, a ceramics studio, was shuttered. Her painting studio building in Bushwick closed. With her young children in tow, she quarantined with in-laws, balancing an art practice with the physical and emotional needs of her children.

Fun House will include 10 paintings and approximately five ceramic works. Her paintings, all oil on canvas, are self-portraits in domestic spaces riddled with elements from life with children. In *Rollercoaster* (2021), seen above, the artist is literally a rollercoaster on which her children ride with exhilaration along the curves of her body. Her exaggerated stance, so wide as to frame the entire width of the painting, creates a foundation of strength, balancing chaos with the confidence of a classical goddess amidst the clutter of the carnival taking place by her feet.



Her ceramics, equally playful, are akin to her paintings in their subject matter, but they employ the material to express the dimensionality of motherhood. In *Jugglers*, seen here, the artist is reclined, *Odalisque*-style. Her body, providing comfort for both her nursing son and sleepy daughter, is literally a vessel and a resting place. This multitasker who seems to be holding it all together -- literally -- is actually supported on the legs of her dog, who is juggling the weight of all three humans with her tongue out in exhaustion or joy, or both. Who is supporting whom in this circus act? How stable, or how precarious, are these moments of care? In one single vignette, so deftly explored on clay, Donahue creates a scene of surrealist humor that lingers on the fantastical, but is always all too real in its emotional heft.

About the artist

Madeline Donahue's work explores the overwhelming absurdity, intimacy, and joy of caring for another person. Her focus is on the surreal reality, physicality and interdependence of the mother and child relationship. Using humor, she addresses the simultaneous existence of the

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abject and sublime. Humor is also present in her bright color palette. The paintings and ceramic sculptures are sometimes small in scale which connect to the intimate nature of her work. She creates each work in one day. Her process is fresh and fluid. The resulting work is reflective of her present moment.

Donahue lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She was born in Houston, TX in 1983 where she regularly visited The Menil Collection, Houston. Its Surrealist and Modernist collection remains influential. She received her MFA at Brooklyn College in 2018, after beginning the program in the company of her six-week-old daughter. She received her BFA from SMFA at Tufts and many of her academic classes took place in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. While making works for *Fun House* she was reading about Kiki Smith, daughter of sculptor David Smith. She is also influenced by Joan Brown, Danielle McKinney, Niki de Saint Phalle, among others.

About Praise Shadows LLC

We believe that the art ecosystem is filled with untapped potential, and our work is rooted in partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship — exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, original concepts that no one has ever tried before. Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a commercial gallery space in the Boston area showing the work of emerging and mid-career artists. It opened in December 2020. Praise Shadows Art Partners advises artists and companies in the creative industries on strategic partnerships and marketing. Our work is local, global, and virtual.

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