



SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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Tara Donovan: Fieldwork

June 14–September 22, 2019 | Opening reception: Thursday, June 13, 7–8:30 pm

Exhibition organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver celebrates the distinctive practice of Tara Donovan



Tara Donovan transforms mundane materials like plastic straws, index cards, rubber bands, Slinkys, and sheets of mylar into elaborate, mind-bending objects for an exhibition presented at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago this summer. On view June 14 to September 22, 2019 *Tara Donovan: Fieldwork* celebrates the American artist's distinctive practice through both large-scale three-dimensional forms that are evocative of the natural world and two-dimensional, wall-based works.

“Tara Donovan has a near magical ability to transform everyday objects and spaces with the monochromatic splendor and sublime formalism of her work. As the Smart continues to imagine new possibilities for the future of university art museums, I am incredibly excited that we are able to share this experience with Chicago, and hope that it inspires us all to see the world around us in thoroughly new ways,” said Alison Gass, Dana Feitler Director of the Smart Museum of Art.

“My pieces are so big that they become expansive fields that you are really moving within. With a lot of these pieces, your peripheral vision is at play when you’re looking at them. They shadow the movement of your body. They are thick but somehow also transparent. So there’s a lot happening when you move around a piece—how that landscape shifts and changes—how it shifts back and forth between architecture and landscape,” said Donovan in an interview last year with exhibition curator Nora Burnett Abrams.

Fieldwork is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, where the exhibition broke institutional attendance records. It features a diverse selection of significant works from Donovan’s career, including sculpture, drawings, works on paper, and site-responsive installations. The exhibition is the first to bring Donovan’s wall-based and freestanding objects together, in order to understand fully how the artist conceptualizes her complex work. Taken together, the approximately fifty works, which

date between 1991 and 2019, demonstrate how order and structure give way to unpredictability and how the mundane cedes to the marvelous.

The opening of the exhibition will be celebrated with a public reception on Thursday, June 13, from 7–8:30 pm. In conjunction with the exhibition, the Smart Museum will present a number of additional free public programs. Additional information about exhibition-related public programming will be posted in the near future at smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/calendar.

A related publication—featuring essays by curator Nora Burnett Abrams and scholars Jenni Sorkin and Guiliana Bruno—further explores ideas related to labor, scale, process and formalism, among other key themes of Donovan’s work. The book, published by the MCA Denver, will be available for \$60 at the Smart Museum.

About the artist

Tara Donovan was born in 1969 in New York City, where she currently lives and works. For the last 20 years, she has created large-scale installations, sculptures and drawings that utilize everyday objects to explore the transformative effects of accumulation and aggregation. Donovan’s many accolades include the prestigious MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2008) and the first annual Calder Prize (2005). For over a decade, numerous museums have mounted solo exhibitions of Donovan’s work, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2007–08), the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2008), the Indianapolis Museum of Art (2010), the Milwaukee Art Museum (2012), the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark (2013), the Parrish Museum, Watermill, NY (2015) and Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh, Scotland (2015). Her work is included in the collections of major institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art, among many others.

About the exhibition

Tara Donovan: Fieldwork is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver and curated by Nora Burnett Abrams, Ellen Bruss Curator and Director of Planning at MCA Denver. The Smart Museum’s presentation is overseen by Alison Gass, Dana Feitler Director, and Jennifer Carty, Associate Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art.

Support for the Smart Museum’s presentation has been provided by Lead Sponsors Mirja and Ted Haffner. Additional support has been provided by the Museum’s SmartPartners.

The exhibition is presented in the Smart Museum’s Robert and Joan Feitler Gallery, Richard and Mary L. Gray Gallery, Janis Kanter and Thomas McCormick Gallery, the Edward A. and Inge Maser Gallery, Joel and Carole Bernstein Gallery, and Eunice Ratner Reception Gallery.

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Images (left to right)

Tara Donovan, *Transplanted*, 2001/2003, Tar paper, dimensions variable, site-specific installation. Photo: Dennis Cowley. Courtesy of the artist and Ace Gallery.

Tara Donovan, *Untitled*, 2014/2015, Styrene index cards, metal, wood, paint and glue, dimensions variable, site-specific installation. Photo: Ron Blunt. Courtesy of the artist and Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Installation view, *Fieldwork*, MCA Denver, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Pace Gallery. Photo: Wes Magyar.

About the Smart Museum of Art

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming. The Smart first opened in 1974. Admission is always free.

Mission

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago opens the world through art and ideas.

Smart Museum of Art

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Hours

Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–5 pm

Thursday evenings until 8 pm

Galleries are closed Mondays and holidays.

Admission is always free. All are welcome.