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Boulder Museum of
Contemporary Art

1750 13th Street
Boulder, Colorado 80302
303.443.2122

BMOCA.org

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National media contact: Abby Margulies, abzymargulies@gmail.com
Local and regional media contact: Jordan Robbins, 303.443.2122,
jordan@bmoca.org

Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art Announces Solo Exhibition by Martha Russo

coalescere brings together 25 years of work by the Sculptor and Installation Artist

Spring 2016 Exhibition
March 31-June 12, 2016

Boulder, CO - Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMOCA) announces *coalescere*, the first museum solo exhibition by abstract sculptor and installation artist Martha Russo. On view March 31-June 12, 2016, *coalescere* will explore 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.

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 oeuvre. 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 not only push the boundaries of clay but also clearly illustrate how integral the materiality of the ceramic process is to her conceptual practice. She playfully references a multiplicity of sources and processes, including anatomical, botanical, and oceanic elements, the biomorphic forms of Antoni Gaudi's process, and notions about the cycle of burgeoning and decay on a cellular level. The works on view bring to light Russo's interest in creating sculptures and installations that invite the visitor to look closely and explore, a process that is at the heart of her studio and exhibition practices.

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. By providing the viewer with reference points that are nearly recognizable, yet just beyond identification, the artist invites a closer engagement with the work.

Rather than providing a chronological cataloguing of Russo's work, *coalescere* will feature new and old works interspersed throughout the galleries, drawing attention to seminal turning points in her artistic evolution. Early small-scale, visceral works, such as *chicken* (1994) and *trickle* (2000) shed light on her study of developmental biology and

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psychology. These works directly reference internal and external body parts and invite quiet, internal reflection. A new sculpture, *phagocytosis* (2016) is a conglomeration of thousands of different sized 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 works.

Russo's *lightness of being (settled)* (2016), an ethereal, intricate, monochrome installation, invites viewers to first take in its impact as a large-scale panorama from afar, before stepping closer to observe the details and the many facets that compose the environment. The individual elements start with the detritus from our everyday lives, such as vacuum cleaner bags, egg cartons, cardboard packing materials, old socks, waffles, and burnt toast, among many others. Russo encases each item in porcelain slip thus giving another life to the object. With these materials, she creates immersive and initially unrecognizable environments, encouraging audiences of all ages to think outside of their traditional linguistic framework.

coalescere ultimately presents a process of discovery for both the viewer and exhibiting artist. Russo is re-encountering past works both psychologically and physically, as many of the works require painstaking installation and new considerations in the context of the exhibition space and BMOCA's historic landmark building. The exhibition looks both backward and forward, and most importantly, is a catalyst for defining and shaping Russo's future work.

Catalog

BMOCA will publish a catalog documenting *Martha Russo: coalescere*. The catalog will include essays by Jeffrey Spahn and Linda Weintraub and an interview with Martha Russo by BMOCA Curator Mardee Goff.

About Martha Russo

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 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. In addition to her studio practice, Russo is currently a Visiting Lecturer at University of Colorado, Boulder and has taught Fine Arts at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design in Lakewood, Colorado for 19 years.

Martha Russo (b. 1962, Connecticut) earned a Bachelor of Arts degree 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 Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She lives in the mountains northwest of Boulder, Colorado with her husband and two children.

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Russo is represented by the Claudia Stone Gallery in New York and Goodwin Fine Art in Denver.

About BMOCA

The mission of Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMOCA) is to be a catalyst for creative experiences through the exploration of significant art of our time. As a non-collecting institution, BMOCA presents rotating exhibitions and programs that stimulate active participation in the global dialog about contemporary art. In 2015, BMOCA celebrates its 43rd year as cultural cornerstone of its community. By presenting the work of international artists, including Anibal Catalan (Mexico), Beverly McIver (US), Henrique Oliveira (Brazil), Amanda Marie Ploegsma (US), and Daniel Pitin (Czech Republic), among many others, BMOCA has garnered critical praise for its thought-provoking exhibitions and programs.

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