

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Bound up Together: On the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment***

**Curated by Rachel Gugelberger**

**October 3–December 13, 2020**

Exhibition First Day: Saturday, October 3rd, timed entry required, check

[www.smackmellon.org](http://www.smackmellon.org) for more information

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**Natalia Almonte, Donna Bassin, Cristina Biaggi, Zoë Buckman, Indira Cesarine, Vladimir Cybil Charlier, Maya Ciarrocchi, Adinah Dancyger & Mykki Blanco, Mary Dwyer, GOODW.Y.N, Alicia Grullón, Clareese Hill, Debora Hirsch and Iaia Filiberti, Julia Justo, Symone Knox, LuLu LoLo, Katrina Majkut, Elizabeth Moran, Ameya Okamoto, Andrea Ray, Shellyne Rodriguez, Yvonne Shortt, Valerie Suter, and Stephanie J. Woods**



Image: Stephanie J. Woods, *When the Hunted Become the Hunters* (still), 2020, moving audio photograph, 07:39 min. Courtesy of the artist.

Smack Mellon is pleased to present *Bound up Together*, a group exhibition and programs organized on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

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The exhibition title borrows from a speech by abolitionist, suffragist, writer and teacher Frances Ellen Watkins Harper delivered in 1866 at the 11th National Women's Rights Convention in New York. "We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity," she said, "and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul."



Video Still: *I Want a Dyke for President*.  
Director/Image: Adinah Dancyger. Camera/sound assistant:  
Alice Plati. Talent: Mykki Blanco. Poem: "I want a dyke for  
president" by Zoe Leonard. Hair and make up: Raisa Flowers.  
Commissioned by Dazed Digital. Copyright 2016

Organized in the months leading up to the 2020 presidential election, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests across the country, *Bound up Together* centers on the achievements that granted some women the right to vote and the pervasive and enduring sexism, misogyny and racism that disfigures American culture and society. Moving between a mythologized past and an uncertain future, the exhibition highlights myriad ways in which women's experiences and interdependent histories

are entangled with the very structures that deny intersectional nuances and complexities. The exhibition presents video, installation, works on paper, painting, photography, sculpture, sound, performance, and participatory programs that represent the likenesses, voices, memories, and collective experiences of countless women and their communities in works that honor, agitate, and imagine new possibilities.

At the center of *Bound up Together* is a portrait wall honoring a spectrum of women—Biblical figures, suffragists, unsung women who paved the way, activists, artists and local organizers—forming an incomplete archive of intersectional identities. While the 1920 ratification of the 19th Amendment in theory secured women the right to vote, the Amendment has proven insufficient for many women whose equality has been denied them due to their race, ethnicity, and class. African American women, for example, were faced with a number of barriers targeted at them, including taxes and literacy tests, and Chinese American women could not vote until 1943 because of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Voter suppression continues today in more nuanced forms. **Indira Cesarine's** portraits in neon and in painting portray acclaimed suffragists; **Mary Dwyer's** paintings focus on suffragists who simultaneously worked as abolitionists and journalists; and **Valerie Suter's** paintings depict women who

have run for the U.S. presidency. **Maya Ciarrocchi**'s Biblical and mythological figures superimposed over maps of contested geographies portray symbols of survival and vengeance, and the archetypes of **Vladimir Cybil Charlier** draw from African-derived religions from Candomblé to Vodou to represent a pantheon connecting Caribbean and African American identities.

Speaking directly to the absence of monuments to women, works by **Christine Biaggi**, **Julia Justo**, and **LuLu LoLo** conceive of monuments by and for the people. Where Biaggi's altarpiece replaces holy personages with historical imagery of women protesting for human rights, Justo's participatory altar honors the transgender gay rights activist Marsha P. Johnson. LuLu LoLo revisits her 2015 public art performance *Where are the Women?*, when, as Joan of Arc, she collected nominations from

passersby for monuments of women in New York, highlighting a longstanding gender and race imbalance: There are currently only six statues of historic women in NYC; the majority of them are white. **Yvonne Shortt** captures the faces of women of color from her community and from the streets in the *African American Marbleization* series of white marble bust sculptures intended to be installed guerilla-style in public spaces.

Agitation and protest are manifest in the courageous acts and everyday activism that undergird many of the storylines running through the exhibition. As we approach the 2020 presidential election, among the urgent issues still driving political debate are voting rights, immigrant rights, gender bias, access to reproductive health care, essential services, and institutional racism, many of which encourage a reevaluation of what it means to be "American." In the photography series *Here We Are*, **Donna Bassin** invited women to collaborate on portraits that represent individual experiences that insist on agency in the face of our crisis of democracy and constitutional law. The drawings of **Shellyne Rodriguez**, many of which were made during the COVID-19 pandemic, depict psychic spaces inhabited by Bronx community members engaged in strategies of survival, the labor of "essential work," and organized activism. Through digital downloads of political art and graphics created in partnership with Don't Shoot Portland and Black Lives Matter Greater NY, **Ameya Okamoto**'s work lives at



Donna Bassin, *My Own Witness. Tracy.5*, 2020, digital photograph, archival pigment print, 24" x 36". Courtesy of the artist.

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the intersection of art and social justice. For the exhibition, she is creating digital prints centered on her Asian heritage, colonization, and women's labor.

Accompanied by activist resources, **Katrina Majkut's** text-based cross-stitch kits bring awareness to both voter equality and reproductive rights. Also rooted in a history of traditional craft practices, **Zoë Buckman's** politically-charged, readymade sculptures with embroidered details respond to the ongoing attacks



Zoë Buckman, *The Oxford*, 2016, From the series *Mostly It's Just Uncomfortable*, antique gynecological chair upholstered with vintage lingerie, Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

on Planned Parenthood, access to reproductive health care, and the right to choose. The efficacy of activism, endurance and debate as change-making tools is captured in the documentary footage of **Alicia Grullón's** 2016 reenactment of Senator Wendy Davis' 13-hour filibuster to deny anti-abortion legislation.

The advances of birth control and gynecological oncology are inexorably linked to a history of scientific experimentation intertwined with eugenics and colonialism. In the video installation *Un día como hoy (A day like today)*, **Natalia Almonte** shares her grandmother's story to shed light on the U.S. exploitation of Puerto Rican women for nonconsensual and hazardous clinical trials of the first U.S. birth control pill in the 1950s. In July, Planned Parenthood of Greater New York announced the removal of Margaret Sanger, the legendary American birth control activist, from their Manhattan clinic's name, due to her support of

eugenics. **Debora Hirsch** and **Iaia Filiberti** elaborate on racism in medicine through the story of Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman whose line of cancer cells were obtained without her knowledge, in an installation of scientific papers that suppress the provenance of Lacks' "immortal cells."

Reflecting on the ways in which white heteronormativity is positioned as the default of American culture, testimonies and archival research underscore the connection between gender and racial inequality deeply rooted within social and political power relationships. The impact of

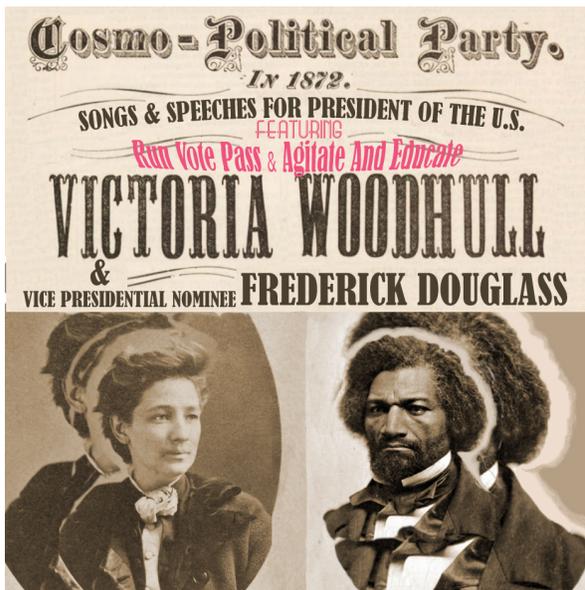


Katrina Majkut, *Voter Registration Card DIY Counted Cross-Stitch Kit*, 2020, paper thread needle, signed instructions, Aida cloth in plastic bag, 8 1/2" x 11", Courtesy of the artist.

negative imagery on the development of young Black lives is narrated in **Symone Knox**'s single-shot film of her 15-year-old sister addressing her transition to self-love through her natural hair journey. In the video *When the Hunted Become the Hunters*, artist **Stephanie J. Woods** is featured in her childhood hometown in North Carolina in a performance set during the 4th of July, shielded in camouflage and a satin bonnet of a lavender-dyed American flag embellished with the text "The Right To Life." A deliberate play on the "Right to life" mantra of the anti-abortion movement, the text personifies the reality of feeling at war in a country built on the free labor of her enslaved Black ancestors.

The re-contextualization of past texts offers critical re-examinations of what may often be considered self-evident. In her ongoing historical research on the first fact checkers—women who worked for *Time* magazine—**Elizabeth Moran**'s prints focus on women's columns introduced to the magazine shortly after the passing of the 19th Amendment. Separated from the "Immigration" and "Negroes" columns, intersectional experiences are denied by page design and editing. In the 2016 video *I Want a Dyke for President*, directed by **Adinah Dancyger**, genderqueer, HIV-positive performance artist and rapper **Mykki Blanco** recites activist Zoe Leonard's poem "*I Want a President*," written in the midst of the 1992 presidential election when poet and activist Eileen Myles ran as

an "openly female candidate." Particularly relevant again, as we approach the 2020 presidential election, the video suggests socioeconomic and political disempowerment as a valid starting point for a president. In *The Sound of Women's Rights*, consisting of audio from women's marches of the 1970s and 2017, and in an installation of aspirational and textual LP album covers, **Andrea Ray** approaches gender through a lens that interrogates tradition, custom and law, raising a question that appears in her writing: "How can gender equality be achieved when our local, state, and governmental representatives do not represent our intersectional selves?"



Andrea Ray, *Woodhull and Douglass*, 2020, from *Aspirational LP Series*, digital print on vinyl adhered to album cover stock, Edition 1 of 5, 12" x 12". Courtesy of the artist.

Rooted in history and storytelling, *Bound up Together* reflects on the ongoing struggle for intersectional human rights through citations that embody the political argument that the "personal is political." Referencing historical moments as well individual and collective acts of protest, the works in *Bound up Together* touch on many of the antecedents that

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reverberate in our current political moment, activating spaces in between for remembering women and their histories.

## CURATOR BIO

**Rachel Raphaela Gugelberger** is a New York-based curator with a focus on place-based practices around social, cultural, and civic issues. Projects include *(after)care*, a site-specific exhibition in a former emergency waiting room at Kings County Hospital in East Flatbush, Brooklyn; the inaugural *Southeast Queens Biennial*; and *Jameco Exchange*, a site-responsive exhibition and socially engaged education platform in a vacant storefront in Jamaica, Queens. Exhibitions at the intersection of information, data and art include: *Once Upon a Time There was the End*, The Center for Book Arts, New York, NY; *Data Deluge*, Ballroom Marfa, TX; and *Library Science*, Artspace, New Haven, CT. Gugelberger is currently Residency Program Director & Curator of Programs at Residency Unlimited. She is a former curator at No Longer Empty (NLE), a non-profit that curated site-responsive and community-centered exhibitions, education and programs in unique spaces, where she was also director of the NLE Curatorial Lab. Gugelberger has also served as a curator at Exit Art, and as co-director of Sara Meltzer Gallery.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

### WORKSHOP AND PUBLIC READING

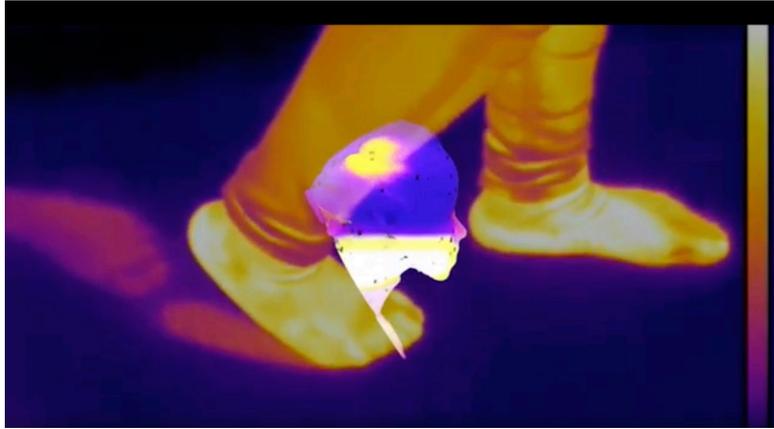
**Thursday, October 8, 6–8 PM and Saturday, October 17, 2–6 PM**

In this two-part program, join exhibiting artist **Maya Ciarrocchi** for *A Remedy for Constitutional Crisis*, a participatory reexamination of the U.S. Constitution. On **October 8th**, the artist will lead an introductory prelude, in which visitors are invited to an intimate round-table gathering within the context of the exhibition to read from Pocket Constitutions provided by the artist, to discuss the laws and rights the Constitution outlines, and to write down their own personal amendments. On **October 17**, Ciarrocchi will organize a public performance reading of the U.S. Constitution. In anticipation of the 2020 presidential election, participants are invited to assemble outside Smack Mellon to read from the Constitution in various languages, hold long table discussions on the importance of a written constitution, and write amendments that imagine a more meaningful and accessible constitution.

### PERFORMANCE

**Sunday, November 8, 2–6 PM**

**GOODW.Y.N** (formerly known as Nicole Goodwin) presents a situation-specific durational performance, *Ain't I a Woman (?/!)*, honoring the stories of invisibilized women on whose backs the women's suffrage movement was built, and who dedicated their lives to the struggle for freedom and inclusion denied them.



Clareese Hill, *Negritude, Hood, Feminism, and Poetics as a Survival Praxis*, 2020, image still from performance lecture. Courtesy of the artist.

**PERFORMANCE  
LECTURE**

**Saturday, November  
21, 4–6 PM**

In the experimental performance lecture *Negritude, Hood Feminism, and Poetics as a Survival Praxis*, **Clareese Hill** combines practice-based research and time-based media to interrogate white hegemony and the failings of the

mainstream feminist movement, reimagining Blackness in a “dimension where identity can go to rest.”

**EXHIBITION TOUR**

**Saturday, December 12, 1 PM**

Guest curator **Rachel Gugelberger** will lead a tour of *Bound Up Together: On the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment*, along with exhibition artists **LuLu LoLo**, **Shellyne Rodriguez** and **Yvonne Shortt**.



Shellyne Rodriguez, *The Debrief (Tres & Dalaeja)*, 2020, color pencil on paper, 19" x 22". Courtesy of the artist.

*This exhibition is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, New York City Council Member Stephen Levin, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and with generous support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Robert Lehman Foundation, Iorio Charitable Foundation, Select Equity Group Foundation, many individuals and Smack Mellon's Members.*

*Smack Mellon's programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and with generous support from The Edward and Sally Van Lier*

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