

HESSE FLATOW

Madeline Donahue: *Strange Magic*

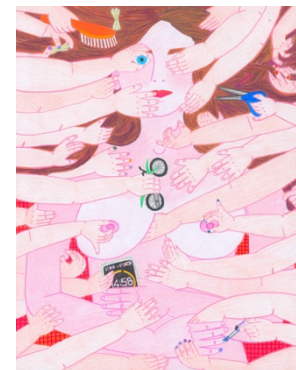
October 6 – November 5, 2022

Opening reception: October 6, 6-8pm

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HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce the opening of *Strange Magic* an exhibition by the Brooklyn-based artist Madeline Donahue, marking her first solo-presentation with the gallery.

Part innate sensibility, part acquired skill – *strange magic* is one way to describe the extraordinary power wielded to achieve countless feats of parenting. Like gifted magicians, parents often assume the role of entertainer, charming their infant audiences through tactics of surprise and diversion, all the while ensuring an environment of safety and amusement. It is within this theatrical framework that Madeline Donahue explores the performative arcs of motherhood, from its embarrassing flops to its resounding joys.



In *Strange Magic*, Donahue presents paintings, drawings, and ceramics that portray scenes at home over the course of a seemingly ordinary day; yet circumstances can turn at any moment. Single-handedly extinguishing fires while simultaneously painting and cradling her toddler, Donahue demonstrates the remarkable complexity of the demands of motherhood. In a bizarre twist of events, she later appears before her children strapped at the center of a carnivalesque, knife-throwing wheel, struggling to keep sharp objects at bay. It is in her next act, where she miraculously levitates under a black cloth, that the illusion of her supernatural abilities is dispelled. As the audience witnesses her children propping her body upwards, a shift in the power dynamic becomes apparent. Suddenly, it is the artist who seems under a spell, as she allows herself to be poked and prodded by tiny hands. This unequivocal bond between mother and child is at the heart of Donahue's works, prescribing a way of being that, at times, can be contrary to logic and reason, but is certainly the stuff of a *strange magic*.

Madeline Donahue (b. 1983, Houston, TX) makes paintings, drawings and ceramics that center on her experiences of pregnancy, birth, motherhood, and owning a postpartum body. Her practice focuses on the surreal reality, physicality, emotionality and interdependence of these experiences. Intimacy is at the core of all of her work, addressing the simultaneous existence of abject and sublime facets implicit in the relationship with her children and body. These explorations detail these experiences – working through the isolation, fatigue, failure, anxiety, and joys of parenting.

Donahue's solo exhibitions include *Live Wire*, Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami; *Fun House*, Praise Shadows Gallery, Boston; and *Attachments*, Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects, New York. She has exhibited extensively across the US and UK including Johansson Projects (Oakland, CA), Lauren Powell Projects (Los Angeles, CA), HESSE FLATOW (New York, NY), Deanna Evans Projects (Brooklyn, NY), and the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA). Residencies include The Wassaic Project, Byrdcliffe Artist Colony, Artshack Ceramic Residency, and Interlude Artist's Residency in Livingston, NY. Donahue's work has been reviewed in the *Guardian*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Elephant Magazine*. Interviews include Sound + Vision Podcast, I Like Your Work Podcast, and Artist Mother Podcast. She recently participated in "A Conversation on Alice Neel, Art, and Motherhood" facilitated by Lauren Palmor, assistant curator of American art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Donahue holds a BFA from The School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University (Boston, MA) and MFA from Brooklyn College (Brooklyn, NY).

Image: Madeline Donahue, *Over-Touched 15 Minute Nap*, 2022, color pencil on paper, 14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)