

RITUALS OF SPHINX AND LAMASSU • AN EXHIBITION BY GALIA LINN AND ELENA STONAKER •
SEPTEMBER 17TH – OCTOBER 29TH, 2016

Museum as Retail Space (MaRS) is pleased to present "Rituals of Sphinx and Lamassu" by Galia Linn and Elena Stonaker, a dual exhibition.

Exhibition text by Catherine Wagley:

"Ecstasy is the contemplation of wholeness," writes Terence McKenna in *Archaic Revival*, a book artists Galia Linn and Elena Stonaker introduced me to in the same conversation in which they spoke about earth, fire, water and air. Linn, who refers to her fierce, bodily ceramic sculptures as relics, works with earth and fire, sending clay forms into a kiln. Stonaker is more interested in ephemeral, dangling, flowing gestures, weaving together fabrics and using her installations as sets or costumes for performances. She would bring the air and water to their dynamic, she told Linn early on.

In the two months leading up to "Rituals of Sphinx and Lamassu," the first show either artist has had at MaRS gallery and their first show together, the two shared studio space. Stonaker's works in-progress were suspended amidst Linn's sculptures, which sat on the concrete floor or on tables. Seeing their work in tandem was a good reminder that formal and tactile similarities are not always the best markers of affinity. In this case, their differences seemed to amplify their compatibility, which has more to do with what they're searching for through the work than which materials they use.

Stonaker and Linn both speak of "going to the root of things," interests in the Neolithic, deconstruction, Pataphysics and pre-lingual states all informing their work. In discussing feminism, they reference excavation and deconstruction, finding a kind of strength that doesn't stem from competition and capital accumulation. Their objects -- vessels both inviting and dangerous to the touch, or tapestries with sensual dimensions that tell intuitive stories -- serve almost as tools, made to make aware living more possible. "We think of these as objects of ritual," Linn said, of what she and Stonaker make.

It was important that this exhibition become a tangible place with depth and grit, a site that could only really be understood in person. Linn and Stonaker arranged the work in an effort to achieve this: Linn's horn on a plinth greeting viewers; Stonaker's suspended, tapestry-like clouds surrounding a family of the vessels Linn refers to as mama and sperm eggs; black guardian sculptures by Linn in a circle near the window; Stonaker's spider woman filling a small side gallery.

In the middle, the two artists assembled a bedroom for dreaming and in-progress ideas. Two unfinished guardians by Linn stand behind Stonaker's bead-covered bed. A rare painting by Linn hangs on one wall, while Stonaker's self-portrait leans in a corner. They'd planned this middle room for a while. It would be the show's charged, vulnerable center, emphasizing the power that comes from surrendering to the process. More power still comes from surrendering alongside someone different, who also wants to break through into a dimension less confined by existing paradigms, where history isn't linear and ancient rituals bleed into present ones.