

## About the Artist:



**Jessie Mott** is a Chicago-based visual artist working primarily in drawing and painting. Although she is best known for her watercolors of hybrid animal creatures, she also works in abstraction and has created work in clay. Her collaborative animations with the artist and writer Steve Reinke have been screened widely at national and international venues, including the International Film Festival Rotterdam, VIDEOEX International Experimental Film & Video Festival in Zürich, and the International Short Film Festival in Oberhausen, Germany, and the 2014 Whitney Biennial. She has participated in prestigious group and solo shows including evening projects + editions and Hyde Park Art Center's 2010 edition of Ground Floor, which highlights the

most talented artists coming out of Chicago's MFA programs. Mott received an MFA in the department of Art Theory & Practice from Northwestern University and a BS in Studio Art from New York University. She is a current MSW candidate from Loyola University's School of Social Work and 2016-2017 Fellow with Field Trip / Field Notes / Field Guide, a trans-disciplinary consortium from The University of Chicago (UChicago), The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), and Northwestern University.

### Super Sunday Exhibition Reception

Sunday, February 26

2:00 - 5:00 pm

Meet the artist and celebrate Jessie Mott: *A Wish to Repair* along with concurrent exhibitions.

Text by Allison Peters Quinn. Photography by Jessie Mott, unless noted otherwise.

The artworks on view are available for purchase through Hyde Park Art Center. Pricelists are located in a binder at the front desk. If interested, contact [exhibitions@hydeparkart.org](mailto:exhibitions@hydeparkart.org).

## Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 [www.hydeparkart.org](http://www.hydeparkart.org). Hyde Park Art Center is a unique resource that advances contemporary visual art in Chicago by connecting artists and communities in unexpected ways. The Art Center is funded in part by the: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harpo Foundation; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; Polk Bros. Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of people like you.

# Jessie Mott: *A Wish to Repair*

Gallery 5  
January 22 - April 23, 2017



*Defender of Animals*, 2015, Ink, colored pencil, and gouache on paper, 36 x 24 inches.

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Jessie Mott once referred to her work as abject fairy tales. A dark sense of childlike innocence emerges from in the work in a manner playfully poised between Brothers Grimm and Walt Disney, offering an alternate form of storytelling for this moment. In a contemporary climate dominated by fake facts and false claims, Mott's vibrantly strange figures invite escape to a parallel universe where we have the opportunity to consider the essential truths that exists deep inside our core.

*A Wish to Repair* debuts Jessie Mott's lively exploration into large-scale spray painted wall and canvas works in addition to a selection of 65 works on paper, several small clay busts and sculptures, and a new animation made with frequent collaborator, video artist and writer, Steve Reinke. Although most of the paintings in this exhibition were made during the past year, Mott has been assembling her prolific cast of figures in a variety of media for nearly a decade. Her artistic influences come from a wide range of women artists varying in style, generation, and medium, all examining sexuality and power including Louise Bourgeois, Dorothy Iannone, Maria Lassnig, Marisa Merz, Annette Messenger, and Carol Rama. Mott's use of geometric designs and bright contrasting colors reveal the stylistic influence of Chicago-based painter, Judy Ledgerwood, Mott's professor and mentor. Other inspirations for Mott's artwork come from erotic Japanese Shunga painting, the pop diva Madonna, mammal images in books and magazines, and human psychology.



*June*, 2016, Ink, colored pencil, and gouache on paper, 16 x 12 inches.

Each animal Mott creates is a unique variation in color, posture, expression, and patterning. Her process is automatic; she draws or paints directly on the paper or wall without sketching the composition first and as a result, the figures embody spontaneity. Mott has mentioned this process as a form of muscle memory from the years of sketching figures from her childhood nightmares and dreams, coupled with the study of nature and animal form. With little exception, the paintings are vertically oriented on the paper to emphasize portraiture and personify the figure. The animals float on a white ground, solitary in a vacuum of time and space (even if it is one body with two heads) to allow for the viewer to imagine conversations, quarrels, or romances between the figures in another realm beyond the paper or canvas.

In the video, *Eat Your Secrets*, Reinke entrances us with an animated peek into these fantastical conversations and relationships. Animals jiggle and slip past each other while talking in absurdist and melancholic non sequiturs (scripted by Mott with quotes taken from her journal entries) interrupted by musical interludes of

S.E.X. by Madonna. Individually, the characters in the exhibition reflect a curious, spirited, and self-absorbed quality. When placed together, the impact of their collective stare feels confrontational and at the same time exposes their vulnerability. Neon pink female genitalia adorn most of the bodies suggesting Mott's world as a matriarchy. Yet, with titles like *Lazlo*, *Peter* and *Herman*, in addition to several bodies that represent intersex genitalia or have pink sacs that appear more like scrotum, it is clear that gender is as fluid as the postures the animals perform.

The hybrid creatures in the artwork share patterns and symbols found in ancient cultures and ground the animals in archetype. One of Mott's most drawn figures, the humanbreast-chested llama-like figure (as seen in *Sasha*, *Mallory*, and *Lauren*), bears resemblance to the iconic artifact, *Lupa Capitolina*. The sculpture of a she-wolf with a long disproportionate neck and four rows of teats nursing Romulus and Remus symbolize the mythical origins story of Roman civilization. Perhaps Mott's invented human/beasts propose totems to reconnect us to a mindful or spiritual origin as well.

Other more universal symbols include the Eye of Providence (eye inside a triangle) seen in *Hector and the Janus* (two-headed figure) depicted in *Ursus and Victor*. Both of these symbols exist throughout centuries, religions, and geography and insinuate a sweet and sinister nature. The all-seeing eye is a reminder of God's power to destroy and protect, while the two-faced figure connotes deception as well as hopefulness for the future inspired by lessons learned from the past. Doubling, especially in the eyes, is common in Mott's work, and perhaps points to a Double Consciousness (borrowing from W.E.B. DuBois) adapted to the LGBTQ narrative to endure a growing conservative American agenda. Mott appropriates the mystical symbols for their contradictions and their universality to further construct that in-between space to find safety and acceptance.

Witnessing sexuality and gender expression this unapologetically raw, exposed, and mutable in any form is intimidating and seductive-even liberating. These carnal beings occupy a parallel universe living within Mott as a coping strategy and offer an escape from rigid contemporary social constructs of gender, sex, race, and class that prevent our true self to emerge. By entering the (under)world Mott creates in her paintings, sculptures and video, we face the unconscious passions, cravings, fears, and restraints that make up the human dilemma stirred by a desire to belong.



*Lupa Capitolina*, 5th Century B.C. (wolf) and 15th Century (twins), bronze, 30 x 45 inches, image provided by Musei Capitolini, Rome, Italy.