

**Deana Lawson
and Dru Donovan**

April 19 - May 25, 2019

Opening reception:

April 19, 2019, 5-7:30 pm



Deana Lawson, *Communion*, 2017; Dru Donovan, *Liberty Pose* [still], 2017

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is pleased to present new and recent work by Deana Lawson and Dru Donovan. Through still and moving images of intertwined bodies, the artists engage in a visual dialogue centered on the gestures of intimacy, depicting negotiations of strength, power, and care. This is the gallery's third exhibition with Deana Lawson (Brooklyn, NY), and its first with Dru Donovan (Portland, OR).

Lawson's photographs connect body and ritual, blurring the boundaries between documentary scenes and staged portraits. Her works on view include *Cascade*, wherein a woman's contorted body contrasts the cool composure of her gaze; *The Beginning*, a visceral depiction of a baby's first moments in the world as her mother collapses from exhaustion; *Communion*, in which a trinity of women engage in an age-old grooming practice; and *Dance Hall Concert*, which captures a scene of lust and physicality in a celebratory public space. Also on view is *Shadonna*, whose subject exudes the self-possession that is characteristic of Lawson's work.

Donovan's black-and-white images distill moments of collective motion wherein force and care cannot be separated. Athletes knit arms to form a scrum; two pairs of hands hover over a paper towel, one gently holding the other; clinging to a mother's breast, an infant mirrors her body. Meanwhile in the video *Liberty Pose*, a formation of tangled arms supports a cheerleader's foot, balanced in precarious stasis; a play between strength and exhaustion is locked in perpetuity by the endlessly looped installation.

Together, Lawson and Donovan cast our gaze on the complexities of female intimacy on their own terms. At the heart of both artists' work is the notion of strength: where it comes from, how we project it, what it lends, and what it costs. Like the bodies they depict, the images in the exhibition converge into an offering.

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Deana Lawson (b. 1979 Rochester, NY) received her MFA in Photography from RISD in 2004. Her work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Art Institute of Chicago, Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, Brooklyn Museum of Art, MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, Underground Museum in Los Angeles, Studio Museum in Harlem, KIT Museum in Dusseldorf Germany, Light Work Gallery in Syracuse, New York, Cohan & Leslie

Gallery in New York, Artists Space in New York, Print Center in Philadelphia, and Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta. Lawson is the recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, Art Matters Grant, John Gutmann Photography Fellowship, Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant, Aaron Siskind Fellowship Grant, and a NYFA Grant in 2006. Her work has been published in *TIME Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *California Sunday Magazine*, *The Collector's Guide to New Art Photography Vol. 2*, *Time Out New York*, *Contact Sheet #154*, and *PQ Journal for Contemporary Photography*. Lawson currently teaches photography and video at Princeton University and resides in Brooklyn, NY.

Dru Donovan (b. 1981, St. Paul, MN) received a BFA from California College of the Arts in 2004 and an MFA from Yale School of Art in 2009. Donovan's work has shown nationally and internationally at venues including the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland, the 2010 California Biennial at the Orange County Museum of Art, Santa Ana, CA, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York, Hap Gallery, Portland, and Philadelphia Photo Arts Center. Donovan's photographs have been published in *Aperture Magazine*, *Blind Spot*, *Picture Magazine*, and *Matte Magazine*. In 2011 TBW Books published her first book, *Lifting Water*. In 2011-2012 she participated in the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace studio residency. Awards received include the John Gutmann Photography Fellowship in 2015 and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 2016. Donovan currently teaches photography at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR, where she lives and works.