

BMOCA



Summer 2022 Present Box

Claire Ashley:
Plump, Pucker, Squish

August 11 - August 28, 2022

Claire Ashley: *Plump, Pucker, Squish*

Claire Ashley's vibrant inflatables embrace and amplify the slippery, blurred lines between painting, sculpture, installation, and performance. On the surface, her monumentally scaled inflatables are soaked in abstract painting, covered by an exhaustive palette of neon hues. Her acidic, bold colors reference pop culture and greet the viewer with an infectious sense of joy that cannot be ignored. Ashley reaches beyond the discipline of painting in her practice, extending flat mark making into the physical, tangible, three-dimensional realm. She works on PVC-coated ripstop nylon, which allows the "painting" to then be manipulated and reconfigured into an amorphous, undefinable form that feels recognizable yet uncannily abstract.

Plump, Pucker, Squish devours BMOCA's Present Box from the inside out, occupying the space like an invasive (but beautiful) weed. The works on view appear to grow and expand upwards from the floorboards, filling every nook and cranny of the museum's lobby and front entrance. Each bulbous form is set to a timer attached to a fan, causing the works to slowly inflate and deflate every 15 to 20 minutes. This causes shifts in how viewers can navigate around the works, challenging our sense of perception and raising questions about how the work can be read and experienced throughout multiple stages of its "life."

Playfully titling her site-specific installation *Plump, Pucker, Squish*, Ashley riffs off of the imagined sounds that her objects might make. Her language references onomatopoeia—the use of a word that sounds like the noise it describes, such as clap, zap, or pitter-patter. She considers what visceral, audible sounds her works might make if they could. Their marshmallow-like plumpness suggests a reference to large bodies squishing up against one another, with loving, smoochy, and affectionate puckers. There is joy, humor, and downright absurdity in Ashley's work and the artist embraces every second of it.

With their skin-like surfaces and soft, pudgy forms in a consistent state of flux, Ashley's inflatables beg for physical engagement. The artist will collaborate with a local dance company to provide novice dancers with the opportunity to remove the inflatables from Present Box and activate them in Central Park, across the street from BMOCA. The dancers' physical engagement with the works fuse Ashley's painting and sculptural practices with performance. As the works become kinetic elements of a performance, they also become extensions of the dancers' bodies, like organisms clinging to their hosts.

Plump, Pucker, Squish is the perfect, energetic companion to BMOCA's *Grossly Affectionate* exhibition, on view in the West and East Galleries. Both exhibitions explore, question, and challenge what a body can be, rather than defining what it is.



Above: Claire Ashley, *Circadelic (Plump Circus Tent)*(detail), 2022, Spray paint on PVC coated ripstop nylon and fan. Approx. 10' x 10' x 8'. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Artist Biography

Claire Ashley received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her BFA from Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen, Scotland. Originally from Edinburgh, Scotland, Ashley is now based in Chicago. Currently, she teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Department of Contemporary Practices and the Department of Painting and Drawing.

Ashley's work investigates inflatables as painting, sculpture, installation, and performance costume. She has been featured in *Hyperallergic*, *Artforum*, and *Sculpture Magazine*, among other publications. Her work has been exhibited internationally in galleries, museums, site-specific installations, performances, and collaborations. Ashley has recently had solo exhibitions at MOCA Jacksonville, FL; Boston Children's Museum; 808 Gallery, Boston University; Icebox Project Space, Philadelphia; and The Chicago Cultural Center. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at numerous venues, including Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, England; Art Basel, Kassel, Germany; and MCA Chicago. Ashley's work has also been exhibited across Scotland.

Present Box is a series of temporary exhibitions that invite artists to transform BMOCA's lobby and front entrance into innovative installations, performances, and events that last less than a month. Presented two times per year, the site-specific projects are intended to encourage artists to create work outside their comfort zone and to foster interactive participation. The exhibitions encourage experimentation and urge artists to test ideas and explore different approaches. Present Box exhibitions are always free and open to the public.

Present Box Events

Opening Reception

Thursday, August 11

6-8pm free public reception

Thank you to our generous exhibition program sponsors: Scintilla Foundation, Nicky Wolman & David Fulker, Sue Schweppe, Audrey & Andy Franklin, The Markowitz Family, City of Boulder, Boulder Arts Commission, Scientific & Cultural Facilities District, Colorado Creative Industries, and National Endowment for the Arts.

Please Do Not Touch Works of Art
Flash Photography Not Permitted

BMOCA

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Contemporary Art

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