

JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY

For immediate release

Davina Semo: Precarious Hardware

March 14 – May 4, 2019

Opening reception: Thursday, March 14, 6–8pm

Jessica Silverman Gallery is pleased to present "Precarious Hardware," a solo exhibition of rough and glossy sculptures by Davina Semo. Combining works from four diverse series, the show explores the triangular tension between nature, society and the self, as well as the philosophical troika of liberty, beauty and power.

Making their debut are Semo's "Trunks," cast bronze sculptures of uprooted, de-crowned silk floss trees. Related to the kapok and called a "palo borracho" in Spanish (which literally means "drunken stick"), the silk floss is covered in large spikey thorns. In Semo's sculptures, the conformity and fierce protectiveness of the trunk contrasts dramatically with the tree's naked roots, which look vulnerable and quirkily individualistic. Hanging from the ceiling on black powder-coated chains, with titles like *Homegrown* and *Muse*, the "Trunks" are poignant loners, emblematic of the violence of being ripped from Mother Earth and exposed to the elements.

Also on view is a new variation on Semo's ongoing series of cast-bronze "Bells," which have wooden clappers attached to thick woven ropes that can be held and rung. These large bells are punctured with holes and polished to a golden shine. Bells beckon and unite communities, ring the time, strike for freedom, signal an alarm, and announce an arrival. Semo's bells are multi-gendered – concave forms impregnated by clappers, but also convex phallic shapes suggestive of missiles. With titles like "Vibrator" and "Seducer," this subseries seems to call out for sexual liberation.

Adorning the walls are Semo's "Bearings" pieces, which consist of warped acrylic mirrors shot through with constellations of radial ball bearings. Reflecting the viewer and the other artworks in the show, these pieces offer curatorial comment, drawing attention to and even coloring the conversation between the works, much like a Dan Flavin neon or Jeff Koons' *Moon* from the "Celebration" series. Additionally, the "Bearings" allow their beholders to get their bearings. The pun on spatial orientation is extended as the arcane patterns of bearings resemble markers on a map or nodes on a network.

Finally, the exhibition includes one of Semo's "Chain" wall works, this one in the shape of a life-sized Roman arch. Titled "Threshold," the black powder-coated chain work conjures up beaded curtains, doorways into imaginative spaces, and theatrical stage sets. For Semo, chains are like heavy, weighty lines, so she sees these pieces as "muscular wall drawings" that are in dialogue with Sol Le Witt and the history of the architectural genre.

"Precarious Hardware" is taut with contradiction – riffing on the relationships between strength and vulnerability, emancipation and restraint, natural growth and destruction. Together, Semo's sculptures attempt to make a positive contribution to the well-being of the 3D world.

Davina Semo (b. 1981, Washington DC) has a BA in Visual Arts from Brown University and an MFA from University of California, San Diego. Semo has been featured in shows at San Francisco Arts Commission, Greene Naftali Gallery (New York), Hannah Hoffman (Los Angeles), and the Bridgehampton Biennial, curated by Bob Nickas. She has had solo exhibitions at Marlborough Chelsea (New York), Ribordy Thetaz (Geneva) and White Flag Projects (St. Louis). She has work currently in the exhibition "Show Me as I Want to Be Seen" at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. Semo lives and works in San Francisco.