

CRISTIN TIERNEY



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## Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins. Balancing act

2 Jun — 21 Jul 2023 at the Cristin Tierney Gallery in New York, United States



**12 June, 2023**

Cristin Tierney Gallery is pleased to present *Balancing Act*, an interactive kinetic sculptural installation with accompanying paintings by artist duo Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins. This is the artists' third solo exhibition with the gallery, and they will be present at the reception.

At the center of Marman and Borins' exhibition is a claw machine based on the classic arcade game. Gallery visitors are invited to play the larger-than-life machine, using a joystick to direct a crane to pick up and rearrange geometric

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shapes into balanced compositions. Crafted by hand and covered in wool felt, these sculptural forms are designed in a variety of shapes and colorful hues. They are stackable and endlessly reconfigurable, with no one correct arrangement or defined goal.

Complementing the installation are several paintings of imagined sculptural combinations. These speculative compositions reference geometric abstraction and surrealism, while maintaining a clever dash of paradox. Ostensibly representing the viewer's activation and results of the kinetic claw machine, these semi-figurative assemblages stand in parties of 1, 2, or 3 in front of bold color backdrops. Equal parts ironic and uncanny, their unusual sense of presence is heightened by the artists' use of contrasting light sources, shadows, brightly saturated hues, as well as both two point and parallel perspectives.

Balancing Act continues Marman and Borins' longstanding interest in reevaluating common tenets of modernist art. Chief among them is the revision of authorship in the digital era. With its reliance on audience participation, Balancing Act critiques the myth of originality. The project also stems from the artists' practice of minimizing evidence of the artist's hand, while producing works that contrast with beguiling familiarity and machine-like precision.

On a narrative level, the artists are also inspired by the industrial age, a time when massive cranes and bulldozers were used to mechanically colonize and reshape the land. As late 19th-century photographs of huge construction projects found their way into mass media, toy-claw-games became a fixture in amusement arcades. These and other games captured the fervor of the gold rush, and the excitement over the engineering of the Panama Canal and other major public works projects.

Embedded in Balancing Act is a reconfiguration of the relationships between art, industry, maker, and audience. The installation directly involves viewers, inviting them to re-stack sculptures on their own and disrupt the divide between art and entertainment. Simultaneously, the kinetic aspects and industrial design of the structure and the studio paintings exhibit a remarkable quality and degree of craftsmanship. Complexities abound as Balancing Act plays with the notions of authorship by both machine and audience, while each work is the product of the artists' laborious process of visual study, research, and design.

Following its presentation at the gallery, Balancing Act will travel to additional venues for exhibition, including Contemporary Calgary in Alberta, Canada. In Calgary, Marman and Borins will present three large-format mixed media installations as part of a major solo exhibition.

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**Jennifer Marman** and **Daniel Borins** have co-authored work since 2000. Marman holds a BA in Philosophy from the University of Western Ontario, and Borins holds a BA in Art History from McGill University. Both artists have also obtained advanced degrees from the Ontario College of Art and Design. In a body of work encompassing installations, paintings, large-format sculpture, and electronic art, Marman and Borins contextualize visual art within everyday life while simultaneously referring to and reassessing twentieth century art history. Solo exhibitions include the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, and the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.

Select group exhibitions include The Power Plant, the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Bi-City Biennale, and the National Gallery of Canada. Their work is held in several notable public collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the City of Toronto. Public commissions include Busy Beaver at the Schulich School of Business at York University, Water Guardians by Water Front Toronto, Dodecadandy for the City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission, and Google for The Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto. The artists practice in Toronto and Southwestern Ontario.