

**Chris Garofalo**

*falling* <sup>?</sup>  
*becoming from undoing*

**July 10~~0~~ August 15, 2020**

"A fallen blossom

returning to the bough, I thought –

But no, a butterfly."

–Arakida Moritake, *Traditional Japanese Poetry: An Anthology*

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is delighted to present our seventh solo exhibition with Chicago-based artist Chris Garofalo. For the past three decades, Garofalo has developed her signature form of ceramic sculptures inspired by the flora and fauna of the world's ever-changing and increasingly precarious ecosystems, from the rainforest to the desert to the depths of the ocean. Garofalo fires multiple layers of glaze on her handworked clay forms, rendering lifelike skins, shells, and membranes that appear to have grown organically. Her specimens recall real-life organisms, but all of the sculptures are born of Garofalo's imagination, playing with and transcending standard scientific classification. Animated by theories of evolution and metamorphosis, the works seem almost to breathe, grow, mutate, and respond to their environments.

For "falling up" Garofalo has crafted an extraordinarily delicate installation of ceramic forms that hang from the ceiling and walls of the gallery, in what the artist considers its own ecosystem. The fragility and contingency of the works invoke the natural environment that inspired it, serving to remind us that humans present both an existential threat to our planet's biodiversity as well as the greatest hope for its preservation. "Whether blossom or human being, life is fragile and temporary," Garofalo writes. "falling up" invites us to undo conventional notions of human primacy and separation from nature, to embrace the profound porosity between categories of living beings, becoming more empathetic members of the entire biological community."

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Chris Garofalo (b. Springfield, Illinois) creates ceramic sculptures that draw inspiration from plant and animal forms. Following extensive experience with printmaking and graphic design, Garofalo was introduced to ceramics. An avid gardener, she took quickly to the medium, finding the two things very similar, especially in smell (the clay and the dirt) and the condition in which both activities leave her hands. Inspired by watching the way plants grow, Chris Garofalo attends to the principle properties of development, but disregards traditional behavioral, environmental, genetic, and mating patterns to reimagine an evolutionary history of our planet filled with forms that are at once recognizable and unidentifiable.

Garofalo earned a BFA from Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. She has exhibited her ceramic sculptures since 1991 holding exhibitions at galleries and institutions internationally including Bureau Gallery, New York; R & Company, New York; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, Illinois; Mathew Marks Gallery, New York; Muskegon Museum of Art, Muskegon; Three Rivers Arts Festival, Pittsburg; Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Monaco; Garfield Park Conservatory, Chicago; and Fondazione Mazzullo, Taormino, Sicily. In 2007, she received the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painter and Sculptor Award. Chris Garofalo has lived and worked in Chicago since 1980.

**To ensure the safety and security of visitors to our gallery and in accordance with the City of Chicago's guidelines, a limited number of visitors will be allowed into the gallery at the same time. Reservations can be made through [sofia@rhoftmangallery.com](mailto:sofia@rhoftmangallery.com) or Tock ([www.exploretock.com](http://www.exploretock.com)).**