

# ARTFORUM

## ELEEN LIN AND TAMMIE RUBIN C24 GALLERY

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View of "Eleen Lin and Tammie Rubin," 2022. Photo: Jeff Chien-Hsing Liao.

Eleen Lin and Tammie Rubin insightfully reinterpreted fiction and history in "Mythodical" at C24 Gallery. The title parses the show's themes of personal and cultural mythologies—both the making and undoing thereof—and how each artist brings method to that madness. The curatorial pairing of Lin (painter) and Rubin (sculptor) was a complementary one, with each presenting work that spanned several years, demonstrating how their individual practices have evolved and deepened over time.

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Rubin's broad coterie of serialized objects—more than a decade's worth—were an exploratory index of lineage, lamentation, and groupings. Among the works on display, the Austin-based African American artist presented a recent iteration of nineteen variously glazed cones from the series "Always & Forever (forever ever, ever)?" 2016–, made out of pigmented porcelain. The verdigris-colored helmet-like forms vary in width and height, but all share textured patterned surfaces created via sgraffito, braille-like extrusions, and inlays. Their hooded shapes and cutout eyeholes called to mind Philip Guston's grotesque cartoon Klansmen. Rubin's objects are affecting: There is something both somber and sardonic about their motley un-sameness; the funnel shapes also resemble dunce caps, religious contrafraternity headgear, and stupas.

There's an ebullience to much of Rubin's sculptures as well, as in *A Joyous Ripening*, *Salaam*, and *The Beauty of Insignificance*, all 2014—three bulbous stacks of spherical forms in glowy earthen colors. These elegantly assembled agglomerations seemed delightfully animate. *Silence Magical Thinking*, 2009, comprised several mobile-like aggregations strung from the ceiling in one corner of the gallery, tilting at attentive angles. They were not merely perky but had a communicative quality akin to antique hearing trumpets, gramophone speakers, or satellites. Across each series, Rubin's forms were dexterous shape-shifters that could be playthings one moment and quiet reliquaries the next.

Lin's vivid, large-scale, and dreamy oil-and-acrylic paintings, made over the course of a decade, riffed on wonky Mandarin translations of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851). Her backgrounds, made from thin washes of acrylic, literalize the novel's nautical setting—the liquescence is also a nod to the fluidness of Chinese ink paintings. Lin's compositions are swimmy and relentlessly bright. Based in New York, the Taiwanese-born painter engages many facets of culture and history. What's lost (or added) in translation is not a quandary for Lin, but a chance to delve further into odd serendipities while inventing new morphologies.

These reworkings of the novel's scenes and themes show something both retro sci-fi (as fanciful as Jules Verne's 1870 novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*) and hypercontemporary. The suspenseful and doomy *Perils of Life*, 2022, shows an inflatable boat, crowded with people, adrift. One face is skeletal, a death's-head, while a lonesome figure sits atop an upturned rowboat nearby. Another vessel is unoccupied, tied up with rope or fishing line. On the water's surface is a white whale or a jellyfish with outstretched tentacles—an oozing, ectoplasmic blob, a thing of horror and fantasy all at once. The work's title echoes *Moby-Dick's* language: "All men live enveloped in whale-lines. All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realize the silent, subtle, ever-present perils of life." The artist out-Melvilles Melville with polychromatic ocean beasts, transcontinental and transcultural crossings, and intergalactic geometries that all collude to form a new fiction born of lacunae. Seeing the work of Lin and Rubin—together but separate—made for adventurous viewing, each artist rewriting the narratives at every turn.

<https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/202206/eleen-lin-and-tammie-rubin-88645>