

TRIBEZA

AUSTIN CURATED

ARTIST TAMMIE RUBIN AWARDED \$15K BIG MEDIUM AND TITO'S HANDMADE VODKA PRIZE

Meher Qazilbash
April 15, 2022



Skilled sculptor Tammie Rubin was unanimously chosen as the competition winner. Photo by Whitney Devin.

BIG MEDIUM and Tito's Handmade Vodka recently announced Austin artist Tammie Rubin as the fifth annual Tito's Prize winner.

Each year, these two organizations recognize the talent and exemplary work of a local artist and award them with a prize, helping advance their careers to a new stage. The prestigious prize includes \$15,000, supplied by Tito's, and a solo exhibition in the Big Medium Gallery, with Rubin's set to take place in the spring of 2023.



Rubin at work. Photo by Erica Robert Pallo.

Rubin was unanimously picked as the recipient of the prize this year, chosen from over 100 other applicants by a curatorial panel consisting of Allison Glenn, writer and curator, Elyse Gonzales, Director of Ruby City Museum in San Antonio, and Coka Treviño, Curator and Director of Programming at Big Medium.

“I’ve known about Tammie’s work for a while so I’ve seen it grow and I’ve known how versatile she is,” shares Treviño. “We absolutely love her work and the way she tackles very serious and hard problems in such a beautiful way.”

Rubin is a visual artist, specializing in creating intricate ceramic sculptures, and the Associate Professor of Ceramics and Sculpture at St. Edward’s University. Alongside fellow Austin-based artists Adrian Aguilera and Betelhem Makonnen, she also co-founded the Black Mountain Project, a contemporary art platform dedicated to generating intimate exchanges, sparking collaborations and expanding engagement in the art community.

Her formal art education includes a Bachelor of Fine Arts in both ceramics and art history from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and a Master of Fine Arts in ceramics from the University of Washington in Seattle.

“When I decided to go to college, I wanted to take some art classes and I really became completely immersed in the ceramics studio,” explains Rubin. “It was a place of community, and it was the first place that I felt, because my professor would invite us to his studio, that I could see a way of having a life as both an artist and a professor.”

Since then, her artwork has been exhibited widely across the country and received reviews in notable online and print publications such as Artforum, Art in America, Arts and Culture Texas, Ceramics: Art & Perception, Ceramics Monthly and more.

C

GALLERY

2 4

Underscoring the power of the ordinary is a recurring motif in Rubin's ceramic collections. During her upbringing in Chicago, she appreciated and noted a preciousness in otherwise ordinary objects that surrounded her home and school life. She cites her regular visits to The Art Institute of Chicago and observations of its many artifacts as a major influence that led her to the art world.

"The theme [in my work] has been using everyday objects and thinking about them as ritualistic or how they fit into a place of historical or cultural storytelling," says Rubin. "Magical thinking as well, the way that we suffuse objects with the idea of power through just belief. Whether that be iconography or liturgical objects or a rabbit's foot, just exploring the things that we put these wishful ideas into."

Rubin's technical skills, along with her talent of finding trivial materials and imbuing them with value, results in a wonderful and dreamlike endeavor for onlookers. Colorful materials, pleasing textures and immersive experiences are all common features of her exhibitions.

Her contributions as an educator enhance community interactions with art and ignite necessary conversations. The influx of information and photos we receive on the daily can often lead to a lack of regard for the labor we're viewing, but a large emphasis in Rubin's teaching is adequately evaluating and understanding what we take in.

"I really want students to think critically when they see work, even if they don't understand it immediately," explains Rubin. "To try to understand the artist's intention, the process, the medium and what it took to put it into the world before making an immediate thumbs up or thumbs down decision."

Tito's Prize offers transformative support and amazing opportunities for artists at pivotal moments in their careers. Rubin's commitment to her craft and her mission in educating and increasing exposure to art in others lives makes her an ideal recipient of the prize, and someone to keep an eye on in the coming years.

"I'm genuinely grateful for the selection and animated by the support and expansion this award will provide," shares Rubin. "My sculptural practice is dependent on tools, space and equipment. This financial support is tremendous in that regard. I look forward to experimenting and creating new work for the exhibition at Big Medium Gallery."

As for her exciting Big Medium exhibition to come in spring 2023, plans are already forming.

"I'm really looking forward to using the gallery space as a laboratory, a place of immersion and transformation, and a place of conversation and development," says Rubin. "I would like to have all sorts of components of collaboration."

<https://tribeza.com/big-medium-titos-prize-winner-tammie-rubin/>