

TAMMIE RUBIN

EVERYTHING YOU EVER



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

NOVEMBER 17- JANUARY 10, 2019

AUSTIN, TEXAS



Above: *Worshipping*, 2018, porcelain, underglaze, wire, steel wool, 12" x 16" x 14"

Cover Panel: *Everything You Ever*, 2018, (gallery view), porcelain, underglaze, wire, steel wool, wood

EVERYTHING YOU EVER

Tillandsia recurvata, commonly known as ball moss, is a flowering plant that grows upon larger host plants throughout the United States. Ball moss is indigenous to the warmer regions of the country, namely the south—Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Texas. As such, these ubiquitous flora bore witness to the development and demise of indigenous peoples, the exploration and colonization of North America by Spain, France, and England, the American Revolution, Antebellum slavery, the American Civil War, the ending of slavery—Reconstruction and the Rise of Jim Crow—and the American Civil Rights Movement. Commonly mistaken as a parasite that kills trees, this dense, ball-like bromeliad is an epiphyte; it perches on other plants but does not sap nutrients, instead feeding off nutrients and moisture already in the air.

In her exhibition, *Everything You Ever*, Rubin uses the ball moss as a signifier of the collective memories and experiences of Austin, a city that she moved to in 2015 for a faculty position at St. Edward's University. Since then much of her work has continued to draw upon the ubiquitous but often subtle nature of racism in the United States through formal and conceptual means. After the formally contained slip cast cones of Rubin's last body of work from 2016, *Always and Forever (ever, ever)*, the complexity and visual density of Rubin's sculptures in *Everything You Ever* is surprising. In *Always and Forever (ever, ever)* and earlier series such as *Caution Contraptions* (2010), *Silence Magical Thinking* (2009), and *He is Gone* (2008), Rubin used the cone form to reference multivalent meanings such as communication technologies, traffic regulators, religious paraphernalia, and architecture, as well as more sinister affiliations with the Ku Klux



Everything You Ever, 2018, (gallery view), porcelain, undeglaze, wire, steel wool, wood, dimensions variable

Klan. Yet the discerning viewer, looking closely, will catch glimpses of these same cone forms beneath the chaotic effusion of organic forms taking over. This strategy of physically building upon her previous forms with the ball moss points to the way material process becomes conceptual content in Rubin's work. In other words, one must consider how she makes to fully access the richness of narrative in her sculptures.

Rubin foregrounded her process in developing this body of work with a performance staged as part of Austin's "Cage Match Project" hosted by the Museum of Human Achievement throughout the summer of 2018. An ad hoc gallery space in an industrial caged trailer, "Cage Match Project" challenges its artist by exposing them to conditions of weather and 24-hour viewership. The trailer itself looks something like a weathered circus trailer that should have lions pacing within. As such, its form has something inherently sinister to it, positioning the performer inside as vulnerable to and trapped by the audience's gaze. Rubin approached the opportunity not as a space to performed caged-ness, but as a space to demonstrate the repetitive, meditative, and deeply tactile qualities of her studio practice. The title of the resulting

performance, *This is Everything*, suggests a dual meaning, both ironic and sincere. Revealing everything about her process for constructing the sculptures reveals nothing for the literal viewer. And yet, with patience and attention, one might see in Rubin's process the stirrings of her deep commitment to working over objects slowly—caressing, manipulating, layering ceramic material, not to transform something banal (like a ball of moss), but to enhance its capacity for poetic association.

Rubin began these sculptures by dipping pieces of Texas ball moss found around her college's campus into buckets of porcelain slip and hanging them to dry. The cyclical action was a mesmerizing display of textures, the slipperiness of the saturated clay, the arachnoid tendrils of moss, the tinny, rusted metal hooks from which they were suspended from the ceiling of the cage. When Rubin fired these porcelain coated plants, the extreme heat of the kiln vitrified the surface and incinerated the interior, essentially destroying the ball moss in the process. In Rubin's usage, however, what's left at the end of firing are hollow, delicate tubes, beautiful but which appear apt to disintegrate at the slightest touch. Layered

with underglaze colors, pigmented porcelain slip, bits of steel wool, cotton, and twine, the material becomes something mysterious, ambiguous, and unsettlingly visceral.

Each of the resulting works resting on the tall plinths of *Everything You Ever* appear as if organic growths caught in the midst of a quiet combustion. Their delicate ceramic tendrils extend from a central body that is held together by steel armatures and disfigured conal forms, a new manifestation of Rubin's earlier works. At the base of each, one can find evidence of the off-white ceramic casts from *Always and Forever (ever, ever)*, which have been mangled, melted, and distorted here by the ball moss growths. In new works such as *More*, the cones are rendered nearly invisible by the ball moss swarming them like antibodies enveloping an infection. Within the installation at *Women & Their Work*, Rubin balanced the resulting organic structures with a group of suspended

ceramic ball moss fragments hanging from the ceiling by microfilament in two rows. They float in the space with a tenuousness that is heightened as movement among them causes each to sway dangerously close to the next. The tightness of the resulting pathways and the mass of ceramic bodies are reminiscent of the initial "Cage Match Project" that gave birth to *Everything You Ever*.

There is a sense of biological disorder across the works. The density of the ball moss here borders on suffocation, and their fragile webs of clay appear almost tumorous in how deeply they've embedded themselves within their hosts, appearing as if capillaries or strands of tangled hair growing in every direction. While these bodily associations are somewhat unsettling, the sculptures themselves are deeply captivating. There is a push and pull between the distressing chaos of the forms and their co-existent aesthetic allure. To say they are beautiful or grotesque

would be half-truths; *Everything You Ever* lives in a transitory space of the in-between. Each work appears as if frozen in a moment of action that highlights their gestural nature. Even in their naming—*Standing, Walking, Riding, Driving, Waiting, Eating, Listening, Worshipping, Consuming, Being*—they actively respond to the world around them in ways that are very similar to our own. Just like the original ball moss, these sculptures are not passive consumers of history; rather, they have an acute 'sense of place' and an awareness of the environment in which they live.

This active tense of being invokes the questions posed by Rubin at the entrance to the exhibition: "What will be lost? What will remain?" At the center of these questions and *Everything You Ever* is an inquiry into the state of *compromised* being. These works prompt a deeper consideration of what it means to co-exist with things that force us to accommodate, adjust, and reconcile ourselves to uncomfortable truths. Rubin's project is ultimately a conceptual meditation on the contemporary socio-political concerns of a city diseased by ongoing racial inequality. Her use of the ball moss therefore defies simple readings, and in doing so calls attention to the symbiotic relationship between nature and culture that she seeks to clarify. One only has to look around to notice the widespread existence of this plant across the Austin landscape. As the ball moss reminds us that with prolonged attention, even the most commonplace elements of our surroundings need to be named and can be transformed into prompts for productive dialogue. *Everything You Ever* reminds us that taking moments to notice, name, and question is never a futile practice.

Neon Queen Collective (Jessi DiTillio, Kaila Schedeen, and Phillip Townsend)



Feminine Persuasion, 2018, porcelain, underglaze, wire, steel wool, 13" x 9" x 9"

Tammie Rubin

EDUCATION

- 2003 MFA Ceramics, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
1999 BFA Ceramics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL
BFA Art History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 *Everything You Ever, Women & Their Work*, Austin, TX
This is Everything, Cage Match Project Round VIII, Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX
- 2016 *Before I Knew You, I Missed You*, de stijl | PODIUM FOR ART, Austin, TX
- 2015 *I Am an Island*, John C. Hutcheson Gallery, Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN
To Wonder & Wander, Rogers Gallery, Berea College, Berea, KY
- 2014 *Lingering and Longing*, The William & Florence Schmidt Art Center, SWIC, Belleville, IL
Neverwhere and Nowhere, The Gallery at Penn College, Pennsylvania College of Technology, Williamsport, PA
- 2013 *Tiny Messengers*, Lone Star College-North Harris Fine Arts Gallery, Lone Star College-North Harris, Houston, TX
Another World, David & Jacqueline Charak Gallery, Craft Alliance, St Louis, MO
- 2012 *Come in Close & Still*, Spiva Art Gallery, Missouri Southern State University, Joplin, MO
Nevermore, Salisbury University Art Gallery, Salisbury University, Salisbury, MD
- 2011 *I Dwell in Possibility*, Sarah M. Hurt Gallery, Indianapolis Art Center, Indianapolis, IN
He Is Gone, imagined contraptions for last communications, Art and Design Gallery, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS
- 2009 *Silence! Magical Thinking in Progress*, Pottery Northwest Gallery, Pottery Northwest, Seattle, WA
He Is Gone, imagined contraptions for last communications, Wakeley Gallery, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL
- 2007 *The Aviary*, Gallery 4Culture, Seattle, WA

SELECTED HONORS, AWARDS, GRANTS & RESIDENCIES

- 2018 Dimension Gallery 2019/2020 Fellowship, Austin, TX
- 2017 Austin Critics Table Solo Gallery Exhibition Award Winner 2016-2017, "Tammie Rubin: Before I Knew You, I Missed You," de stijl | PODIUM FOR ART, Austin, TX
Artist Residency, C.R.E.T.A Rome Center for Ceramics, Rome, Italy

- 2013 Jeanne Bowman Ellenstein Purchase Award and Evansville Museum Contemporaries Purchase Award, Evansville Museum of Arts, History and Science, Evansville, IN
- 2011 Juror's Award First Place, *12X12*, Todd Gallery, Middle Tennessee State University, TN
Individual Artist Support Initiative – Artist Project Grant, Illinois Arts Council, IL
- 2008 Grants for Artist Projects (GAP), Artist Trust, Seattle, WA
Anthony E. Stellaccio Award, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL
- 2007 Artist Residency, Pottery Northwest, Seattle, WA

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2018 Wayne Alan Brenner, "Tammie Rubin, Everything You Ever at Women & Their Work," *Austin Chronicle*, January 4, 2019.
Lindsey Reynolds, "Natural/Synthetic/Human: Tammie Rubin's 'Everything You Ever,'" *Sighlines*, January 3, 2019.
Laura August, "Review: Tammie Rubin, Everything You Ever at Women & Their Work" *Arts and Culture Texas*, December 13, 2018.
Rebecca Marino, "Q+A with Tammie Rubin" *Conflict of Interest*, July 26, 2018.
Jeanne Claire van Ryzin, "Disrupting Practice: To Make a New Series of Sculpture, Tammie Rubin Makes Her Art-Making Public," *Sighlines*, August 16, 2018.
- 2017 Sean Redmond, "Interview: Tammie Rubin," *fields*, Spring/Summer, 2017. 20-39.
- 2016 Kate Green, "Critics Picks Tammie Rubin," *Artforum*, November, 2016. Online.
Jeanne Claire Ryzin, "Sculpting one's self," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 27, 2016.
Sam Anderson-Ramos, "Tammie Rubin: Before I Knew You, I Missed You, at de stijl | PODIUM FOR ART," *The Austin Chronicle*, November 11, 2016.
- 2012 Laura O'Donnell, "Tammie Rubin Messages," *Ceramics Art and Perception* Issue 89 (2012): 38-41.
- 2011 Episode #11 Interview Tammie Rubin, *Art Now!*, Public Arts Program, Urbana Public Television.



Clashes, Tangles, & Knots, 2018, porcelain, underglaze, wire, steel wool, 12" x 13" x 9"

Women & Their Work

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Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 40th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,905 artists in 318 visual art exhibitions, 128 music, dance and theater events, 16 film festivals, 30 literary readings and spoken word performances, and 665 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, The New York Times, ArtForum, and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Women & Their Work reaches over 700 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



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