

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
515 WEST 26TH STREET
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Self (Contained)

Curated by Elizabeth Denny and Katie Alice Fitz Gerald

June 27 – August 16, 2024

Opening reception: Thursday, June 27, 6:00-8:00pm

Including work by Paul Anagnostopoulos, Camille Billops, Brian Bress,
Francesca DiMattio, Damien H. Ding, Lizzie Gill, Hannah Lim, Holton Rower,
Stephanie Syjuco, Gabriela Vainsencher, Amanda Valdez, Paula Wilson

RYAN LEE is pleased to present *Self (Contained)*, a group exhibition of twelve artists gravitating towards the concept of the vessel as a metaphor for self and all of the meanings that the term holds. Spanning different generations and mediums, the exhibition is co-curated by Elizabeth Denny and Katie Alice Fitz Gerald.

The word vessel is derived from the Latin word *vascellum* which has a direct meaning of “urn” or “vase.” The Latin also has associative meaning with ships and arteries or veins—both of which contain and transport. The latter brings the vessel to have corporeal association. Our bodies are a larger container not only for physical matter but also ideas, opinions, emotions: a sense of self.

Self (Contained) pays attention to the concept of containment, to the vessel, and the breadth of meanings to which this term can refer. Stemming from the language and associations of the word vessel in Ancient Greek culture and mythology, the exhibition tackles the different shapes and objects taken from this cultural history. For artists such as Paula Wilson, Lizzie Gill, Paul Anagnostopoulos, Camille Billops, and Gabriela Vainsencher, for example, the Greek amphora itself serves as a way to visually represent mythological stories. In their work, its shape mimics or conceptually references bodies as containers. The self can be thought of as a homogenous vessel carrying a nuanced interior. Through this prism the artists investigate their own selves and archetypes: the mother, the hypermasculine queer male, the female as object.

For some artists in the exhibition such as Amanda Valdez, the vessel is a carrier of female histories and mythologies. For others, it is a conceptual trope to conceive of what contains the world around us, or what contains ourselves and the emotional life we embody and carry around. The artists themselves become vessels for their own work, thus reflecting on authorship, on artmaking and creative ownership. Several artists explore both the physicality and concept of this: Brian Bress, Damien H. Ding, Francesca DiMattio.

Artists Stephanie Syjuco, Hannah Lim, and Holton Rower look at the histories of such vessels which have gone from functional objects to prized art pieces through institutions—appropriated for different purposes. Through their practice, they examine the need to acquire, and to collect. Their work underlines how the ownership and acquisition of objects reflects one’s own culture and self.

Self (Contained) looks to question art as a container both in terms of the physical object—which artists fill with different media and narratives—and a conceptual holder of ideas and intangible reflections. Each work on view is filled with meaning by its maker, each is a reflection of the diverse group of artists’ particular vision of the world.

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Paul Anagnostopoulos (b. 1991, Merrick, NY) aggregates various histories, beliefs, and symbols in his paintings as a way to explore mythological desire and melancholy. His paintings act as portals to an idyllic paradise, serving as postcards from a journey that may or may not have been experienced. He has been included in group and solo exhibitions at Dinner Gallery, NY; the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, NY; and GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, PA. His work is in the collections of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, NY; Museum of Modern Art Archives and Library, NY; Rhode Island School of Design, RI; and Yale University, CT. Anagnostopoulos lives and works in Queens, NY.

Camille Billops (b. 1933, Los Angeles, CA – d. 2019, New York, NY) was an influential artist and filmmaker whose staunch activism and profound belief in the power of memory and representation made her a pillar of the Black New York-based artist community. Her work primarily touches upon themes of racism—which she considered ever present throughout society—gender dynamics, Black culture, and personal narrative. She has been included in exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum, NY; Georgia Museum of Art, GA; Institute of Contemporary Art, MA; and the Museum of Modern Art, NY, among others. Billops's work is in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art, OH; Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Das Schublade Museum, Bern, Switzerland; Studio Museum in Harlem, NY; and the Yale University Art Gallery, CT, among others.

Brian Bress (b. 1975, Norfolk, VA) is a video artist whose panel works incorporate performance, painting and sculpture, often placing life-sized humanoid figures behind the separating skin of a monitor screen, sharing a ritual and offering a curious companionship. Describing himself as coming to video with the agenda of a painter, Bress addresses the connections between film, photography, and painting—and the two-dimensional picture plane they share—in his single- and multi-channel video work. Bress's work has been included in group and solo exhibitions at the Akron Art Museum, OH; Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Figge Art Museum, IA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Weisman Art Museum, MN; and the Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, among others. Bress lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

Francesca DiMattio's (b. 1981, New York, NY) practice combines a cacophony of influences, which she applies in a layered and non-hierarchical approach to her work. Her sculptures draw from the rich tradition of ceramics, merging contrasting references and styles within each fluid construction. DiMattio's work has been included in group and solo exhibitions at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, NY; Blaffer Art Museum, TX; Kimball Art Center, UT; Mass MOCA, MA; and Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK, among others. Her work is held in the collections of the Everson Museum of Art, NY; Perez Art Museum, FL; and Saatchi Gallery, London, UK, among others. DiMattio lives and works in New York, NY.

Damien H. Ding (b. 1992, Nanping, China) is a painter who uses the language of furniture and cabinetry to create containers and spaces for his paintings, recalling domestic altars and small chapels. The imagery of Ding's paintings is often meditative yet intense and hints at transcendence through stillness and velocity. Recently, Ding has been included in group and solo exhibitions at Alexander Berggruen, NY; Anderson Gallery at Virginia Commonwealth University, VA; Braverman Gallery, Israel; Denny Gallery, NY; Eugster Belgrade, Serbia; Galerie Marguo, France; and Steven Zevitas Gallery, MA, among others. Ding is based in Singapore and New York, NY.

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Lizzie Gill (b. 1989 New York, NY) is a multimedia artist whose work explores themes of domesticity in a contemporary context. Through a variety of mediums, Gill illustrates time warps of everyday objects, human agency, and “post feminist” contemporary society. Her work is a nostalgic look at the past and innocence with a twist, prompting one to question their sense of time and culture. Gill has been exhibited recently at Aicon Gallery, NY; Carol Corey Fine Art, CT; Dallas Art Fair, TX; Geary Contemporary, FL; and Spring/Break, CA, among others. Her work has been featured in The New York Times, Elle, Wired, and Vogue. Gill lives and works in Sharon, CT.

Hannah Lim (b. 1998, London, UK) is a Singaporean-British artist working in sculpture, installation, and drawing. Her work frequently explores the relationship between her two heritages, looking particularly at how that relationship has been reflected through furniture design, architecture, and objects. She has recently been featured in group and solo exhibitions at the Edinburgh College of Art, UK; Royal College of Art, UK; Royal Scottish Academy, UK; and Saatchi Gallery, UK, among others. Lim is currently based in Oxford, UK.

Holton Rower (b. 1962, New York, NY) is known for his innovative work across sculpture, installation, assemblage, and painting. In his most recent series, Rower creates sculptures that push the boundaries of the clay medium in astonishing ways, appearing both novel and reminiscent of ancient artifacts. Rower’s dynamic visual language, balancing precision and spontaneity, draws viewers into a hypnotic, meditative experience, showcasing his deep love of materials and creative genius. Recent exhibitions include solos at Arthur Roger Gallery, LA; Cencebaugh Contemporary, NY; Galerie 6, Aarau, Switzerland; Galleria Maeght, Barcelona, Spain and Paris, France; The Hole, NY; and Venus Los Angeles CA. His work was also recently part of the *Tectonic* group exhibition organized by the Moving Museum in Dubai. Rower lives and works in New York, NY.

Stephanie Syjuco (b. 1974 Manila, Philippines) works primarily in sculpture, installation and photography, leveraging open-source systems, shareware logic and flows of capital to create friction between high ideals and everyday materials. Her conceptual craft practice translates digital content and process into physical experience, often with an active public component that invites viewers to participate as producers or distributors. Syjuco has had numerous solo and group exhibitions at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, TX; MSU Broad Art Museum, MI; Museum of Modern Art, NY; National Portrait Gallery, DC; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, CT, among others. Her work is in the collections of the Amon Carter Museum, TX; Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO; Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN; Museum of Fine Arts Houston, TX; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, PA; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, among others. She lives and works in Berkeley, CA.

Gabriela Vainsencher (b. 1983, Buenos Aires, Argentina) is known for combining archaeological and anatomical motifs in her interdisciplinary practice of drawing, video, and photography. In her recent work, Vainsencher draws inspiration from mythology, ancient Greek ceramic vessels, Roman frescoes, and archetypes of motherhood. Her work has been included in exhibitions at A.I.R. Gallery, NY; Asya Geisberg Gallery, NY; Hanina Gallery, Israel; Kunstforening, Norway; Musée d’Art Moderne André Malraux, France; National Gallery of Saskatchewan, Canada; and La Chambre Blanche, Canada. She lives and works in Montclair, NJ.

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Amanda Valdez (b. 1982, Seattle, WA) is a research-based artist best known for mixed media paintings which incorporate textiles, oil stick, and paint. Valdez's work draws on landscapes, physical experiences, archaeological objects, and sites that she encounters in day-to-day life, research, and travel. Her work has been presented in group and solo exhibitions at Denny Gallery, New York and Hong Kong; Danforth Gallery at the University of Maine, ME; Heckscher Museum of Art, NY; and Mead Art Museum, MA, among others. Her work is held in the collections of the Davis Museum at Wellesley College, MA; Heckscher Museum of Art, NY; Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, MA; and the US Embassy in Guatemala City, Guatemala, among others. Valdez lives and works in New York, NY.

Paula Wilson (b. 1975, Chicago, IL) is a multimedia artist whose practice centers on recurring themes of feminine power, natural life systems, and acts of art-making. Incorporating print, collage, textile, painting, and video, her holistic practice stems from her life in Carrizozo, New Mexico: the high desert terrain, native wildlife, and the life she has cultivated with partner and collaborator Mike Lagg. Wilson has been included in museum exhibitions at the Albuquerque Museum, NM; California African-American Museum, CA; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX; Inside-Out Art Museum, China; Tufts University Art Galleries, MA; Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Poland, among others. Wilson's artwork is held in the collections of the Princeton University Art Museum, NJ; Colby College Museum of Art, MA; Studio Museum in Harlem, NY; the New York Public Library, NY; Yale University Art Gallery, CT, among others.

About RYAN LEE

Celebrating emerging and established artists and estates, RYAN LEE presents innovative and scholarly exhibitions across all spectrums of art practices, including painting, photography, video, sculpture, and performance. The gallery takes chances on a wide variety of boundary-pushing artists; their work consistently transcends political, cultural, material, or technical boundaries. In addition, RYAN LEE has, throughout its history, demonstrated its long-standing interest and dedication to feminist, Black and Asian American, as well as queer narratives in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Founded in 2013 by Mary Ryan and Jeffrey Lee, the gallery is led by partners of different generations and backgrounds with over six decades of combined experiences informing its unique approach.