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 florae 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 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
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 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.

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. Hucheson 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 Dwel 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 Axiary, Gallery 4Culture, Seattle, WA

SELECTED HONORS, AWARDS, GRANTS & RESIDENCIES
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
        Rebecca Marino, “Q+A with Tammie Rubin” Conflict of Interest, July 26, 2018.
2011  Episode #11 Interview Tammie Rubin, Art Now!, Public Arts Program, Urbana Public Television.
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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