

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
515 WEST 26TH STREET
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RYANLEEGALLERY.COM

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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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.