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—we *have* colonies—and the affectations of state are not news. Still, in a country that deifies liberal barristers as much as demonizes septuagenarian capitalists—in a world where one of the most articulate advocates for climate justice is the Pope—it's worth repeating that the absurd dramas of power have always been effective distractions. The world is strange already. Townley's best sculptures appear in the gallery like pointed excerpts of an oft-misquoted text. Like the salvaged throne in its bubble, he sets ceremonial and superstitious objects into the anoxic material stasis of art. The context of government and god stripped away, the growth of insects and spores suppressed, these objects remain meaningfully reactive.

Carrie Cook at Tyler Park Presents

November 14, 2020–January 23, 2021

In the tarot, the water bearer is represented by the star card. In it, a nude woman pours water onto the grassy earth from a jug in one hand, and into a pool of water from a jug in the other. She kneels on the living, solid ground with her left leg, stepping into the whirlpool before her with her right, moving toward the swirling symbol of intuition, memory, and imagination. Carrie Cook echoes the water bearer's absorbing in-betweenness in her solo show, *Tears for Years*, at Tyler Park Presents. Ten years after the untimely death of her father, and through the disappointment of lost romances, the artist conveys the disorienting, oneiric effects of lingering grief by employing imagery related to water: rain, waterfalls, ponds, pools, the ocean. Tears flow across her paintings, which range from a wall-sized diptych to canvasses as small as a diary. The water helps to illustrate the space between flashbacks and reverie, and feels especially relevant in this unprecedented time of quarantine, where isolation and uncertainty increasingly erode the separation between daily life and darker dreams.

Cook's imagery pulls from an archive of personal photographs taken with her phone, digital cameras, and—much less frequently—screenshots of pictures online she has kept and curated since 2015. I have known Cook for nearly a decade, during which time this archive has taken on more and more importance in her work—she has referred to her photo archive as her "dictionary" or "Bible." Photos from the archive appear in *Sunny Beach Fountain* (2020), an installation in a smaller room off the gallery's main space. In the piece, three slim, collaged paper columns hang from the ceiling to a fountain on the floor, each one a chain-like patchwork of photos that are encrusted with coins, pebbles, and small mirrors. In one, a photo of Cook's father at a NASCAR race joins a small painting of a botanical form and an aerial shot of a desert. The columns' jumbled, clipped imagery and bumpy, reflective surfaces recall the daily visual detritus that eventually form our memories, and evoke the sorts of unexpected associations that can emerge when trying to recall an especially far off person, place, or event. A document containing text and collaged photos by the artist describes a memorializing ritual that Cook enacted for her father on the Texas beach where they last met, a reminder that even unassuming throwaways can trigger a descent into deep grief or memory. On the floor, a fourth strip of photographs—of crashing waves and a Los Angeles sunset—lays beneath a clear rectangular tray of water. A fountain at the center of the pool softly spouts water from the top of a Styrofoam cooler that is surrounded by sand and a set of ceramic frogs, snakes, and alligators—creatures that live between land and water, natural navigators of the in-between.

Cook's installation injects an unexpected element of feeling into something as quotidian as a Styrofoam cooler: its white, streamlined form and proximity to the ground make it resemble a gravestone. The fountain presents the thematic and visual source material of her paintings as a single, sculpted manifestation of her artistic mythology. However, the fountain's trickling sounds and lightweight components serve as a serene, mobile counterpoint to the works in the next room, where Cook's murky, nocturnal palette and thickly-applied paint convey a kind of emotional sedimentation.

In *Pond in a Pond* (2019), thick flecks of soupy, unmixed colors churn into and around one another, recalling unresolved sentiments that refuse to settle in the mind. The inky pools in *Pond in a Pond, Bad Weather* (2019), and *Waterfall*

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Top: Carrie Cook, *Bad Weather* (2019). Oil on canvas, 36 × 48 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Tyler Park Presents, Los Angeles. Photo: Elon Schoenholz.

Bottom: Carrie Cook, *Romeo 3* (2020). Oil on board, 9 × 12 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Tyler Park Presents, Los Angeles. Photo: Elon Schoenholz.

diptych (2020) evoke the stymied saturation of a hard Houston rain—Cook lived there for a time during grad school—where one must wait for the water to seep down. More feeling comes from Cook's portrayal of human bodies. *Romeo 3* (2020) shows a TV screen on the back of an airplane seat playing the 1996 film *Romeo + Juliet*. Cook's version of the iconic water scene is layered with agitated, heavy strokes that obscure the details of each face, making it unclear whether there is tenderness or tension between the two figures. The movie was popular when Cook was a preteen, and her ambivalent, painterly treatment of the scene seems to reflect the experience of revisiting the film's message of timeless, pure, romance as an adult who has weathered failed relationships and lost loves.

For Cook, past events remain vividly relevant as elements to mull over in her present-day artistic practice. But though her works are based in real-world events, they remain tantalizingly dream-like and open to interpretation. Cook's paintings are dark without falling into darkness. Like the water bearer, she moves toward intuitions and dreams, though she keeps one foot on solid ground. In this way, Cook does something we all do, especially in this uncertain time: revisit the past from the present moment. The star card is seen as a symbol of hope and forward movement after a period of turmoil. *Tears for Years* opens a space to process and rework fleeting memories, a gesture toward healing.

(L.A. in S.F.) Candice Lin at Friends Indeed

November 12, 2020–January 6, 2021

Roger and friends, Candice Lin's recent exhibition at Friends Indeed, included seven oil paintings depicting her eponymous cat Roger that were never intended to be seen by the public. However, just as the exchange between the private and public has become increasingly muddled under the parameters of a smothering, pandemic-imposed domestic life, so, too, has an artist's relationship to the work she makes privately, and what she offers for public viewing. As far as quarantine-specific pastimes go, Lin took up the appeasing act of painting her cat, each portrait painted at home with leftover oil paint from more "serious" paintings.[1]

For Lin, these intimate paintings mark a significant departure—not in subject matter (as cats have featured frequently), nor in their representational nature, but rather, in medium and materiality, as well as in interiority. Until recently, Lin's practice—nebulous, rigorous-in-research, and strategically diverse—has not publicly included a medium as canonically Eurocentric as a stretched oil painting on canvas. Likewise, her body of work has seldom included such an intimate, even autobiographical, glimpse into her interior life. Much of Lin's previous endeavors have delved into destabilizing legacies of colonialism, slavery, and migration, often focusing specifically on colonial flora (such as fungi).

In light of Lin's research-based and outward-looking praxis, this shift towards interiority is a new lens for the artist. When I reached out to Lin to fact check some of my assumptions about the work, she told me that the paintings were a pleasurable activity, made under the veiled belief that they would not be seen. As such, they are objects plucked from Lin's private (interior) world. The pieces are distinctly modernist in their depiction of interiors: chunky impasto application, cross-hatched wallpaper, a plethora of bedspreads. Yet unlike the modernists, for whom the domestic interior became a pivotal repeated signifier of modern urbanity, Lin depicts her cat not as a sidekick to another eroticized protagonist (e.g., Balthus), nor as a decorative wallflower of interior life (e.g., Vuillard), nor as a stand-in for the entrapped woman (e.g., *A Room of One's Own*). Instead, Lin's cat is a cat—the protagonist of his own contemporary quarantine melodrama.

Across the paintings, Roger deftly slips through various social interactions, his life punctuated by idiosyncratic mobility during a time when many of us are afflicted by limited social opportunities and an enduring sense of claustrophobia. In each, Roger appears in a seemingly different home, traversing easily through the quarantine as a sort of vicarious fantasy. In *Can You See Me* (2020), Roger scampers up the chest of Lin's father, mid-meow, demanding to be seen by

stephanie mei huang

1. Lin embarked on the endeavor of making "serious" paintings last fall, using lard and wax as a conceptual medium in a series of paintings exploring pathogen and anti-Chinese racism for *Pigs and Poison*, her 2020 show