

Exploring Identity and Mythology: Cathy Lu's Installation at the SECA Art Award Exhibition



By Katayoun
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Cathy Lu's ceramics-based installation, *Resurgence* (2022), at the SECA Art Award Exhibition is a captivating attraction for literature and mythical creature enthusiasts. Lu's artwork draws from the mythology of Nüwa, a Chinese creation goddess, to create a masterful exploration of identity, immigration, displacement, and longing. The installation features a waterfall of long fingernails and corner-store fruits, all cleverly crafted from clay. The hands and fruits are arranged in garlands, creating an immersive and disorienting environment that captures the viewer's attention. The installation flows seamlessly from the ceiling, giving it a unique and ethereal atmosphere that is grounded and otherworldly. Lu's work is a thought-provoking representation of mythology and modern life's complex issues, making it a significant addition to the SECA Art Award Exhibition. Whether you're a literature, mythology, or art fan, Cathy Lu's installation is an experience to be noticed. In her work, she defies strict cultural boundaries and interrogates what it means to be "authentically" Chinese or American.

Lu employs the mythological figure of Nüwa as a lens through which to examine the complexities of Asian American identity. By manipulating Chinese cultural references, Lu deconstructs preconceived notions about being Asian American, resulting in a deeply personal and political work. Notably, Lu's work balances the familiar and the unfamiliar by manipulating and arranging commonplace items such as fruits and long-nailed hands in fresh and unexpected ways. This tension between the familiar and foreign is a relatable experience for many immigrants and displaced individuals as they navigate the space between cultural roots and a new and potentially exotic environment.

Lu's work features a variety of colors and textures, including shades of brown, green, and white, as well as the earthy tones of the clay itself. The color palette evokes the natural world and the themes of creation and cultural roots central to Lu's work. Lu's work is both visually stunning and profoundly thought-provoking. By drawing on the mythology of Nüwa and using it as a tool to explore Asian American identity, Lu invites viewers to question their assumptions and biases. Lu's work is a must-see for anyone interested in exploring the complexities of identity and cultural heritage.

Cathy Lu is a master at imbuing her work with thought-provoking themes and concepts. Her art delves into traditional Chinese art imagery, manipulating and appropriating its forms to examine how ideas of cultural "authenticity" and "tradition"

interface with contemporary trans-cultural experiences. Lu's skillful interweaving of Eastern and Western aesthetics creates a complex, innovative, and nostalgic visual language. Her work invites the viewer to consider the fluidity of cultural identities and power dynamics within the cultural exchange. Cathy Lu's work is a thought-provoking and visual critique of cultural identity and its relationship to power dynamics. Her creative use of traditional Chinese art imagery serves as a reminder of the importance of interrogating cultural beliefs and embracing the fluidity of identity.



Cathy Lu, *Resurgence*, 2022
Photo by Katayoun Bahrami



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Katayoun Bahrami is an Iranian multidisciplinary artist and curator living in the Bay Area. She draws her inspiration from women's history to create work that combines social practice, performance, and textile-based installation through mixed-media, video and series of photographic pieces.