

**Rachelle Dang: *Uncertain Haven***  
**October 30 – December 21, 2019**  
**Opening Reception: Wednesday, October 30, 6–8pm**

Lesley Heller is pleased to present *Uncertain Haven*, a site-specific sculptural installation by Rachelle Dang in the Project Space.

Over several years Rachelle Dang has reconstructed various 18th century botanical transport carriers based on scientific designs and historical illustrations. Her approach draws from her family's history in Hawaii—herself born and raised there—and an acute awareness of environmental vulnerabilities and the lasting effects of colonialism. She intertwines ecological, colonial, and personal narratives embedded in these elaborate cabinets, which were originally produced to transport living tropical plant species across oceans to Europe and to other colonial territories.

In this new work, Dang has enlarged and subtly altered the transport carrier, sealing off the interior; its unknown contents behind three layers of wood and opaque stained glass. While the original form operated within a larger naturalist and colonial project to transfer living plant specimens globally, she has rendered the conveyor non-functional. The cabinet, stripped of its function, takes on a psychological resonance. Resembling a small house with its familiar A-frame structure, the form also alludes to a cage, trunk, or tomb. Dang's use of color and its gradient application references an 18th century French watercolor drawing depicting the wooden carrier resting weightlessly over tufted pillows of grass—in a strange field extending to the milky horizon.

Leaf forms—brittle like porcelain—are caught between the glass panes and the boarded inner chamber of the carrier on one side. The cabinet structure has also been surrounded with an undulating floor of worn and misshapen cushions, hand-built in clay. These cushions—once supple markers of comfort and safety—are rendered rigid, their parched and cracked surfaces attest to strain and desiccation, evoking a barren topography. The carrier and its surrounding elements suggest an unsettling landscape of loss and displacement; of questionable protection or an Uncertain Haven.

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Rachelle Dang (b. Honolulu, Hawaii) has exhibited her work in New York at Socrates Sculpture Park, Fergus McCaffrey, Nathalie Karg Gallery, Motel, Hunter College, Cooper Union, mh PROJECT nyc, Underdonk, and SPRING/BREAK Art Show. Additional exhibitions include the Honolulu Museum of Art, Hawaii Pacific University, Detroit Art Week *Young Curators New Ideas V*, and the Haverford College Art Galleries. Upcoming exhibitions include a solo project space exhibition at Lesley Heller Gallery and a solo fellowship exhibition at A.I.R. Gallery. Dang has been an artist-in-residence at Shandaken: Storm King Art Center, the Studios at MASS MoCA, Cooper Union, Vermont Studio Center, and Sculpture Space where she received an Emerging Sculptor Fellowship. She was awarded a 2019-2020 residency with the Smack Mellon Artist Studio Program, a 2019 Emerging Artist Fellowship with Socrates Sculpture Park, a 2019-2020 Fellowship with A.I.R. Gallery, and was recently nominated for the Dedalus MFA Fellowship and the Rema Hort Mann Emerging Artist Grant. Her recent solo exhibitions have been reviewed in the *Brooklyn Rail* and *Hyperallergic*. Dang received an MFA from Hunter College in 2018.