



# RUIZ-HEALY ART

Latinx, Latin America, & Texas Contemporary Art

Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to present *Karma is a Cat*, a solo exhibition of works by gallery artist Jennifer Ling Datchuk, opening on Wednesday, November 15th, with an opening reception from 6:00-8:00 PM. *Karma is a Cat* will be on view at our New York City gallery through January 2024. A fully illustrated catalog will be published, and the artist will attend the opening reception.

Jennifer Ling Datchuk's work explores her layered identity—as a woman, a Chinese woman, an “American,” and a third-culture kid. Datchuk works with porcelain and materials often associated with traditional women's work—such as textiles and hair fibers. Datchuk's practice discusses fragility, beauty, femininity, intersectionality, identity, and her personal history. Through material culture, the history of craft, and by championing the handmade, Datchuk challenges the social, political, and cultural systems that continue to hold women back.

The “cat lady” trope has persisted in culture and advances the stereotype of lonely and strange women who use felines as a substitute for both lovers and children. On May 4, 2022, Congressman Matt Gaetz of Florida employed this sexist trope by tweeting, “How many of the women rallying against overturning Roe are over-educated, under-loved millennials who sadly return from protests to a lonely microwave dinner with their cats, and no Bumble matches?” *Karma is a Cat* delves into the use of the expression to discredit the feminist movement and explores the complexities of the “cat lady” label.

In her latest work, Datchuk continues to build upon her “object-based practice” by initiating thought-provoking dialogues that confront the misogynistic conventions that continually stigmatize women who defy traditional roles. *Hear Us Coming* features 8 porcelain cat bells each measuring 3 x 3 x 3.5 inches. Datchuk states, “As an overeducated, cat-loving, elder millennial in a committed and loving relationship with a man and cat, I am actively fighting against the social, cultural, and political systems that continue to hold women back. Adorned with large porcelain bells, they will hear us coming and continue to fear us because karma is a cat.”

A reimagined 1970s protest banner reading “men of quality are not threatened by women for equality” will be on display. In the early 20th century, as women came closer to gaining the right to vote, cats became a standard feature of anti-suffrage propaganda. As stated by journalist Rae Alexandra “associating women's rights activists with this particular pet acted as a wink and a nod to the public about what kind of woman wanted the vote: lonely, bitter man-haters.” Other works that will be part of the exhibition like *Love Yourself Long Time*, a set of 50 custom red welcome mats made in China. Red doormats are found in front of almost every Chinese restaurant and business all over the world. These mats are markers for crossing thresholds, the objects below our feet that welcome or receive us as we work, spend, desire, and consume. This red is symbolic of good luck and fortune in Chinese culture but synonymous with anger and passion. Jennifer states that we often think of the label “made in China” and associate it with *cheap and poorly made objects*. *What makes their labor and bodies any less than that of American labor?*

## **About the Artist**

Jennifer Ling Datchuk was born in Warren, Ohio, and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Her work explores her layered identity – as a woman, a Chinese woman, as an “American,” as a third culture kid. Trained in ceramics, Datchuk works with porcelain and other materials often associated with traditional women's work, such as textiles and hair, to discuss fragility, beauty, femininity, intersectionality, identity, and personal history. Her practice evolved from sculpture to mixed media as she focused on



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domestic objects and the feminine sphere. Handwork and hair became totems of the small rituals that fix, smooth over, and ground women's lives. Through these materials, she explores how Western beauty standards influenced the East, how the non-white body is commodified and sold, and how women's – globally, girls' – work is still a significant economic driver whose workers still struggle for equality.

Datchuk holds an MFA in Artisanry from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and a BFA in Crafts from Kent State University. She has received grants from the Artist Foundation of San Antonio, a travel grant from Artpace, and the Linda Lighton International Artist Exchange Program to research the global migrations of porcelain and blue and white pattern decoration. She was awarded a residency through the Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum to conduct her studio practice at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, Germany, and has participated in residencies at the Pottery Workshop in Jingdezhen, China, Vermont Studio Center, European Ceramic Work Center in the Netherlands, Artpace in San Antonio, Texas and the John Michael Kohler Arts/Industry Residency in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

In 2017, she received the Emerging Voices award from the American Craft Council and, in 2020, was named a United States Artist Fellow in Craft. Her work has been featured in a solo publication, "Jennifer Ling Datchuk: Half," through French and Michigan in San Antonio, TX, and included in "Artpace at 25," "Black Cube: A Nomadic Museum," the Guardian, Vogue, and American Craft Magazine. Her work is in the collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, TX; San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX; and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, LA. She is an Assistant Professor of Ceramics at Arizona State University and lives and maintains a studio practice in Phoenix, Arizona.

## **About Ruiz-Healy Art**

Founded in 2006 in San Antonio, Texas, Ruiz-Healy Art specializes in contemporary works of art and represents an international roster of artists with an emphasis on Latinx, Latin American, and prominent Texas-based artists. With galleries in San Antonio, TX and New York, NY, Ruiz-Healy Art's continuous investments in these underrepresented areas have remained a longstanding signature of the gallery program. For inquiries regarding our gallery programming, or to schedule a private appointment outside of our regular gallery hours please email [info@ruizhealyart.com](mailto:info@ruizhealyart.com) or call 646.833.7709.