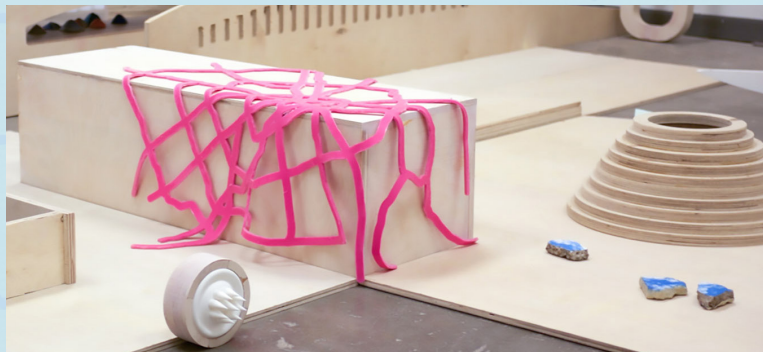


## FROM THE CURATOR

The UMLAUF is honored to ring in the new decade with Ling-lin Ku's *Off the Map*, a highly pertinent exhibition for this Museum. 2020 marks the inaugural year for the UMLAUF Prize Expanded, a juried competition for emerging artists working in greater Austin. In addition to opening up this year's prize to more artists, the UMLAUF expanded the jury to include Shea Little, artist and Founder/Director of Austin's beloved Big Medium, and Deborah Roberts, a native Austinite who is one of the art world's most sought-after artists.

The challenging process of selecting the winner reaffirmed what we already knew: the Austin area holds a diverse group of immensely talented emerging artists. Ling-lin Ku had steep competition, but won the prize for her fanciful, precisely rendered works. Born in Taiwan, Ku has a background in music and earned her law degree in Taiwan, before receiving her MFA in Sculpture and Extended Media from the University of Texas at Austin. She has exhibited in L.A. and New York and won the Seebacher Prize for Fine Arts from the American Austrian Foundation. As the first recipient of the UMLAUF Prize Expanded, Ku's imaginary cityscape reflects her distinct global perspective. *Off the Map*, the site-specific installation she constructed in the gallery, surpassed our expectations. A pastiche of recognizable yet incongruous objects, *Off the Map* offers hints of landscapes and objects from a wide array of cultures and geographies. The humorous juxtapositions and scale shifts suggest the artist's slightly amused point of view, delivered with a perfectionist's eye for detail.

**Katie Robinson Edwards, Ph.D.**



The UMLAUF Sculpture Garden + Museum exhibits the work of Charles Umlauf, his influences and other contemporary artists in a natural setting and provides educational experiences that encourage the understanding and appreciation of art. We provide art-in-education programs to at-risk youth; touch-tours for visually impaired and special needs; and free tours for every public-school child. The UMLAUF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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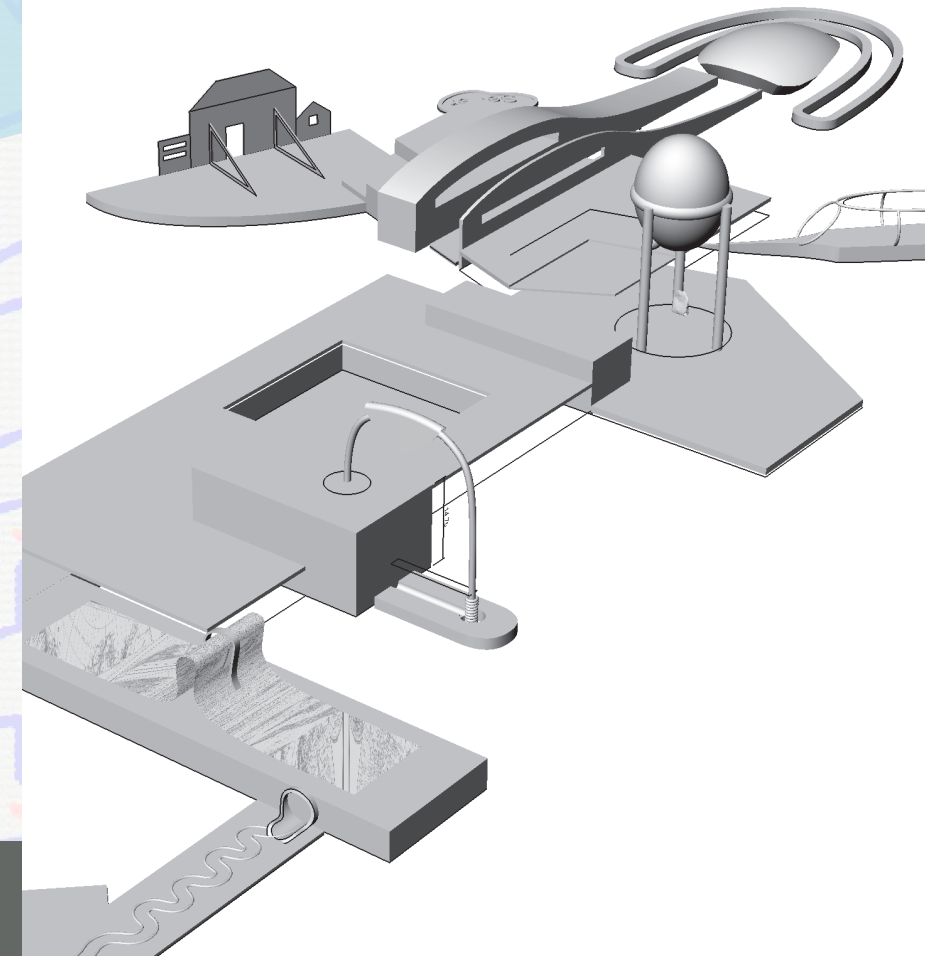
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The UMLAUF Sculpture Garden + Museum  
presents UMLAUF Prize Expanded winner

# LING-LIN KU: OFF THE MAP

Jan 23 - Apr 5, 2020



605 Azie Morton Road  
Austin, TX 78704  
Tues - Fri 10-4  
Sat & Sun 11-4  
[umlaufsculpture.org](http://umlaufsculpture.org)

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## ABANDONING THE SIDEWALK FOR AN OPEN FIELD

Somewhere along the vast information superhighway exists a noteworthy pitstop in the form of a web page by artist Ling-lin Ku, simply titled “Studio Play.” Images of bananas cuddling underneath a white towel and a yellow squash disguised amongst a bunch of citrus with the caption “zucchini trying to hang out with lemons,” speak to the core of who Ling-lin is as an artist: a devilishly clever and highly observant student of everyday objects, places, and how people perceive them.

With *Off the Map*, Ling-lin continues to share the concept of the familiar yet strange, encouraging viewers to engage with spaces somewhere in between fantasy and reality, as they journey through imaginary territories. Colorful oven baked clay tents occupy a highway underpass, meant to offer a childlike perspective on poverty, and found bits of concrete with UV printed images of blue skies act as a mirage, turning discarded objects into something wondrous.

Construction materials like plywood, concrete, clay, and sand are carefully handcrafted by Ling-lin, and represent the Earth’s “non-spaces,” ambiguous areas unseen and unconsidered by the populace. The installation acts as a map for a nonexistent place, inspired by the concept of psychogeography— an exploration of urban environments that emphasizes



playfulness and drifting. References to Houston, Ling-lin’s current home base, can be seen in the bubblegum pink mold of a map of Houston’s major highways and in circular wooden objects that symbolize tires with spikes, a riff on the city’s Slab culture.

Ling-lin’s expert use of 3D modeling technology and skills as a fabricator are evident in this exhibition where pieces fit just so and clean lines abound. The artist acts as an urban planner for this make-believe city, keeping placemaking and shared geographical knowledge at the forefront of the creative process.

Born and raised in Taiwan, Ling-lin experienced a radically new sense of space after moving to Texas, her primary form of transport, train travel, giving way to Texas-sized cars and highways. The show’s title was inspired by a book of the same name by novelist Alastair Bonnett featuring stories of hidden geographies and detached places. As an immigrant living in the U.S., Ling-lin has long considered what it means to be from a place that is seemingly nonexistent on the world scale.

Greeting gallery visitors at the tip of the 18 x 25 x 2 foot plywood structure is a computer cut, terrain covered turtleback tomb, inspired by traditional Asian burial structures. The turtle shell symbolizes a woman’s womb, the end of a long journey, and being reborn. Often drawing insight from places she travels, Ling-lin saw some of the graves while traveling in Okinawa a few years ago.

Another piece in the show was inspired by her recent trip to the Oldmasters Museum in Belgium. Ling-lin brings an otherworldly object from Netherlandish painter Hieronymus Bosch’s triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* to life in the exhibit, modernizing the fantastical horned structure by enclosing it in a clear party balloon.

Playing with scale, a 36-inch tall abstract water tower and oversized ant hills dot the 3D map, and an excavation site reminiscent of a sandbox allows us to muse how objects might interact with one another.

Constructed at TX/RX Labs in Houston, every element of this exhibition has been custom made for the UMLAUF gallery.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ling-lin Ku received her MFA from University of Texas at Austin in 2019 and BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2016. Ling-lin has exhibited her work in cities such as Salzburg, New York, Austin, and Los Angeles, and has been selected into residencies including the International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) in Brooklyn, New York, Summer Academy in Salzburg, Austria, Haystack Open Studio Residency in Maine, Ox-Bow Artists Residency in Michigan, and Helene Wurlitzer Foundation in New Mexico. In 2019, Ling-lin was one of the four recipients of Seebacher Prize for Fine Arts awarded by the American Austrian Foundation.



## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Jan 23, 6-8pm

Opening Reception

Feb 9, 12-4pm

Family Day

Feb 19, 7pm

INSIGHTS; Emerging Professionals Panel

Mar 8, 12-4pm

Family Day

Mar 25, 6-8pm

Artist talk and performance with Ling-lin and her twin sister Ling-ying Ku

Ling-lin’s ability to draw inspiration from her travels, personal identity, urban landscapes, cultural references, maps, classical music, and machine diagrams makes for a visually rich sculptural world, a much needed escape from reality.

On a recent run around my neighborhood after considering Ling-lin’s work I began to see routine objects in new ways: a fallen leaf became a miniature stegosaurus, freshly distributed newspapers appeared curled like undulating tidal waves. With *Off the Map*, Ling-lin reminds us, via the use of delightfully tacky billboards and so much more, about the power of perspective. In her words, she’s constructed a physical shift in perspective, “like a traveler wandering without a specific destination or like abandoning the sidewalk for an open field.”

**Mary K. Cantrell**

B.A., B.J., Independent Arts Journalist