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Inspired by Tetsumi Kudo and Sci-fi TV, a New York Painter Makes Contact with “Peaceful Alien”

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Image courtesy of The Pit.

In art, literature, and particularly in film, the alien—a foreign or extraterrestrial being—is often associated with hostility, danger, and the unknown. But in a new series of paintings by Adrienne Rubenstein, the alien is far from a threat; it’s a peaceful presence.



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(1935–1990), children’s book author and illustrator Graeme Base, and, perhaps most importantly, *Roswell*, a sci-fi TV series that ran from 1999 to 2002.



Adrienne Rubenstein
Peaceful Alien, 2016
The Pit

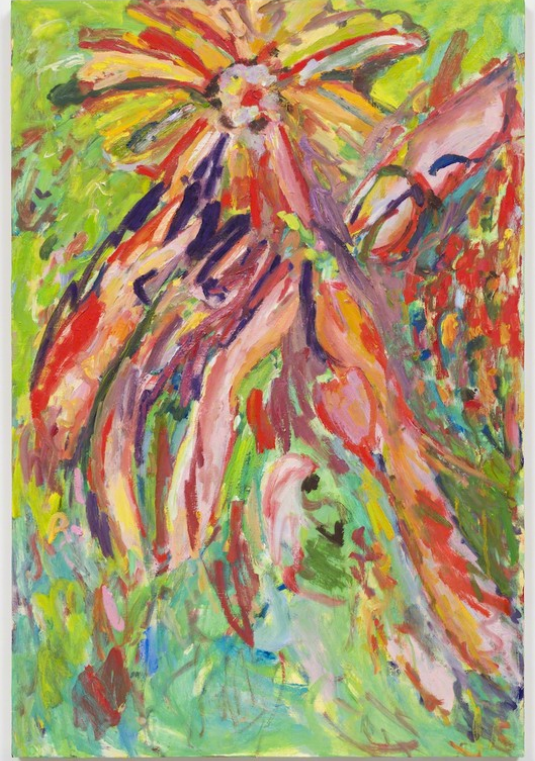
Rubenstein’s show, “Peaceful Alien,” features just five paintings. How do her predilections factor into these vibrant, richly detailed works? In Rubenstein’s organic shapes—especially the looming head in *Peaceful Alien* (2016)—there’s a hint of Kudo’s eccentricity and the abstract expressionist style that made him a key figure in Tokyo’s “Anti-Art” movement in the 1960s. Thematically, Rubenstein’s paintings also evoke Base’s colorful picture books. One of his better-known works, *The Worst Band in the Universe* (1999), involves an interaction between the protagonist and aliens on a foreign planet.



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Adrianne Rubenstein
The Eleventh Hour, 2016
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Adrianne Rubenstein
Underwater Flower, 2016
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And then there's *Roswell*. Rubenstein clearly feels a certain nostalgia for the televised drama, in which teenage human/alien hybrids meet and fall in love while bonding over shared visions of a past empire on another planet. Just as those characters revisited past lives, Rubenstein herself returned to the places where she once lived. In preparing for “Peaceful Alien,” the artist, who is now based in New York, traveled to San Francisco, Toronto, Montreal, and Newfoundland. Her new body of work is saturated with nostalgia, with memories of those places and the poignancy of revisiting them years later.



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Adrianne Rubenstein
Tetsumi Kudo Painting, 2016
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Adrianne Rubenstein
Broccoli Planets, 2016
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Although deeply nostalgic, Rubenstein’s new paintings are also charmingly whimsical. Note, for instance, the heart shapes in *Tetsumi Kudo Painting* (2016), the giant planetary broccoli in *Broccoli Planets* (2016), and the colorful flowers, honeycombs, and snails that dot her work. Isn’t that how memory functions? Dreams, old scenes, and remembered moments get mixed up and folded onto one another. Colors seem brighter, fantastical details cloud the actual lived experience, and reality gets blurred, even if the truth really is out there.

—Bridget Gleeson

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