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Reviews | *National*

Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin

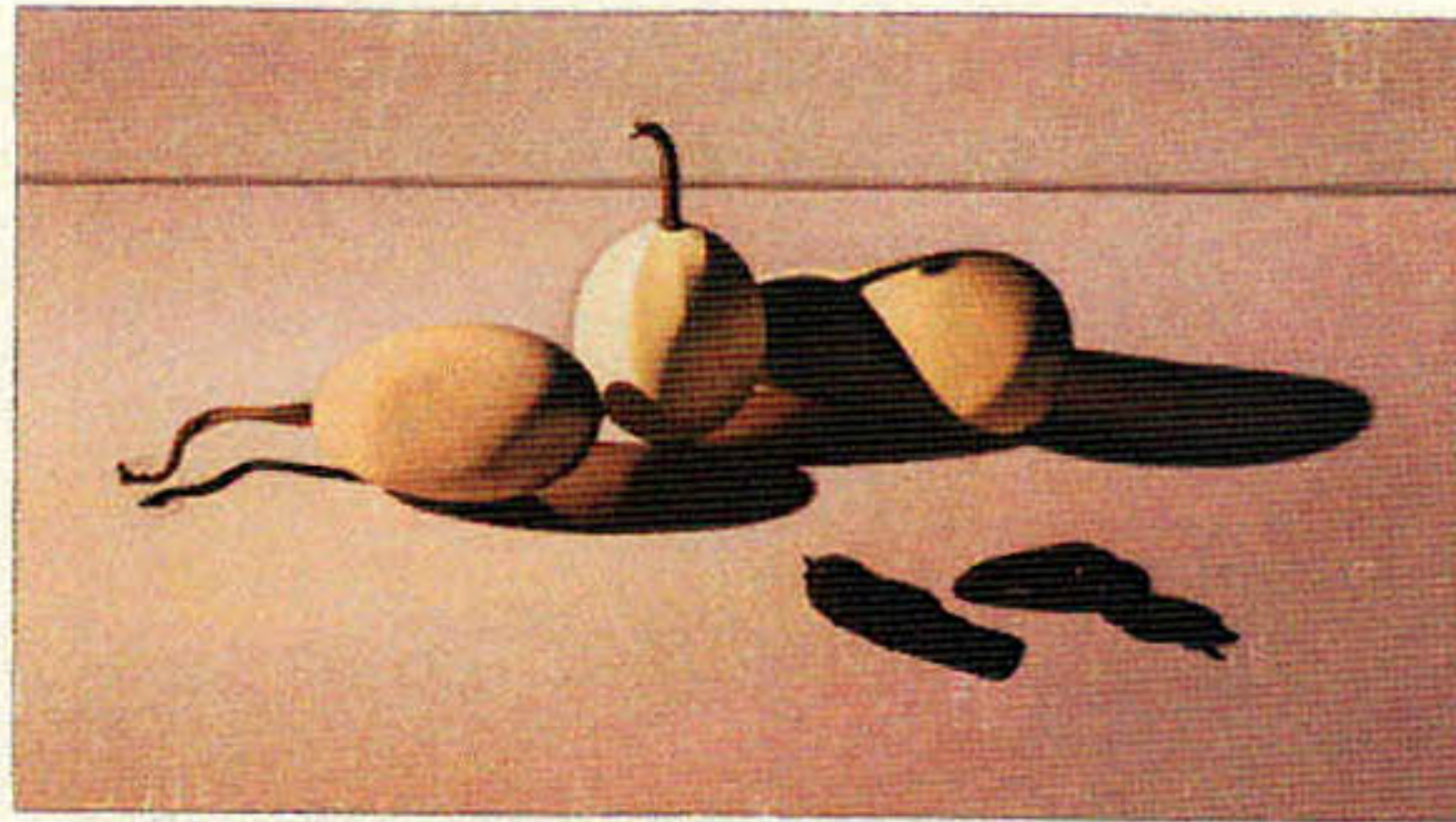
L.A. LOUVER
Venice, California

In the eleven years since her last solo show, Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin has made a dramatic shift. Instead of sweeping cityscapes rendered in painstaking detail, she has been painting spare and intimate still lifes set in empty white spaces, albeit with the same crisp realism. The work on view here dated from 1994 to 2003. By narrowing her scope from the panoramic to the particular, Rubin was able to showcase the sophistication of her technique.

The timing of the transition coincided roughly with Rubin's move from Los Angeles, where she'd spent most of her life and which had been the source of her subject matter, to northern California. In the cooler climate, she began painting indoors (Rubin works exclusively from life), and one senses her retreat from the overwhelming stimulation of the outside world. In the later works, we find only a few objects at a time, all carefully chosen (whether for color, shape, scale, or symbolic significance) and meticulously arranged in idiosyncratic compositions. The light in each painting—manipulated to produce dramatic shadows and reflections—is completely static; the atmosphere surrealistically still and airless.

In the absence of context, a charming camaraderie emerges between the objects: the plump, glistening jalapeño and the chalky white gourd of *Gourds & Peppers* (2002-3); the sturdy sledgehammer and the thin shards of shattered glass in *Sledge Hammer with Light Bulbs* (2000-1); the voluptuous lime-green teapot and a tube of the same shade of paint in *Color* (2002-3), a set of 12 paintings, each a study of a different hue. Lavished upon these simple but visually compelling little scenes, Rubin's smooth, clear painting feels like a celebration.

—Holly Myers



Sandra Mendelsohn
Rubin, *Gourds & Peppers*, 2002-3,
oil on linen,
36" x 65".
L.A. Louver.