

Artist's statement

By Insook Hwang / 2010

In my installations, my interest is in creating a form that resembles a living organism by combining small, repeating images that assemble into a larger more intriguing form. This approach employs some unique cloning and collage techniques, as well as a distinctive vocabulary. The distinctive characteristics of these works lie in the repetitive, playful combinations of cartoon-like symbols and marks. When creating forms digitally, I use each small image like a cell, repeating them but with slight variations in their form. While Surrealism has been a clear influence on my works, so are ancient Korean landscape paintings and calligraphic works, as evident by the use of line-oriented marks and the white background as infinite space. My cartoon-like abstractions are stimulated by Western artists, notably Roy Lichtenstein, Keith Haring and Philip Guston.

My works are the result of my explorations with diverse mixed media and techniques, which combine traditional techniques (such as freehand drawing, painting, collage, sewing, and stamping) with various digital techniques. These are used to intensify the optical illusions in my work yet make it feel very tactile and personal. Since 2008 this has included the making lenticular prints and applying them as distinctive and effective visual elements in my work. These lenticular elements enable me to create the look of multiple animations without adding the weight of multiple electronic devices to an installation.

For this show, I extended my method of making hanging soft sculptures to raise some of the collaged elements off the canvas with cotton backing, making the work more dimensional and tactile. I also utilized several different computer imaging programs ranging from image creation and editing to 3D modeling and video editing to create the lenticulars, prints and video clips, thus enhancing the optical illusions. The Imaginary creatures created by combining multiple images of monitors, curve pipes and tubes symbolize our contemporary, internet based society moving, affecting and evolving itself.

In the lenticulars, the young American pop star, Lady Gaga is juxtaposed with the image of ancient Korean statue holding a musical instrument, typically positioned at a temple entrance to drive evil spirits away. The small and overlapping images and written texts in my pieces not easily seen from a distance work like a cryptic code and serve as contemporary talisman wishing people well being, balance and happiness. In this context, I used photographed self portraits of myself seated, mimicking the multi armed Buddha or Hindu goddess Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth and fortune), hoping these symbols would touch the world by creating a magical effect on the viewer if even for just a second.