

Artist Statement

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My work expresses social issues based on my autobiographical experiences. As a woman and Korean immigrant artist in America, I have struggled to adjust to my new culture. Every situation summons different roles, customs, and habits, which bring upon different mental challenges. I attempt to illustrate my resistance against the conformities of society and of American and Korean culture by showing variable perspectives and physical dissonance.

The first category of my work is about woman's status in Korea and America and my confused identity in-between the two cultures. In Korea, I felt social pressure to perform the traditional role of the submissive woman. As Estelle Disch states in *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*: "In Asian cultures that have been heavily influenced by Confucianism, women are regarded as secondary to men, existing for their service" [1]. Within these constraints, I could not reveal my true self or my feelings to other people directly. After moving to America, I faced obstacles in dealing with different cultural expectations about women. I had been conditioned to act like a 'proper' woman according to Confucian ideals that were expected of women in Korea while struggling to be more self-confident, independent, and assured in my new American homeland. Whenever I faced situations that required decisiveness, I was confused on which role I needed to follow and sometimes criticized myself because I thought I did not behave properly. I confront this struggle indirectly by expressing my feelings in my artwork. I find peace and escape from the hardship and difficulties by using art as a therapeutic vehicle. I hope my audience finds connections between my work and their lives.

Another category of my work deals with relationships. We sometimes learn the value of love from religion, children's fables or personal experiences. I try to make my audience reflect on the importance of caring for each other. The concept of the relationship in my work is not limited to people, but is open to non-human beings such as nature, everyday objects, or robots. This approach broadens the target of affection

universally. In my work, people hug trees, interact with imaginary sociable creatures in tabletop interfaces and witness robotic skeleton arms reacting to their smiling. Audiences learn that they could express appreciation to non-humans as well as human.

The last category of my work is about democracy. I organize various community workshops to share technological knowledge through DIY activities. These workshops provide accessible experiences using craft materials. They embrace simple technologies that most participants can utilize easily within a limited time and at a minimal cost. In my most recent workshop, Huggable Nature, community participants record voice messages that play back whenever they hug trees, flowers, or bushes.

Visual artworks can be interpreted in various meaning and convey more radical ideas compared to verbal or written media. Even though art does not solve social issues immediately, it reveals problems and persuades people. To me, art is not merely meant to be decorative or beautiful; instead, art can be a question, an argument, a proposal, a resolution or a reflection of the various problems that we encounter in our world. My greatest hope is for my audience to learn more about themselves, be confident in themselves, relieve their physiological burdens and acknowledge our society's issues as I have through my work.

- [1] E. Disch, *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology* vol. McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2002.