

Artist Statement

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My work considers '*in-between space*', which is based on my autobiographical experiences of moving from Korea to America. The space is a psychological gap; on one side, I have been conditioned to become a 'proper' woman according to Confucian ideals that are expected of women in Korea while struggling, on the other side, to be more self-confident, independent, and assured in my new American homeland.

Having lived in two countries, I struggle to adjust to each different space and culture emotionally and physically. Each situation summons different roles, customs, and habits, which bring upon different mental challenges. In Korea, I felt social pressure for performing the traditional role of the feminized 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." Within these constraints, I could not reveal my true self or my feelings to other people. After moving to America, I faced obstacles with various cultural expectations.

Through my experiences, I have become acutely aware of how my body has become a medium between the way I express myself and the world that encompasses me. As Douglas Kahn explains in *Noise Water Meat*: "When one speaks, the act of hearing one's voice is the most widespread private act performed in public and the most common public act experienced within the comfortable confines of one's own body." As a result, I have decided to use my body in my art as a connector between my private thoughts and the public world. In all my work, the body is either trapped, under scrutiny, and on view; thus, implying that my body is a nexus for a direct exchange and interaction with the viewer. Not only do I wish to convey my struggles to the viewer but I also hope to experience resolution and relief through the use of my body in my external.

All of my artwork is initially inspired by my personal experiences, my emotions, and my in-between state. Through my process of making, I attempt to illustrate my resistance against the conformities of society and of American and Korean culture by showing variable perspectives and physical dissonance. This process

of expressing and exhaling my unconscious dissatisfaction and frustrations allows me to release emotional stress and burden. Also, my art pieces work as a reminder of immigrant problems by publicizing the societal problems. Evenmore in a broader spectrum, my work provides encouragement to the oppressed sectors of society

In my work, I have two conditions I wish to fulfill: one is to be true to myself and the other is to accurately convey my messages to broad and various audiences. For the first condition, I find peace and escape from the hardship and difficulties I have encountered; and thus, internalized by using art as a therapeutic vehicle. Regarding the second condition, I try to convey my feelings and my experiences as a woman being raised in the confines of Confucian Korea and then being subsequently placed in an entirely new and foreign country, where the way of life is almost antithetical to the one in Korea.

In each of my pieces and performances, I express ideas through the use of different mechanisms, such as agony, oppression, and liberation. To me, art is not merely meant to be decorative or beautiful; instead, art can be a question, an argument, a proposal, a resolution, and, ideally, a nirvana for the various problems that we encounter in our world. My work is not only meant to be aesthetic but also a discussion of philosophy. My mission is to be a socially-responsible artist that examines the arena of societal role, oppression by bigotry, mental emancipation, and immigrant situations. Through the body of work I have addressed, I have learned a great deal about myself and about social issues, and I think I have also matured and advanced as an artist. My greatest hope is my audience has also learned more about themselves and our society's issues.

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