

3. Chloe Jeongmyo Kim: On Emotional Catharsis at the Abandoned Salton Sea



Artist Chloe Jeongmyo Kim

All images reprinted courtesy of Chloe Jeongmyo Kim

Chloe Jeongmyo Kim is a Korean artist who immigrated to the United States in 2012 and continues to explore her career as a fine art artist in Orange County where she has permanently settled.

Eivette Lopez: I want to begin by asking how your Korean culture, past travel experiences, perspectives, and constant relocating shape the way you translate messages into your art? How does your self identity affect your work?

Chloe Jeongmyo Kim: I am a Korean, immigrated to the United States in 2012, and lived as a nomad for several years before planting my roots in southern California. I was blessed to have a myriad of experiences living in many different countries and cities including Seoul, Washington D.C., New York, Hong Kong, Michigan, and Los Angeles. Although wildly exciting to visit the new places, I felt tremendous turmoil adjusting and readjusting to different cultures and lifestyles, knowing that my temporary stay would be short-lived. But through my journey, I've found rays of sunlight beaming through my Korean cultural background allowing me to see the world through vivid lenses. With the influence from a variety of cultures and places, my unique identity turned out into my artwork.



Chloe Jeongmyo Kim. "Stagnant Dream," Acrylic painting, digital print on plexiglass, 2021

EL: Throughout your work, I noticed a consistent use of layering in regards to materials such as plexiglass, paint colors, tape, and other materials which speaks to the clash of translucency and opacity. How does this technique relate to your artistic process?

CJK: In order to express these strong emotional responses and to explore the after-tastes of my flavorful experiences, I intermix various painting gestures with the representational photographic images. These two elements create profound visual narratives on top of the natural transparency. Comparing with canvas, the physicality of the transparent sheet of plexiglass doesn't have representational value. It is something we can look through but it gives me a sense of freedom. While sparingly layered both sides, front and back, my hybrid identity is manifested. By leaving empty space to invite penetrating light, I create phenomenological and affectual depths on a transparent surface, which echoes the contrast found between human-touched expressions and the dehumanized manual world.



Chloe Jeongmyo Kim. "Stagnant Dream," Acrylic painting, digital print on plexiglass, 2021

EL: Your most current project "The Salton Sea Project," a collaboration with three Chinese artists, encompasses sculptural photographic pieces as both a visual and emotional response to the current COVID-19 pandemic juxtaposed with the Salton Sea, an inland sea which has long been abandoned. May you please expand on this project and discuss how the connection to this particular sea motivated your participation?

CJK: The COVID-19 pandemic threatens human life worldwide and has devastated millions of lives. The current crisis had a deeper impact on the Asian community. Research has shown, racial discrimination against people of Chinese and other Asian ethnicities has risen sharply especially in the United States. Also, with violent crime and using derogatory phrases such as the Yellow Peril, Model Minority, and Chinese Virus.

Within the Asian immigrant artist's point of view, I want to express my alienated and frustrated emotion during the pandemic through the Salton Sea project.

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I am a Korean, immigrated to the United States in 2012. I have been living as a perpetual outsider. I passionately started the second stage of my life here, where I thought the multicultural aspects of America is what makes this country so beautiful and that it is the perfect place to show my artistic desire to various audiences from different cultures, backgrounds, and points of view. However, under the current political climate with the widespread notion: the “model minority stereotype” (Asians in success makes potential competition or threats to the other racial group), against the backdrop of COVID-19, I felt awfully devastated seeing the gap between my ideological perception and the fact of reality with my own political lens. Within the Asian immigrant artist’s point of view, I want to express my alienated and frustrated emotion during the pandemic through the Salton Sea project.



Chloe Jeongmyo Kim. “Stagnant Dream,” Acrylic painting, digital print on plexiglass, 2021

My ambiguous Asian identity transformed into the translucent sculptural medium. I brought the work to the most abandoned body of water, the Salton Sea. I juxtaposed the abandoned objects from the site with a vast expanse of unprotected water creating an immersive narrative.

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This project includes the ‘Stagnant Dream’ work that is a composition of two sculptural painting pieces referencing my exploration of abandoned places and objects, affected by COVID, near where I lived in Southern California. Even today, communal places where there were many

residents such as the community pool, barbecue grilled area, and a small trail were now turned into abandoned places. And, there were a lot of objects that I could identify with as they all seemed to be very alienated. All of a sudden, the swimming pool strongly caught my eyes. It resonated as a drowsy and mac and cheesy taste of Western vibe, but there was a dreary feeling as if it it as never used or taken care of, like a pool of abandoned stagnant water. Withered palm tree leaves and dead insects floated on the bleach and chlorine water surface, slowly sinking to the bottom of the pool.



Chloe Jeongmyo Kim. "Stagnant Dream," Acrylic painting, digital print on plexiglass, 2021

I tried to infuse my ongoing discomfort into my artwork by applying translucent material and layering hand-cut photographic images with buttery colors. My ambiguous Asian identity transformed into the translucent sculptural medium. I brought the work to the most abandoned body of water, the Salton Sea. I juxtaposed the abandoned objects from the site with a vast expanse of unprotected water creating an immersive narrative. I put into play my plain dream by interacting with the surrounding environment and interplaying with natural light and shadow to create the extraordinary "Stagnant Dream."

For More of Chloe Jeongmyo Kim's work visit: chloejmkim.com