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Mihyang Kim - MFA Thesis Show

Mihyang Kim
Claremont Graduate University

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Artist Statement

Mihyang Kim

My works are a sort of journal, which is truly personal but at the same time belongs to the public. All of my experiences are connected to the outside world and each piece is connected to a story. I paint abstract emblems that stem from my interactions with people expecting their deaths, living as immigrants, or being disconnected from their pasts. My work represents my sympathy and compassion for the pain they have. I record my emotional and experiential individuality, based on the situations in which I have found myself. The precarious state of nature and the human environment are important to my work, as both a context for and continuation of the empathetic humanity my art conveys.

I have a strong sensitivity to the pain behind the stories that I see or hear in my daily experiences. Numerous narratives of death, ignorance, starvation, separation, destruction, and depression face me every day. The pain in my work is my visualization and interpretation of my feelings from these events. It is indirect and abstract, but based in reality. In my art, figures mix with human organs and elements of nature are handicapped. The limbs of figures are chopped and even though the act of suturing repairs some forms, important pieces of the figure are still missing. Fabrics are burned and torn to distort images and embody absence. The figures are alone or in crowds, limping in the middle of nowhere, revealing their labor, sadness, and shamelessness. Images

are flat, simple, and contain no unnecessary illusions. They are painted in muted natural colors that are unreasonably beautiful and peaceful. This maximizes and sublimates tragedy.

My work is my own ritualistic ceremony where I can release the fullness of distress, which seems to be everywhere, and seems to be shared by everyone, at some time or another. In my process, there is sorrow, but at the same time there is beauty and irony. It is playful melancholy, a type of tragicomedy that has element of farce mixed with pathos and sincerity. My ancestors created the most beautiful farces in Korea when history went to extremes and people were eager to consume them to feel catharsis. This is the relationship I make with viewers whose suffering will come back to joyful beauty in their lives.

The biological, emotional and cultural influence on people, the serenity and devastation of nature, and the burdens of human society on our population and planet, all play a part in my work. Rather than releasing the daily encounters of suffering to fading memories, I hold the stories and resuscitate them to unbind hidden emotions that often go unnoticed, but are worthy of being shared.