

GENEYCLEE GALLERY

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Q. Tell us about yourself, your background and your journey getting to this point of your art career.

A. I was born in Taiwan and immigrated to Bangkok with my family when I was 6 years old. There I attended an international school, studying alongside children from different backgrounds and ethnicities with mainly British and American teachers. I moved to Thailand without learning a single word in English or Thai, so drawing and painting became a way for me to express myself when I couldn't speak the language.

As a third culture kid, which I would define as a person who grows up in more than one culture, I was exposed to a wider variety of cultural heritage. Especially attending a school founded by the United Nations. A big part of the curriculum was focused on teaching us to understand and embrace cultures and traditions from all parts of the world. This has led me to study my BA at Slade School of Fine Art, and MFA at Yale School of Art. These experiences and studies instigated my quest to further investigate on how our cultural backgrounds can shift our understanding of a story and also on the way we story tell. In addition, I also became fascinated by the similarities in symbolism, allegory or even descriptions of mythological creatures that are shared in different parts of the world. These ideas of collective consciousness and colliding cultures have become the backbone of my art.



Q. How has your time at Slade and Yale influenced you and your work?

A. I decided to go to the UK to pursue my undergraduate studies mainly because my high school teacher was British. He persuaded me that if my aim is to make narrative paintings I needed to go to a place with more art history. On top of that with my love for German expressionism, I knew Europe was where I needed to be. The Slade School of Fine Art's structure gave me plenty of time to experiment and find my own voice. I was given a studio space to just go at it, and everything was pretty much like a masters program in the US. With all the time to work in my studio and contemplate on my subjects I really started to question my personal history. I began delving into Chinese art history and studied Chinese ink paintings, eventually developing a style in which I layer oil paint on top of acrylics. The acrylic paint stains the raw canvas to create a watercolor and Chinese ink painting-like backdrop while the oil paints are then applied to break into the backdrop's fluidity. I felt like this formula was the perfect merger of the East and the West.

After graduating I knew I wanted to come to the States since the different educational system would bring about a new set of inspirations. Yale School of Art has taught me a completely different way of looking at art. Much of it was focused on formalism, heightening my awareness of composition, structure, and color. I definitely managed to get the best of both worlds.

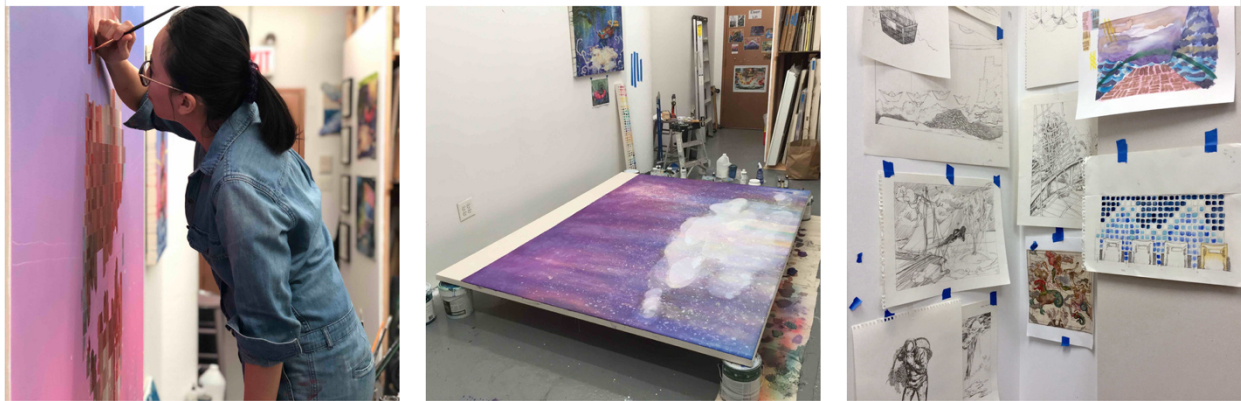


Q. You have several series within your body of work, could you tell us a little about each of them?

A. I started the series “Non-places” during my MFA program at Yale. The notion of “non-places” was introduced from Marc Augé’s “Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity”. These paintings are collective journals that document the loss of cultural boundaries that we face in this contemporary globalized world.

After graduate school, I moved to New York. Wanting to diverge away from all things theoretical that were so saturated over the course of the last two years, I dived into fictions, mythologies and specifically Chinese folklores, mainly due to nostalgia and feeling homesick. At this time, I also adopted my first pet cat, Meme. I wanted to fuse these folklores about human-animal relationships with the modern-day urbanite’s attachments with their pets. The paintings in the series “Pet-Society” also focuses on filtering these stories through the poetics of translation and mistranslations, spotting cultural indexes that are often overlooked and highlighting ambiguity and ambivalence.

My current project “Mythopoeia” reiterates *Moby Dick*. Many elements in this piece of classic American literature relate to my experience as an immigrant artist: the cultural diversity of the crew-mates, the journey from New England to Asia, the segregation from society, and the mysticism of travel. By overlapping similarities between stories from different parts of the world with the original, and highlighting mistranslation due to cultural indifference and evolution of contemporary language, the new reiteration illustrates how the globalized world brings us closer together and create a collective consciousness shared across cultural divides.



Q. What do you hope to achieve in your art career?

A. Like most artists, I would like to have solo exhibitions in all major museums and continue to create artworks full-time. All of my paintings are embedded with multivalent and cynicism, and it is this awkwardness and humor set up by a mix-match of cultures that is fundamental in celebrating our diversities and is one I have learned to embrace. I want to continue to create works that play with the nuance and complexity of our new age and I hope these works will bring us all closer together.

Q. Talk us through your creative process?

A. I develop each painting according to a set process. My paintings usually begin with a vague pencil sketch that I turn into a watercolor study. Then, I paint a smaller piece to assist with the development of the final 7 feet by 8 feet painting. Each step helps me understand what will work best for the scale of the work and how to add new layers into the final composition. I believe the balance between conceptual and compositional elements is achieved by years of learning through trial and error.

The backdrop and water are usually the first things I put on the canvas. I let it loosely stain the surface and allow the paint to flow freely. The rest of the painting is composed around the initial shape of the water. The more I paint water, the more I'm able to lose control. It is the one part my paintings that are truly abstract and I'm still developing ways to play with various renderings.

Q. You've achieved what so many aspiring artist hope to achieve, what kind of advice can you offer those aspiring to become full time artists?

A. I think the most important thing to become a full-time artist is self-motivation and perseverance. Making art is hard and it is crucial to always keep focus, but also make sure to study art history and be updated with contemporary art. The more you see the more you'll know what's best for your art.

<https://www.genecleegallery.com/post/who-s-next-eelen-lin>