

Masquerade: Self-Presentation and Self-Awareness

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School at the
University of Missouri

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

By

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May 2014

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

MASQUERADE:
SELF-PRESENTATION AND SELF-AWARENESS

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance

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Dedication

To my mother and brother, for their love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my Thesis Committee – Matthew Ballou, Jessica Thornton, and James Van Dyke – for their support, generosity, and encouragement. Without them, I would not have been able to figure out what I needed to make. I say “needed” instead of “wanted” because they patiently guided me through, waiting for me to figure out the core ideas that I really needed to express in my work.

I also want to thank Eric Sweet for helping me with my thesis writing and developing ideas.

I would like to thank all other professors and faculty who pushed me to understand my work better and supported me in that process.

Finally, a special thank you to all of my MFA colleagues who shared laughs and tears in and the outside of the studio. I love you all.

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Introduction

This project provides an opportunity to think about the power of self-presentation and self-promotion. Living as a female Korean immigrant had led me to develop my own strategies to blend into American society. Central to these strategies has been my practice of making funny faces and taking on big body gestures among me peers and in public. Such actions are documented and exhibited on social media by friends, and the accumulation of those images has created another version of me: a caricatured persona. The core concept in this project is how I have solidified these fictional images of myself into a series of friendly and non-threatening cartoon-style characters that may be easily accepted.

In the present time, social networking has become one of the easiest and most widespread tools to connect with people. Images that people post online reflect their interests and ideas about themselves. Therefore, it is important to take a critical look at how self-portraits – or any image of an individual at all – can manipulate the public view of an individual, and how people can take control of images to shape how they appear in the public sphere.

Thanks to new technology, photography is much easier than in the past. The smartphone era has allowed people to take photos and share them with friends and family anytime and anywhere. Shared photographs are now constantly on view to the public; asserting ownership of those images becomes tricky. Most photographs are presented without the understanding of the viewer as to how the original intent of their

portrait photographs is affected by the context in which they are viewed. We are left with the unfortunate reality that images of people may be shared, decontextualized, manipulated, and reinterpreted freely.

Thus, someone can share images of me online without my approval or even my knowledge. Viewers without question accept those pictures, as if that singular representation is my one sole identity. Yet this cultural phenomenon establishes a potential new context for self-portraiture. As an artist who relocated from a different country, I have always been aware of contemporary imagery of minorities in the United States. Satirical, stereotypical pictures of minorities have existed for thousands of years. With the advent of the photograph, film, and television, these projections saturated the visual realm. Now with the Internet, a new level of propagation has taken place. What people accept as true is often the result of many decades of layered prejudice and misunderstanding – such as the ideas that Asian women are submissive, inherently good at math and science, or have poor driving skills (Jo 137)(Family Guy, Fox Season 5, Episode 8). By working from an awareness of how media has shaped the public perception of minorities, I began a body of work that actively reclaims images of my own visage and persona in order to re-contextualize and re-present them toward my own ends.

This creative research focuses on the vigilant awareness of self-presentation. All portraits of me with jocular facial expressions reveal my own ceaseless attention to my appearance in public. Using representational images of myself taken from online social networking sites, I work from four different approaches: acrylic paintings on clear

Plexiglas, digital drawings, animated images using the graphic interchange format, and longer format animations built in the computer from drawings and paintings. A critical view of reclaiming my own unique identity – one that does not rely on stereotypes of the Asian female in the United States – is presented in this body of work.

Chapter 1: Self-presentation to public as the subject in my work

1.1 Realization: the importance of self image-making

In July of 1997 my family relocated from South Korea to the United States to look for a better life. It was a shocking and disappointing moment when I stepped on to United States' soil for the first time. I felt this way because – at least in the San Francisco airport – the country did not seem full of the flawless and beautiful people I had always seen in American movies or television shows while growing up in South Korea.

As a kid who grew up watching American media frequently, I was excited to meet the handsome and pretty people who were portrayed as active and adventurous in movies such as *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) and *Scream* (1996); the actors and actresses in the mystery and horror films I loved always went where I would never go for any reason. They were courageous and had strong moral values so they tried to help out friends who were in trouble all the time. Usually there were one or two unattractive or dumb people in the movies, but they never played main characters and got killed or disappeared at the beginning of the movie. Thus I did not pay attention to those sidekicks; they were not glamorous enough to be remembered by a young Asian kid who had never interacted with a westerner before. It did not take me long to realize that it was unrealistic to expect to see model-like figures everywhere on the street.

Soon, I understood that their beauty and presentation were all works of art crafted for the screen.

Trying to get used to a new language and place kept me busy and made me forget about the expectations I had regarding Americans before I arrived. At this time of transition, the idea of ideal modes of public presentation came to the fore of my attention. Who would I be in this new country, using this new language?

When I went to the immigration office to gain American citizenship, I had two options regarding my name; I could hold on to my Korean name or choose an American name. Without hesitation, I told the government officer that I would like to change my name from Mee Jeong Kim to Jane Jun. Although I had been thinking about changing my name for a while, I did not know that it could be done that easily. It meant that a Korean kid who wore the brightest Hawaiian shirts to school every day in order to stand out from her classmates was becoming an American adult who chose a name representing the quintessentially anonymous female.

At that point, the experiences I had for eight years in the United States changed my mind about how I needed to act and present myself in public. I realized how different I was from how I had been in South Korea. Mee Jeong, a young Korean girl had not paid attention to Asian characters in American movies because they did not play important roles (just like unattractive and idiotic characters in American horror films). On the other hand, Jane – who was about to become an American citizen – had watched shows and realized how Asians were portrayed there. To me, the portrayal of Asian

Women in American media was unrealistic. Sun-Hwa Kwon, a Korean woman in an American television series *Lost* (2004), acted passive and submissive to her husband. She even hid her bilingualism from her husband to avoid making him upset when they were trapped in the island. Another example is a Vietnamese prostitute from the movie *Full Metal Jacket*. In the scene where she approaches to two American soldiers and tells them that she would do “Every t'ing you wan' ” for ten dollars (*Full Metal Jacket*), her broken English and flirtatious body gestures are a typical depiction of Asian women as sexualized objects. Plenty of examples portraying Asian women as demure and obedient prove how Hollywood thinks of Asian women. Knowing that mass media teaches people societal norms and expectations made me wonder if my acquaintances expected to see me with those stereotypes. (Stroman and Jones) Since I am neither submissive nor demure, I needed to figure out a way to present myself as an amiable person to fit into the community where I wanted to belong.

1.2 Clowning

My experience of changing from a young girl who wanted to stand out to a woman who wanted to blend in has influenced my current body of work. In becoming the subject for this body of work, I began to utilize how I present myself as a clown to anyone taking photos that included me. What was first simply a way to participate in a group and defuse social anxiety soon found expression in my paintings. The works that

eventually led to my thesis paintings began with photos that had been posted on social media by friends of mine. My fascination with clowning for the camera in social situations grew with the idea that a clown has to be aware that he is aware, as it is this awareness that facilitates a direct communication with the audience. In building this body of work, I chose images that struck me as particularly effective examples of my clown activity. That activity - exaggerated poses and animated facial expressions – was used to promote my sociableness to my audiences.

Such gestures have become a social strategy for me as an immigrant. As a person who exists in what German sociologist Ruben Rumbaut called ‘the 1.5 generation’, starting a new life in the United States, learning a new language, and getting used to the cultural customs was challenging. The 1.5 generation, which Rumbaut describes as individuals who arrived in the United States before adolescence, is a cultural phenomenon that describes immigrants of many backgrounds. (Rumbaut) Having this dual Korean American identity means I have to understand the influence of both cultures within my personal background. In the article, *Searching for and Defining Identity* by Luke I. Kim and Grace S. Kim, they define identity as:

“The total sum of my being of what I am. It is the totality of my physical, mental, emotional, social, legal, cultural, and conscious and unconscious thought processes and feeling... [s]ome aspects of me are given and beyond my control. However, other characteristics are acquired or can be cultivated with effort. Identity does not form naturally by itself, but identity formation is an active

process into which we can make considerable input and define who we are. We will be able to influence the shaping of our identities”. (Song 116)

Such dynamic processes and the mixture of a wide variety of intangible factors are involved in developing one’s identity. As a part of the 1.5 generation, conflicting cultural ideologies coming from the country I grew up in and the country I am trying to settle down in are the most significant influences when deconstructing my identity. Learning how to balance out both the old and the new means understanding how to value cultural heritage and sense what efforts need to be made in order to become a member of a new society. Having Asian facial features and a Korean accent immediately makes me a “guest” in America in spite of the fact that I have earned American citizenship and have lived here for seventeen years. Wanting to be treated as a member of American society, and in order to show others that I am likable, I present staged false images of myself to my friends’ cameras.

This staged, affected presentation of myself is meant to manipulate my personal traits and make people believe in the falsified me within a social setting. Activity like this is akin to what tricksters have traditionally done. Tricksters use some sort of sleight of hand or physical distraction to fool their targets, those they want to take advantage of. The distraction is a device to keep people from seeing the deeper level of what a trickster actually has in his mind. In my case, comical facial expressions are deployed to hide my anxiousness at being around people and to help me be seen as an easygoing person. Freud saw humorous actions such as what I describe here as having an explicit

task of protecting the emotions: “the super-ego tries, by means of humour, to console the ego and protect it from suffering.” (Britton 133)

In other words, I developed this social strategy – hiding honest feelings and revealing instead fabricated facial expressions – in order to protect myself while simultaneously ingratiating myself to my peers. My concocted, elaborate gestures conceal my desire to in with the groups of Americans that surround me. Over the course of time, I became better at disguising myself as a light-hearted person to the public.

1.3 Japanese Gyaru culture

Another element that influenced my desire to be seen as a different but acceptable character in a social setting is Japanese Gyaru culture. While I was living in Japan, I noticed a fashion trend that I have not seen anywhere else before. What I witnessed was Gyaru culture. Miura Atsushi talks about Gyaru in his book, *My Homeless Child* as,

“The gyaru... freed themselves from the subtle class anxieties at the heart of mainstream consumer culture. From a class perspective, ganguro girls did not think at all about looking like the people who belonged to the class above their own. In that way, this was an epoch-making fashion. At the same time, there were no celebrity models for ganguro. The gyaru had become almost completely free from the pressures of fashion’s classic authoritative groups — foreigners,

the rich, celebrities — and instead only looked horizontally to their peers”.

(Namba 128)

Gyaru is a Japanese transliteration of the English word Gal. The Ganguro, one of the Japanese fashion style and a part of Gyaru culture is radical. The original Gyaru style, lightly tanned skin and dyed brown hair adopted from Western casual and Hawaiian surfer looks, was pushed these signifiers to the extreme in Ganguro. This was in order to create a distinctly Japanese fashion phenomenon. Achieving a Ganguro look requires bleaching ones hair to a platinum blonde, tanning the skin dark, and applying extremely thick make-up so no one could recognize your face.

How I adopted this idea of Gyaru is apparent in my work. Costume and appearance symbolize the tension in clown’s relationship to the society. By deviating slightly from the society’s everyday dress code – for example, in my work wigs become an important modification – the clown displays an awareness of the surrounding. The effect becomes humorous and it enriches thematic resonance.



Figure 1.1, *Masquerade_3*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014

Chapter 2: Historical and contemporary influences on the formation of the Masquerade

Portraiture before the nineteenth century operated as the indicator of the subject's social status by showing clothing, accessories, and lush environment. Entering the modern art era, the meaning of portraiture changed due to artists' longing to capture the mood of the moment and the sitter's state of mind. Therefore non-local colors, disfigured facial features, and abstract brush strokes are used instead of portraying the sitter realistically. After the invention of the camera, artists' expanding practices of photography dramatically accelerated to the new way of capturing the individual and place. Cindy Sherman, Nikki S. Lee and Kehinde Wiley use portrait photography to deal with the certain stereotypes they face in their everyday lives.

2.1 Photographic portraiture in contemporary art

Among many artists who use photography, conceptual portrait artist Cindy Sherman's work is the most influential and inspirational to my work. Sherman poses important questions to the audience about the representation of women in society. Although she does take other types of photographs, her most well-known works are portraits; she becomes someone else in her photographs. Using the props such as wigs, costumes, still-life objects, elaborate backgrounds, and intense facial makeup she becomes almost unrecognizable in her photographs. That process also helps her to create an expansive and dynamic range of work while using only one subject, herself.

The only subject in my work is also myself, however there is a primary difference between Sherman's work and mine: her works are thematic and staged while mine lack completeness of preparation and reveal instead the endeavor of the moment. Sherman encapsulates perfect photographic moments with carefully orchestrated props and surroundings. My work, in contrast, becomes complete after I add final layers to reclaimed photographs of myself.



Figure 2.1, *Unblended_1*, JPEG, 2014

All aspects in Sherman's work are designed to raise the viewer's curiosity. While considering her portraits, it is easy to identify aspects such as the camera's angle of view or reiterated subject matter that focus and move the eye. Often the simple fact of the artist posing herself in such pathetic, seemingly debased ways – as with the sad clowns

in Figure 2.2 – is enough to make the audience anxious to know about the subject’s story and emotion.



Figure 2.2, Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #417*, Chromogenic color print, 2004

One of her works that I feel strongly connected to is *Untitled #417*. It is a photoshopped image of three clowns - all Cindy Sherman herself. It is such a frightening and unsettling image. It is not only the bright psychedelic colored background and clown makeup that suggest such a mood, but also the staggering eye contact and the subtle facial expressions that bring out a mysterious, menacing nuance. The interesting thing about this work is that the three clowns show different emotional states through the different scale of their heads in one closed pictorial space. The light shining from

different angles and the slight modification of eye lines are also interesting. In this particular piece, the artist cropped out whole bodies leaving only the heads. By eliminating the most significant element in clowning – body language – the only communication that can happen between the viewer and the subject is through the clowns' facial expressions.

I paid attention to Sherman's compositional execution in this piece. Although the face of the clown in the middle takes up one third of the space, other clowns in the corners are treated as equally important. The positioning of heads (one on the left is raised, one on the right is lowered) made their gazes provocative and the light intensity on their foreheads is somewhat stronger than on the middle figure.

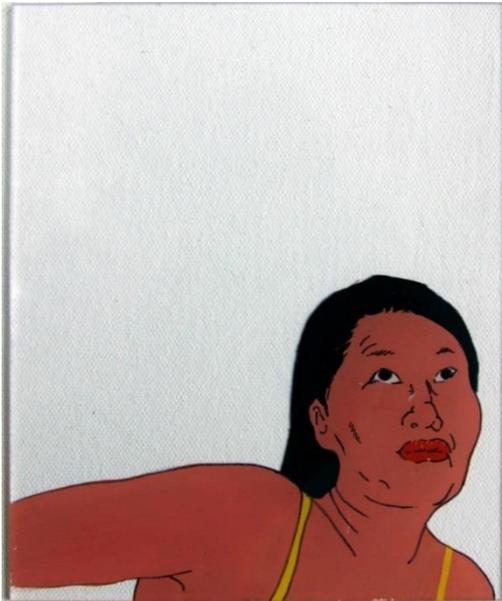


Figure 2.3, *My Glamorous Facebook Life_17*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2013(left)

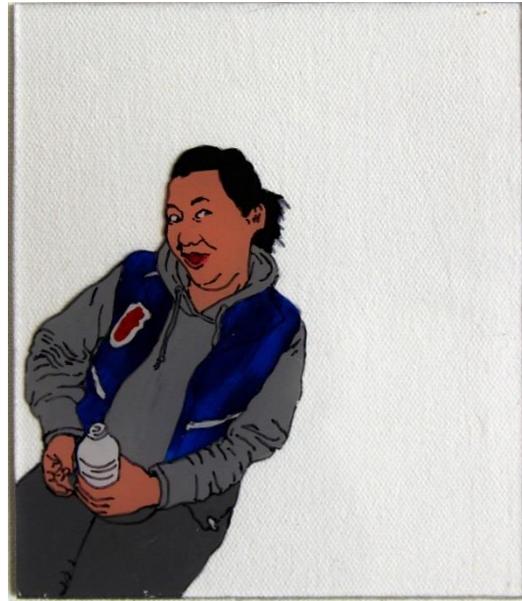


Figure 2.4, *My Glamorous Facebook Life_34*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2013

Here, I made decisions to place figures off the center. My intention is to have a “photo bombing” quality, which means to spoil a photograph of someone by suddenly appearing in the camera's field of view as the picture is taken. This action, waggish disruption, represents how I feel around my American acquaintances. Here I am scrunching myself into the picture frame to be a part of scene. Because of the transparent background and overall empty composition, viewers are forced to focus only on the subject in the paintings. However, having no information about location, atmosphere or other interactions, the frivolous actions stand out even more.

Another Artist Nikki S. Lee immerses herself in groups of different ethnicity, age, lifestyle, and culture and documents in a photography form to talk about the concept of intersectional identity. Intersectional identity is described by philosopher Diana Tietjens Meyers in the article *Intersectional Identity and the Authentic Self? Opposites Attract* as identity that has been heavily influenced and even determined by social experience and contexts. The combination of multiple factors such as ethnicity, gender, class, and social situation make individuals adjust their behaviors to fit into the dominant group because individuals from different groups have different common experiences and different shared forms of socialization. (Meyers) Her article points out that social experience and contexts are significantly influential in terms of forming an identity since all human beings have the tendency to have the feeling of solidarity.

Lee's *Projects (1997–2001)* which she hung out with different groups of people – hip-hop artists, school girls, elders, or lower-class people – and asked someone from the group to take pictures of her with others.



Figure 2.5, Nikki S. Lee, *The Hip-hop Project (1)*, Fujiflex print, 2001



Figure 2.6, Nikki S. Lee, *The Ohio Project (7)*, 1999

Lee's successful way of creating multiple personas in every pictures and having a snapshot quality by adding digital numbered dates from the camera are enough to convince the audience that she belongs in the group of people in her photographs. By displaying experiences of new social contexts, Lee's work engages in a conversation of what identity means.

I believe that Nikki S. Lee's work and mine throw a fundamentally similar set of questions to the viewer: what does it mean to be able to fluently move from one culture to another as immigrants? What effort will people put forth in order to fit in the broader society? Where does their identity go in the midst of this desire to assimilate?

2.2 Painting portraiture in contemporary art

Another contemporary artist who uses portraiture to talk about self-awareness, self-presentation, and the misconception of stereotypes in society is Kehinde Wiley. Wiley paints portraits of young African Americans (mostly males) set amongst the trappings of authority, aristocratic power, and wealth. In general, African American males on the street are portrayed negatively in the media (Rome). Larry Davis, dean of School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh, talks about the matter this way:

“Overwhelmingly, white Americans learn about African Americans not through personal relationships, but through images shown by media. Unfortunately, blacks too consume these same images.” (Barlow)

How Wiley looks for his subject matter is interesting. The artist goes out and finds random models for his paintings on the street. He shows them historical portrait paintings and asks them to pick one they like. Then he comes back to the studio with them and they pose for a photograph. The pose has to be exactly the same as the figures in the painting they have picked. The final stage, he adds intricate patterns to the background in Photoshop and paints it into the composition. Painted models that are larger than life-size, Old Master style painting application, and rich colors in the portraits elevate the figures' majesty.



Figure 2.7, Kehinde Wiley, *Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps*, Oil on canvas, 2005

Interweaving art historical references and the contemporary male is a genius approach to break the stereotypical image of black males and talk about race and masculinity. The poses utilized in the paintings function as signifiers that audiences could automatically see as connected to wealthy and successful historical figures. The effect of making and seeing the works helps to raise the status of black male identity, as well as critique their ongoing societal subjugation.

Like Wiley, I use photographs as inspiration and source material. Once chosen, I paint these images on clear surfaces. The painting process allows me to add another layer that I couldn't achieve in the moment of photograph. The final execution and refinement, distorting and adding graphic facial expressions, manifests the idea of putting on a mask to disguise the audience from showing the truthful Jane Jun.

Chapter 3: Medium

3.1 Acrylic on Plexiglas

From the beginning of this research, transparency of surface was the most important quality I wanted to develop in my paintings. Mainly, I wanted to project myself onto the surrounding context and, secondly, I wanted to use an obscure format to emphasize the duality of covering and revealing reality. In addition, I wanted the painting to act as a mask and to have the many shadows cast by each work to represent the multiplicity of my own identity.

The first action, of projecting myself onto the surrounding context, is a direct way of me saying that I am trying hard to fit into this society but cannot. From a distance, it may look as if my portrait is a part of the scenery, but my likeness will be always separated from the background. This push-and-pull effect – of the painted figure on the clear surface being easily superimposed upon backgrounds but simultaneously and finally separated from them – projects the idea of feeling like a guest in this country even though I try my best to be a member of its society.

The second dimension of the work, of emphasizing the duality, is my attempt to recreate a new Jane Jun character with a reverse painting technique. In order to paint a face on Plexiglas without having brush marks, many layers need to be painted backward, covering previously painted areas. At the end, this carefully planned build-up operation

forms a face that can be seen only from the front; the rough brush strokes and flaws remain on the backside. Covering other layers to construct the image by blocking the background with a face, and using transparent negative spaces create a tension of duality in the work. This coexistence of illusion and reality asks the audience to think about the assumption that we believe to be truth is really truth. (Schlain 22)

The third arena of interest in my painting, of creating a painting to act as a mask, is the metaphoric expression of my life in America. The facial expression on the mask is how I want to be seen, however, the true emotion it hides remains in question. A sad face could be there. A traumatized face might sit behind of it. Once the mask covers my face in the image, my emotional state is hidden and my presence will always be an affectation and a mystery to my audience.

The final aspect of my works is that of using shadows cast by each painting to represent the multiplicity of my identity. I wanted to use the shadows to reference the idea that many other aspects of our lives – such as culture, environment, and people – serve to influence and form our identities. The lighting, which comes in from different directions, constructs numerous layers of silhouette that have numerous shades and scales, all referring back to the original work. A stronger and closer light creates a darker silhouette and a weaker and further one creates a lighter shape. Darker silhouettes act in place of friendships, education, and welcoming atmospheres that are positive and have given me inner strength. Weaker shadows reflect my facial features and accent from birth language, aspects of my identity that are not necessarily negative, yet which became obstacles for me in America.

3.2 Digital images

A new level of image propagation takes place on the Internet, one that works differently from the ways TV and other mass media do. Television, once the new technology of reproduction and presentation in the postmodern era, influenced and transformed domestic lifestyles for generations. Yet it was the Internet that truly opened up a realm of convergent space where emerging technologies and bodies of knowledge come together and craft a global collective consciousness. (Stallabrass)

Facebook became integral to my project once I realized how many hours I was spending every day looking at friends' newsfeeds and pictures. Facebook is a social networking website where people fill out their information such as their educational history, current and former places of living, relationship status, and event pictures. Especially important are profile and cover pictures, which are often specifically curated by users for effect. The profile pictures of many individuals caught my attention in particular because of the attention given to them; they are icons selected to represent who a person thinks they are.

Given the fact that people upload approximately six billion images on Facebook per month, users have a variety of photographs from which to choose for their profile pictures. (Horaczek) Often times, the profile picture suggests qualities that do not match up with the person's actual personality; the picture only shows what the person wants – or hopes – the public to see.

After growing in my understanding of how powerful image sharing online could be in solidifying falsified self-presentation, my interest in making tangible objects moved onto the next step: working with digital media. The number of works is an important component in this project, since I want to talk about my action as tireless attempts to be seen as a funny person in the public. Making digital images – including GIFs and other animations – made sense to me because their inherent ease of duplication and distribution.

3.2.1 JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group)

By using MS Paint, a program that allows me to digitally draw on JPEG images, I draw faces on digital images to accentuate my facial expressions.

Unlike other pieces, I present myself with other people in my JPEG images. When other works just focus on what I do in front of camera by removing all the background and people, my JPEGs have more information about when, where and with whom. In order to separate myself from other people in the digital images to show how I feel about myself in the social setting, I draw a facetious face on top of my actual face in the image.



Figure 3.1, *Unblended_2*, JPEG, 2014

Covering my face with overly exaggerated and cartoony self-portraits is another way to stress that I am putting on a mask in social situations. The faces that I manifest in these images are distorted and, furthermore, have been given different skin tones. These shifts are designed to stimulate the audience into questioning who the person is, what ethnicity she might be, and what her affect is meant to represent. Here I am trying to develop the unique character of Jane Jun; eventually this light-hearted and funny-faced version of Jane Jun is the only image that people can think of when they hear the name.

3.2.2 GIF (Graphics Interchange Format)

“한번 보는것이 백번 듣는것보다 낫다”- “It's better to see it once than hear it a thousand times”

- Korean proverb

Early in the Internet age, Graphic Interchange Format images (GIFs) were used for making flashy banners or link buttons so as to give life to websites. GIFs - a string of two or more compressed digital images that appear sequentially over a short time frame to create short movies – continue to be widely used on the Internet. These images loop continuously so viewers experience same actions over and over again, non-stop.

The GIF, which has been replaced with CSS, Flash, and Java tools for standard website uses, has lived on by supplanting embedded videos. Animated GIF files are much smaller than actual videos and are often the simplest way of sharing moments of action online. Instead of typing comments under someone's posting, people often share these moving pictures to express their feelings and thoughts.

The immediacy, spontaneity, and humorous qualities of GIFs enhance the performative aspect of my project. The repetitive movement reinforces my singular actions in public. This not only gives me a chance to add additional layers of face making, but also adds a dual dimension to the redundant movements: the repetition is playful and whimsical, while simultaneously carrying with it a core of seriousness. By depicting these small actions over and over they become ritualized and habitual. GIFs also allow my frivolous actions to be seen as more than simple reactions; they become focused attempts, developed over time, to master anxiety and social relationships. Through them there is a chance I will master the problem of fitting in.

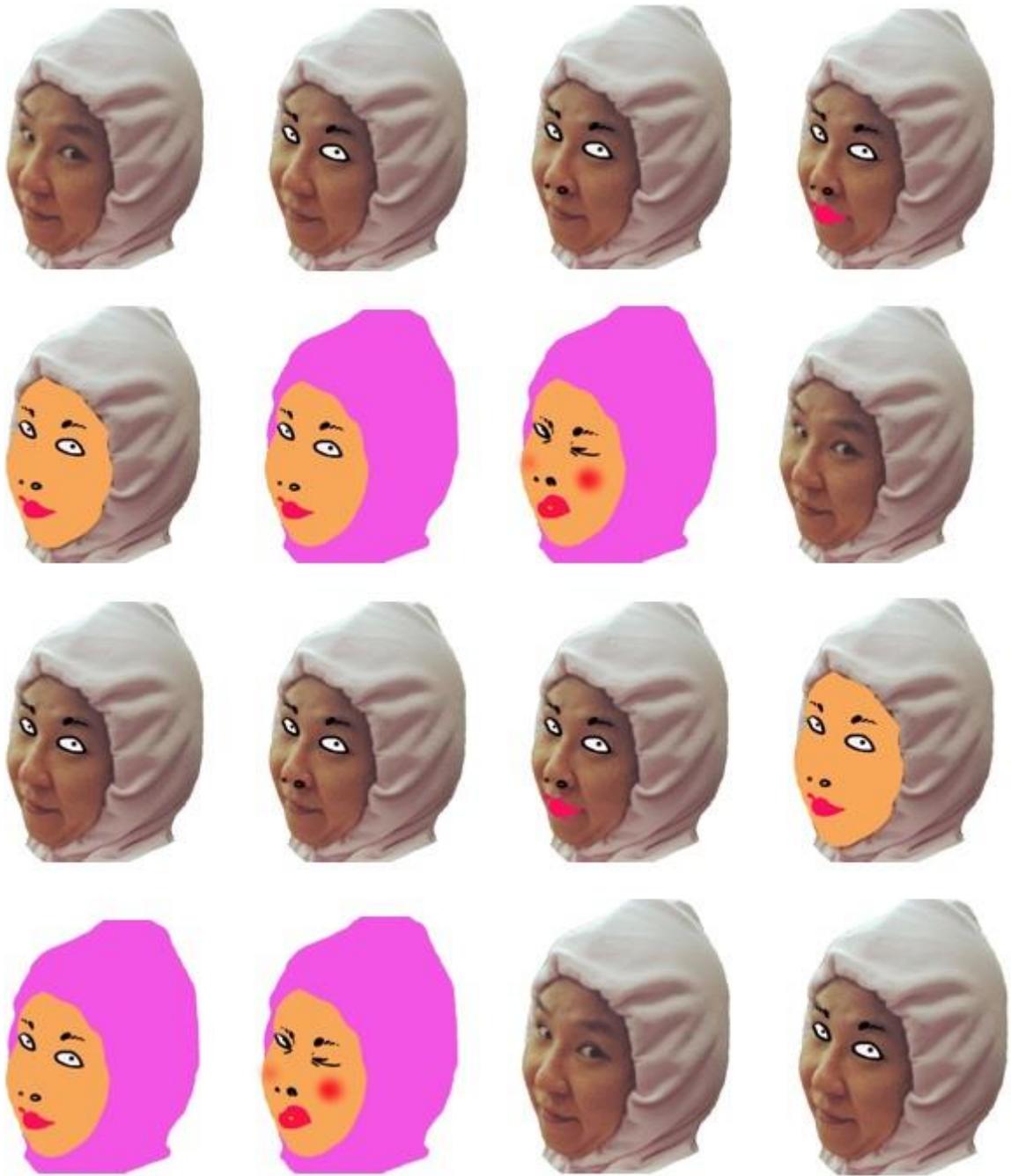


Figure 3.2, *Wink*, Digital image (GIF), 2013

3.2.3 Animation (stop-motion animation)

“보이는게 다가 아니다” - “Not everything you see is the truth”

- Korean proverb

Unlike films, animation is a moving-image form that allows artists to create narrations in their work without necessarily using photo-representational images. Though it has a fairly short history in art (the first moving pictures projected by the Praxinoscope were made in 1877, and the first stop-motion animation, *Humpty-dumpty circus*, came out in 1897), artists choose animation as their media platform because they acknowledge the distinct qualities that attend notions of movement and sensory stimulation. The main benefit is the ability for artists to use moving gestures and the audio at the same time, features that static paintings cannot have.

Another reason why artists are drawn to this medium is that this creative process can be easily intertwined with other art disciplines. Understanding the process of making and presenting an animation makes it easy to perceive that it can be crafted via painting, drawing, collage, or even installation. In fact, a high percentage of animation is directly connected to other, more traditional forms of painting and drawing.

In my short-animation film, *Convo with JJ*, a watercolor image of a doll named JJ is a metaphoric symbol representing my psychological and social state. The erasable

face of the doll has been drawn and erased several times by a more resolved version of Jane Jun, and during the process she starts talking to the doll. The conversation between the doll and Jane Jun happens in two different languages, Korean and English. Since the audio adds another layer to the film, the visual information of motions and facial expressions are not enough for the viewer to fully understand what is happening; the whispered dialogue completes the work.

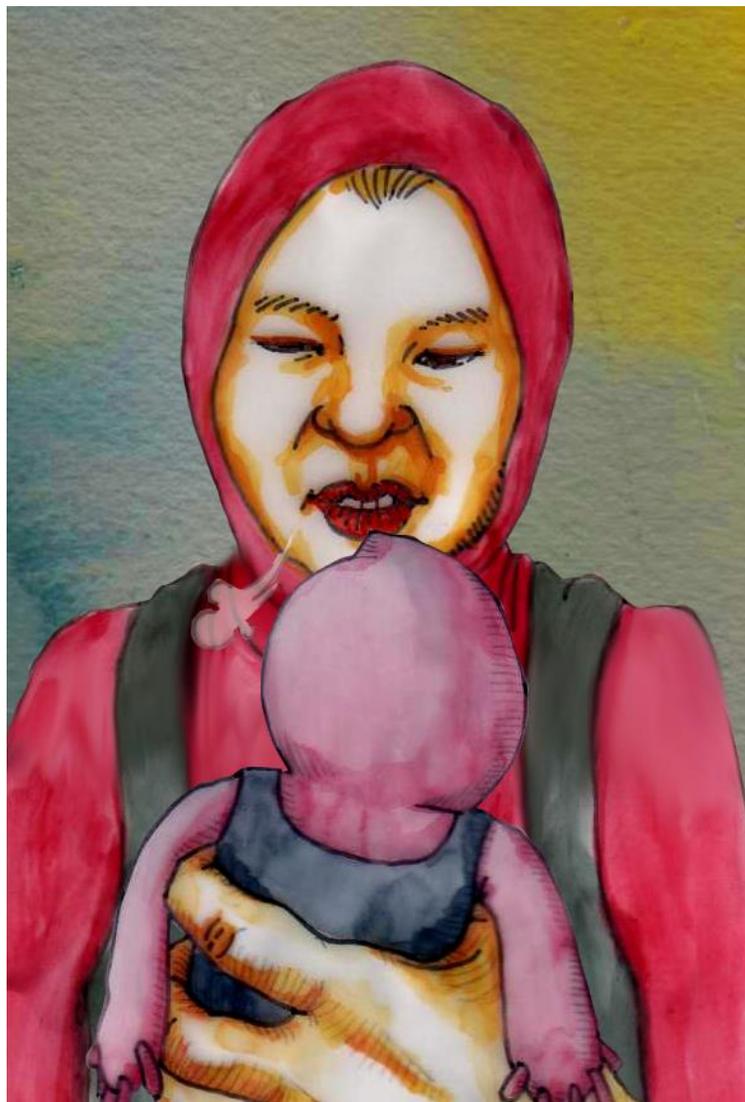


Figure 3.3, *Convo with JJ*, Animation, 2014

Conclusion

By exhibiting carefully-crafted self-images of what might be seen as frivolous or hyperbolic actions to the public, this project displays a growing self-awareness of the multiplicity of identity and received stereotypical notions as they play out in the public realm. The work makes a social critique centered on how much control each individual can have regarding how they are presented in society. Ultimately, the project reflects on my own attempt to reclaim and shape my own identity by showcasing my manipulated appearance.

Four different configurations, acrylic on Plexiglas, drawing on JPEG, GIF, and animation, are the formal language that are used to present my idea of self-awareness and self-presentation. Each configuration carries a different nuance that changes the tone of the work. Playful, silly, funny, exaggerated, animated, and superficial are the words that associate with this body of work and those words reflect how I decided to project myself into American society. It is not a denial of who I am. It is my way of rejecting the stereotypes of Asian women that have been accumulated by American mass media. I believe that the generalized prejudices against my own race do not apply to me and in my art. I am who I am.

This project, the investigation of self-awareness and self-presentation, helped me understand my identity as a Korean-American and artist. I hope that this project can

be applied to other greater social issues so its contribution can be a part of the dialogue in contemporary art and cultural studies.

MASQUERADE

MFA Thesis show



Figure 4.1, *Masquerade-Jane Jun*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.2, *Masquerade MFA Thesis Show Installation, 2014*



Figure 4.3, *Masquerade MFA Thesis Show Installation, 2014*



Figure 4.4, *Masquerade MFA Thesis Show Installation, 2014*



Figure 4.5, *Masquerade*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.6, *Masquerade_1*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.7, *Masquerade_2*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014

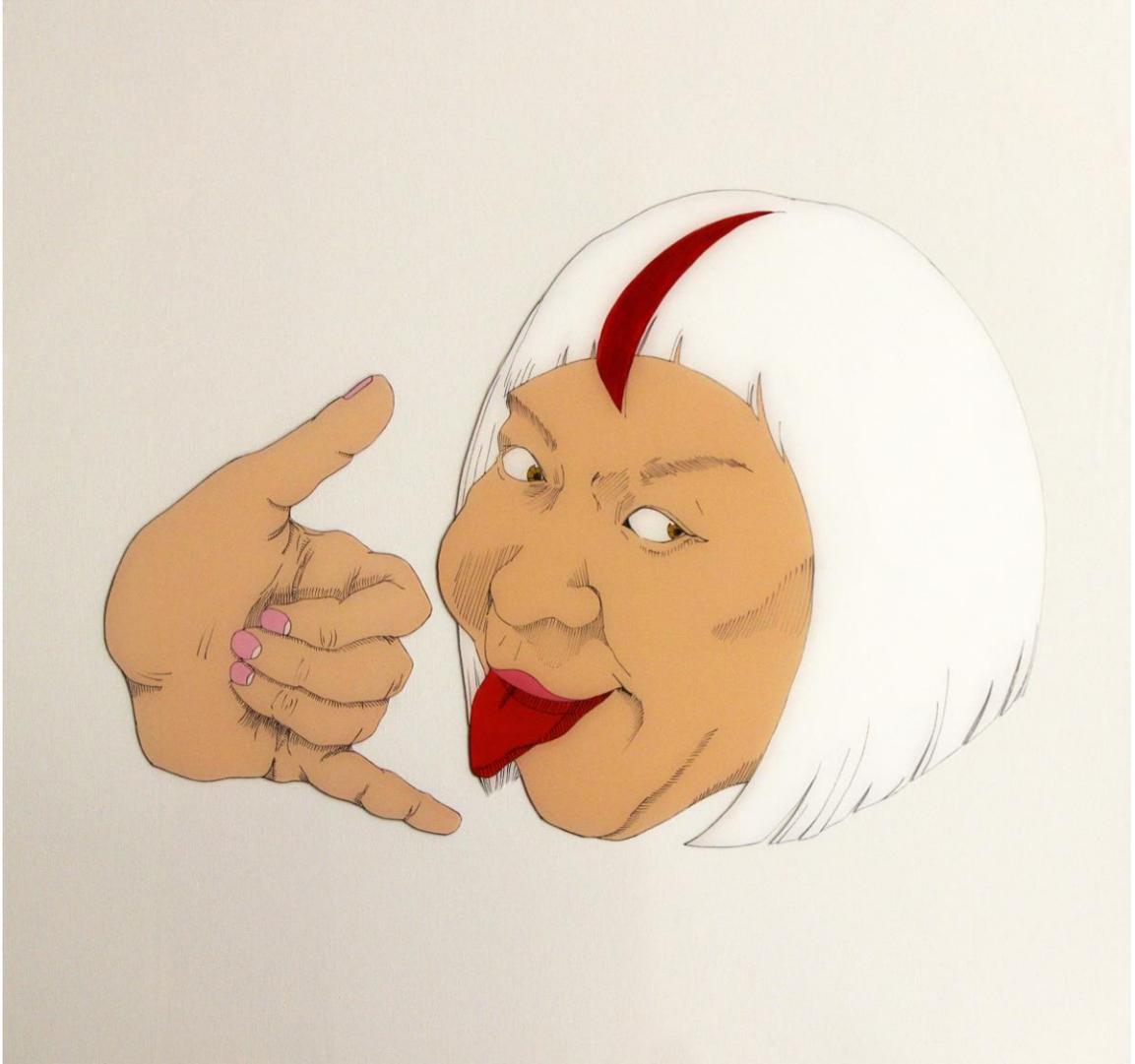


Figure 4.8, *Masquerade_4*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.9, *Masquerade_5*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.10, *My Glamorous Facebook Life*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.11, *My Glamorous Facebook Life (detail)*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.12, *My Glamorous Facebook Life (detail)*, Acrylic on Plexiglas, 2014



Figure 4.13, *Unblended_3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (clockwise)*, JPEG, 2014



Figure 4.14, *Convo with JJ*, Animation, 2014



Figure 4.15, *Amber and Ron*, Digital image (GIF), 2013

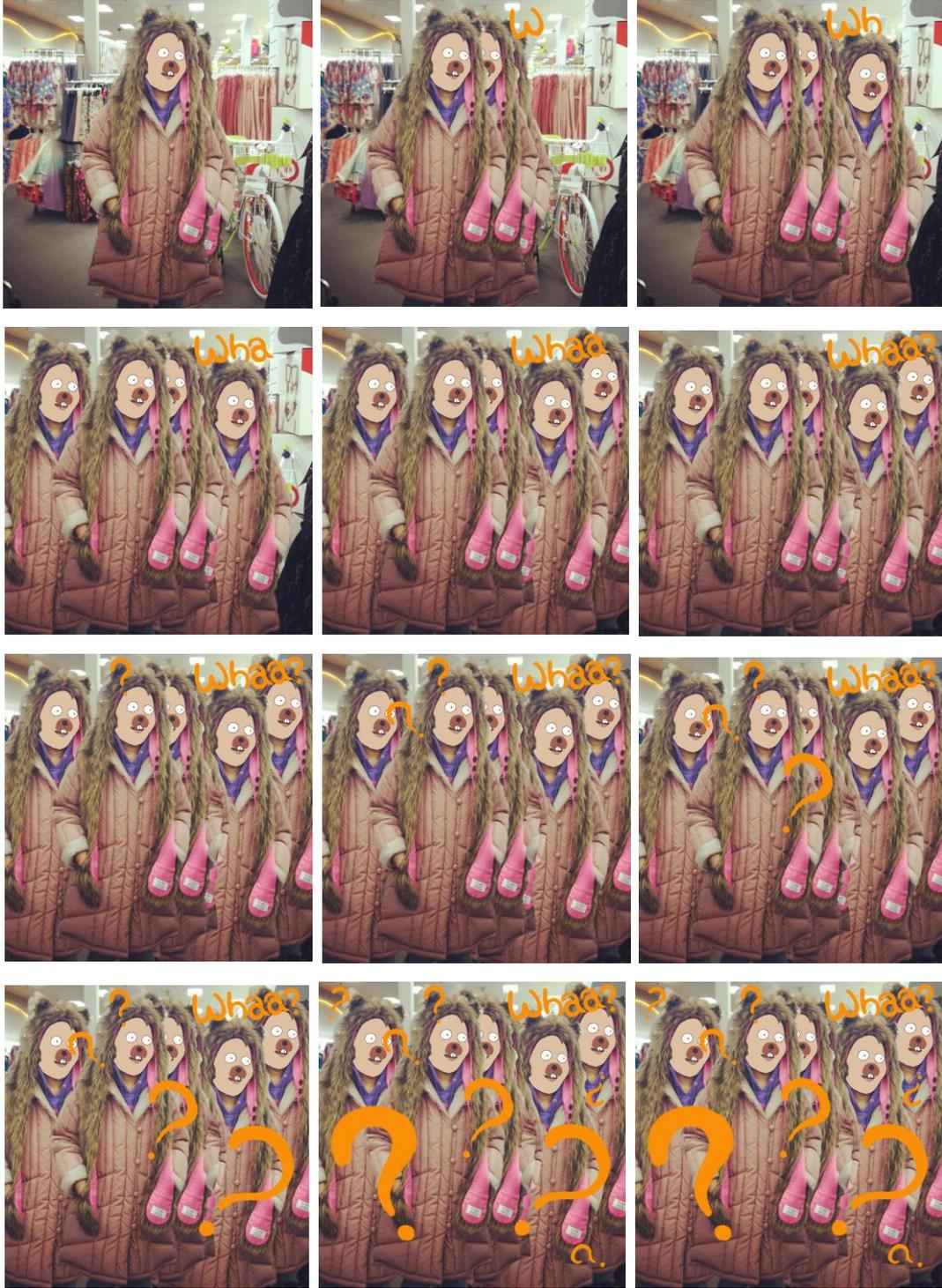


Figure 4.16, *Whaa?????*, Digital image (GIF), 2014

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