

Mina Cheon speaks of her multicultural artistic pursuits

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SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Mina Cheon is an artist that recognizes things for what they are and has developed a humorous approach to serious matters. Last Friday, Cheon came to Fine Arts Studio A to give a lecture about her work and how, through experiment and research, she was able to combine the two to studying the triangle relationship of North Korea, South Korea, and America.

Cheon says to prioritize your research. By learning and actually applying it she gains new insights into her art. "By learning that, my method as an artist has completely shifted," Cheon said.

The UMBC graduate comes from an artistic family. Born in Seoul, Korea, Cheon said that by living as an artist challenging and negotiating rules, she found that she likes to eliminate the structure of teaching. "There are a lot of things people can work together on," Cheon said. "There's no one direct path in terms of being an artist." She teaches at the Maryland Institute College of Art and travels back and forth from South

Korea teaching art. While she likes teaching, the collaboration is key in learning, she says. "You have to figure out all the components on your own and then sort of script it."

Cheon grew up with a family in the arts and at a very young age she directed fashion shows. "I can't believe they allowed such a young kid to do whatever she wanted to," the artist explained. During that time, Cheon grew to love stage production and dance, such as, Canadian dance project "Blue Snake." Back then those kinds of performances seemed exceptional to her. "Now you've got Cirque du Soleil so all of this is completely washed away," Cheon said, shaking her head.

Eventually, her experimentation grew to media studies where she started to incorporate elements of new media (programmable media) and theories. She laughs at one of the fashion shows in which a model called NOM the post-modern man (a guy dressed as a machine), makes an appearance. "Hey, it got me to grad school," said Cheon with a laugh.

"I really thought I was going to be in this royal neighborhood and

I had no idea. I never left my dorm and classroom for two years. I was the typical scared Korean girl." During the time she was a shut-in, she painted a 72 foot wall called "15 Billion Years of the Traveling Atom." "It was sort of going from the genesis to the present times of the cosmic universe." It was a 72 foot long canvas with paint that illuminated under a black light. One would enter through a video installation space and then drift into a world of Martian pinks and purples. "Grace Hartigan was upset that I started doing all sorts of other things and she said "Don't you know silence is music?" Cheon recalled. "I had a bubble machine, I was reading the bubble-big-bang theory and I had everybody blowing bubbles [in the exhibit]."

One of her works that she did at UMBC was a gigantic web that represented the world wide web with a figure in the net which is representative of the everyday (wo)man that is either predator or prey in the virtual world. The camera had delayed tracking which gave off a ghostly effect.

Cheon also discussed her work "Half Moon Eyes." Here, Cheon focuses on the way Asian eyes are shaped

and compares them to Caucasian eyes. In South Korea, there is a surgery that allows women to have eyelid surgery (blepharoplasties) so they can have more rounded eyes. Also in the exhibit, is an American voting booth that seems like it is ready for the elections, but when one enters it, they have the ability to choose from interactive module. However when one makes their selection, they quickly find out everything is not what it appears to be and their selections are then made public on outside screens. Big Brother is watching seems to be the message here. The message is very clear in America's concerns with voting and their relationship to Korea.

If being visited by Brother Eye and examining the American-Korean beauty dichotomy isn't more pressing, then the image of 99 Miss Kim(s), a wall of 99 dolls in uniformity, is a message that Korean women (the Kims, the most popular name in both of the Koreas) are desired for their "half moon eyes." More children's playthings like paper doll dresses (which also send the message of one look) make monolithic appearances throughout the exhibit.

The political pop artist is currently working on a three year research exhibit which will debut in 2011. This focuses on Japanese Manga that is fueled with hate toward Koreans. "It became a big hit in 2005 with Korea and Japan," Cheon said "This hate comic from Japan became the best seller," she stated, but Cheon isn't going to just study the manga, she is going to study the "hate wave" in general, calling this "political pop art." "My political pop art is to really locate the most politicized or overtly hidden areas that can call onto political readings of [Korea's] relationship with other nations," Cheon explained.

Until then, the eerie surveillance of the voting booths and the planned computer sketch of "D.I.Y Obama" (a statue of Obama that can be colored), keep Cheon busy.

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Comedian Kyle Dunnigan elicits laughs at Ottobar's Chucklestorm

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Sounds of (you guessed it) many, many chuckles filled a full house at the Ottobar during Thursday night's Chucklestorm, the fourth installment of an improv/comedy event created by UMBC students Alex Braslavsky and Dan Friedman.

Chucklestorm started last June after, according to Braslavsky, "One of the owners of the [Ottobar] started doing these little skits and videos... [and] after having me host an event one night, I started talking to [him] about comedy shows taking place at the Ottobar and he basically said, 'Why don't you set one up?'" Chucklestorm typically starts with opening skits and remarks from hosts Braslavsky and Friedman, who this past Thursday began with an audience-participation segment called "Choose Your Own Adventure," where the crowd was able to shout out different plot twists of the improvised skit.

Braslavsky and Friedman also appeared sporadically throughout the show, introducing comedians and improv-ing between segments. Following the introduction were fantastic sets from local and aspiring comedians Umar Khan, Eli Sairs, Aparna Nancherla, and Seat-

tle native Dartanion London, whose set was complete with sound effects and a song about a well-known Full House alum that got many cheers from the audience. To recruit comedians for these events, Braslavsky explains: "We go around to different comedy shows in the area, [and] if I like one of the performers, I'll approach him/her and invite them to do our show."

Arguably, the highlight of Chucklestorm was the last set, performed by L.A. comedian Kyle Dunnigan, known for his *Comedy Central Presents* special and for his role as "Craig" on *Reno 911*. Dunnigan's routine, particularly his voice-looping bit (called the "Oh Yeah" segment on his YouTube page), left the crowd at Ottobar literally howling with laughter and elicited much applause.

Based on Chucklestorm's success, Braslavsky says that he is "pretty psyched about how [the shows] have been so far. Good turn-outs pretty much every month, the crowd seems really engaged and I'm always pretty pleased with the comics," adding that they are "still playing around with the format (headliners, including sketches, etc.) But I like where the show's at right now...with each month, the show gets smoother and smoother."

As a member of the audience at Chucklestorm, I would have to agree. The Ottobar had standing-room only by the time the show was underway, and the vibe and participation from the audience (if the level of laughter volume is any indication) was ideal for the event. Something that perhaps distinguishes Chucklestorm from other comedy shows in the area (and what I found to be particularly encouraging) is how supportive the venue is for new and aspiring comics; there is no implicit pretentiousness here. In fact, Braslavsky welcomes those who think they might want to showcase their comedic talents at Chucklestorm, advising those interested that "once you're comfortable with your material, send a video to us and who knows, you might be the next Chucklestorm superstar."

The next Chucklestorm show is currently scheduled for October 28th, and Braslavsky and Friedman "plan on hosting them once a month for as long as possible, as long as we're still having fun doing them."

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Coming to
THEATERS
Daniel Supanick

LEGEND OF THE GUARDIANS: THE OWLS OF GA'HOOLE [PG]
After their village is attacked, a pack of young owls try to find the fabled Guardians of Ga'Hoole, legendary owls who protect those in need. Being Zack Snyder's first animated movie, it looks to have pretty incredible visuals, but nothing terribly interesting beyond that. See it in 3D if at all.

WALL STREET MONEY NEVER SLEEPS [R]
Michael Douglas returns to his Oscar-winning role as Gordon Gekko in this sequel to Oliver Stone's 1987 corporate drama *Wall Street*. In this installment, Gekko, recently released from federal prison, takes on a new protege in the form of Shia LeBeouf. Is the original perfect? No, but it's still a good movie, and Gekko is an awesome villain, and word of mouth on this is good, so I'm excited to see this one.

YOU AGAIN [PG-13]
Kristen Bell is upset because Odette Yustman made fun of her in high school and is now going to marry her brother. Snore. Jamie Lee Curtis, Betty White, and Sigourney Weaver, and Ellen Ripley herself are in it too. Really, Ripley? Why? You're so much cooler than this. Oh, well.

BURIED [R]
Ryan Reynolds stars in this high concept film about a man buried in a coffin as a hostage. It seems gimmicky, and has gotten really mixed responses, so personally, I don't trust this one. Only see it if you're totally invested in the idea.