

CLAIRE OLIVER

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Jennifer Poon

A Temporary Space

April 17 - May 15, 2010

Opening Reception with the artist: Saturday, April 17, 6 - 8 pm

In *A Temporary Space*, Poon moves her fragmented, fragile, water colored, bodies off the two dimensional wall; the gallery becomes a proving ground for her exploration of ritual in contemporary culture. The artist's recent experience with familial death causes her to reflect on our expectations of those closest to us. "We remember those who have passed on with a different stream of consciousness, we find our own meaning in what was reality; death sanitizes everything," says the artist.



White Out (detail)
watercolor and gouache on cut paper, silk ribbons, thread

An Asian American, Poon was raised in San Francisco by her grandmother, who spoke only Chinese. She grew up in a tradition rich household, following ancient rituals, the significance of which was lost long ago. The clashing of culture, generation, and social bias is evident in this work; Poon merges themes of race, sexuality, and personal identity with life experience to create a unique perspective on an individual's reaction to social pressures from the world around them.

Central to the exhibition is Poon's life sized human form, created from small bits of fabric, which have been sewn, tied and quilted down to the smallest obsessive minutia. She lies in state before a wall of silken organs, transforming the viewer's approach into a strange living landscape. Here the body, separated from its internal clockwork, invites reflection and a sense of ritual that is both clinical and sentimental.

Juxtaposed from this work, an altar piece holds scores of clay pendants, each adorned with a small portrait and line of text, a talisman. Upon closer study, the viewer finds this work is a rebellion against tradition without merit in the modern world. Here Poon speaks to the lack of understanding of our cultural history and family, of rituals performed out of habit which may bring some sort of comfort in the familiar, but have lost the deeper meaning with which they were originally intended. In our over processed, over stimulated society, the artist invites us to create some small space for ourselves in which we can find greater meaning and significance in the reasons we do things.

Poon's slightly unaligned; sometimes overlapping imagery is full of emotive expression, yet void of morality or of imperative outcome. Fusing the political and the painterly, Poon addresses head on the complexities of image making, the beauty of art and the masculinity of traditional painting, while excavating the blurred area between the physical and the psychological. In this respect, Poon is in solidarity with Marlene Dumas however, to a great extent Poon's work is ultimately her own. Despite clear synergies with other artists, her work is technically and stylistically distinct. As with any modern era figurative painter who explores violence, ambiguity, and irony, there is an extrapolation of ideas descended from Goya, but Dumas—and now Poon—are adept at settling a contemporary effect on the human condition. Poon's intentionally undefined relationships create a cocktail of uncertainty, angst and curiosity, establishing her place among art's emotional provocateurs.

It is incumbent on the viewer to summon enough courage to pierce the tension, the uneasy truce that Poon leaves coiled in every work. Recent exhibitions of the artist's work include the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art and The Pasadena Museum of California Art.

For more information: www.ClaireOliver.com | Tel:212.929.5949

Public transportation to the gallery

Take C or E train to W. 23 St., walk west to 10 Ave., then walk 3 blocks North to 26th street & 1/4 block west **OR** Take any north/south local train including C, E, 1, 9, F, V, N, R, W or 6 to the W. 23 St. stop, & take the M23 bus west to 10th Ave. then walk 3 blocks North to 26th street & 1/4 block west **OR** The M11 bus stops on 10th Ave. between W. 25th & W. 26th Streets.