I first became aware of JooYoung’s work when she contacted me, explaining [that] the art school encouraged her to choose any artists she’d like to spend a few months studying under. While I was flattered, I explained [I didn’t] feel I had much to offer any artists, being [that I am] self-taught, and a pretty reclusive person by nature. She graciously understood, yet ever since, we stayed in touch by email, and she kept sending me examples of her latest work, and I was often in awe, impressed [with how] her work has exploded and wonderfully morphed over the years.

I feel her paintings connected us to her ‘Cosmic Womb’ universe, a magical place that reminds me of a cross between Pee-wee’s Playhouse and [the] Funkadelic soundtrack. A quirky blend of traditional paintings, comics, animation, installations, clay, sculpture, you name it. Her attention to every genre of creation seems all funneled through the lens of adolescence and self discovery. Is it any wonder she happened across some issues of old Maxx comics when [she was] younger? She is always looking to combine rhythmic space and vivid colors in ways that never fail to impress me.

And while I still feel academically unqualified to teach anyone artistically, it slowly dawned on me that what JooYoung had sought from my work when she first wrote to me, she has already organically achieved, independent of me. Because of HER. Her talents. Her vision. Somehow she’s forged her own path, already absorbed all she needed from her own inner story. Her fascination with the childlike womb of imagination has became a language in and unto itself.

Playhouse

JOOYOUNG CHOI biography


SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2019
Big Time Dreaming in the Age of Uncertainty
Art Museum of Southwest Texas
Beaumont, TX

2018
Perennial Favorites: Big Time Believer and the Garden of Courage and Love. Manchester Arts, Wichita, KS

2017
SomnusMaxx: Reawakening solo installation in conjunction with Better Yesterday, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, TX

2016
Panasonic: Alchemy, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, TX

Have Faith for You Have Always Been
Loved solo installation in conjunction with Round 45: Local Impact, Project Row Houses, Houston, TX

A Change in Parables Front Gallery, Houston, TX

C.S. Watson and the Cosmic Womb, Brazos Gallery, Richard College, Dallas, TX

(Chai Show), International Korean Adoptee Art and Film Festival, Seoul, South Korea

Speaking the Unspoken, East Meets West, Cambridge, MA

Parker Hill Library Exhibition, Roxbury, MA

For Ai Be An Nob-Bin-Bi South Korea

Visual/Arts, James Rain, Maine, PA

Artantithese: Somerville Library, Somerville, MA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016
A Time Before the stirring born: Visions of Armanda in Contemporary Painting Sung-Virad & B-Him Art Gallery, New York, NY

From Pangs to Pangs, Grand Nasser, Los Angeles, CA

Picture Show of the Heavt, A Tribute to the Teachings of Osbert David, Meadows Museum of Art, Shreveport, LA

Reverberations: SoulKicks Gallery, Tyler University, Philadelphia, PA

Double Digits: lawnside Artist Studio Program, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX

ABQ: Lavinard Artist Studio Program
Exhibition, Lavinard Art Center, Houston, TX

The House on Mango Street, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, IL

Parliment of Owls, Divisions, Houston, TX

Eco Myths: Last Project Space, West Hollywood, CA

Urban Art: Expressions of an Environment, ECA Council Gallery, Fayetteville, NC

Rou-Pai: Looking and Dreaming Museum of Human Achievements, Austin, TX

The Big Show, Lavinard Art Center, Houston, TX

Third Coast National X Space Contemporary, Corpus Christi, TX

The Big Show, Lavinard Art Center, Houston, TX

ASL IPA Visual Arts Graduate Exhibition, Boston, MA


T.J. Asian Pacific, Moderate American Heritage
Hoffmann’s T.J. Headquarters, Framingham, MA

PUBLICATIONS

2017

New American Paintings, West Edition, No. 165

Exu, Volume 1, Published by Robert Boyd

The Adoption Constellation, Gleaning the Adopted Adolescent, by Jae Ran Kim (Art Work Featured)

Gardening Secrets of the Dead by Lee Henrikson (Cover)

2012
Katigba Review Fall Issue (Cover)

Outsiders Within: Korean Translation (Cover)

Woven Wings (Cover)

2019
Asian American Poetry and Writing - “New Truths” (Cover)

SELECTED AWARDS & GRANTS

2019
National Endowment for the Arts, Challenge America Grant Recipient

The Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs and Houston Art Alliance Support for Artist and Creative Individuals Grant, Houston, TX

The Idea Fund Stymus Grant, endowed by the Andy Warhol Foundation, Houston, TX

Artpace Award, Artpace Fund for Art and Dialogue, New York City, NY

The IdeaFund Grant, endowed by the Andy Warhol Foundation, Houston, TX

LUST-Steinfels Aard Award, Boston, MA

LUST-Steinfels Aard Award, Boston, MA

LUST-Steinfels Aard Award, Boston, MA

International Korean Adoptee Council LCC, Cultural Heritage Grant, Somerville, MA

Biography

JOOYOUNG CHOI

JOU N K YOUNG C H O I  bi o g ra p hy

Journey (Sooner or Later), Oil, 2018, oil, 2018, acrylic paint and paper work on paper, Collection of Dr. and Dr. Shiffe, photo credit Tom Dubrock

Journey (Sooner or Later), Oil, 2018, Oil, 2018, acrylic paint and paper work on paper, Collection of Dr. and Dr. Shiffe, photo credit Tom Dubrock
As an astro-futurist, multidisciplinary artist who works with paracosms, the foundation of my art-making process is a highly structured imaginary realm called the Cosmic Womb. Through this magical world, I use the genre of sci-fi/fantasy to explore the conditions and characteristics of the Other, and critique the act of Othering. Using a variety of media such as video art, painting, puppetry, music, soft sculpture, and installation, I create art that reflects the Cosmic Womb mythos and ideas behind it.

The name Cosmic Womb was inspired by a book titled "The Primal Wound." In it, author Nancy Verrier discusses how the separation of the adopted child from her birth mother is a form of trauma. As a Korean adoptee who grew up in a family where it wasn't safe to openly use words like trauma, loss or grief when referring to my adoptive family, I found Verrier's ideas to be a relief. It was a relief to know that the pain, loss, and sadness I felt was not a bad thing, and moreover didn't make me a bad person. Over time I realized that if I was to acknowledge that I had a primal wound, I would also require a cosmic womb, a place of healing, where I could express my feelings freely, and provide my younger self the childhood place of healing, where I could express my feelings.

Throughout the decades, I developed a narrative about a terrible world called the Cosmic Womb. The narrative focuses on Lady Madness's terrible War for Power that results in the attempted enslavement of an entire race of beings called Black Stars.

Everlasting Spirit's healing powers and Brilliant Mind's engineering skills, along with the remains of a magical sentient bed named Pom Pom Thunder, using Lady Madness' Legion of Horribleness. They were sold to NEVAHALT, a corporation that exchanges children for cash and favors. Before being bought, the two children had been captured by Lady Madness. She is a horrible dictatress named Lady Madness. Her skin is green with envy, she smokes 3 packs of Virginia Slims 100s a day, eats pandas, throws massive celebrations featuring dancing and cheering for the imaginary friends old and new, and back again if it allowed her even a moment with her girls. She has sacrificed everything and would gladly travel across the universe for months I worked with an incredible team of volunteers, create a Black Star named Resilient Heart; she's a single mom from outer space who wants nothing more than to be with her two missing daughters. Although this story and the world I built are imaginary, the feelings I share through it are real. Big Time Dreaming isn't just for children or artists, it is a gift we are all born with. The power to use our imagination to heal, and resolve the primal wounds and unspoken traumas of our pasts, is open to us all. It is a way of thinking and doing that invites gratitude and reflection. It is a process that recognizes the power of creative expression and steadies the heart during times of great uncertainty. The quest to find wholeness in one's life is a journey of big time dreaming.

From this narrative, a new character began to form, a new type of hero I hadn't yet seen. For months I worked with an incredible team of volunteers to create a Black Star named Resilient Heart; she's a single mom from outer space who wants nothing more than to be with her two missing daughters. She has sacrificed everything and would gladly travel across the universe and back again if it allowed her even a moment with her girls.

Her two children, Everlasting Spirit and Brilliant Mind, had been kidnapped by Lady Madness' Legion of Horribleness. They were sold to NEVAHALT, a corporation that exchanges children for cash and favors. Before being bought, the two children were stored in a holding tank, where they found the remains of a magical sentient bed named Pom Pom Thunder. Using Everlasting Spirit's healing powers and Brilliant Mind's engineering skills, they were able to revive the magical bed and create for her a pair of shoes that can travel on a superhighway of dreams. Together they rescue and reunite displaced children and their parents.

With the help of Queen Kook, benevolent ruler of the Cosmic Womb, myself, Earth artist JooYoung Choi, and a team of incredible volunteers including Shelby O'Dell and Alyssa Shotwell, we were able to redesign my installation here at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas into a reunion center complete with a teleportation portal that has allowed Pom Pom Thunder to make nightly trips via the superhighway of dreams and rescue and reunite more families. Already, Pom Pom Thunder has transported families such as Emma Poundcake Girl and her father Poundcake Man, Ampulexus and Spacia and their adopted son Momo the scaleless Pangolin, Lewis and Martin the Snow Brothers, and many others to AMSET.

From what I hear they are enjoying Beaumont. Finally free from Lady Madness’s reign of terror and trauma, they are beginning the process of reconnecting with their loved ones and finally getting a chance to do some Big Time Dreaming together as a family.