

Steve Kim

A+ EXCELLENT

MFA Thesis Show Statement

In *Secret Knowledge*, David Hockney talked about how the Old Masters essentially traced their way to glory via camera obscura techniques. And while the book's actual thesis was forgettable, his insistence on presenting his drawings as some kind of factual evidence pushed on my brain like a tumor. Why was someone soooo interested in drawing himself such a bad drawer? I feel I am qualified to say such a thing because, in contrast, I am a good drawer.

The answer, I think, is a difference in moms.

Every day, I would try and draw the very best Batman or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle as I could to impress my mom when she came home from work. She worked as a sewing machine lady and had a high school education from Korea. For her, and for me, excellence in art was generally in how realistic something was. I endeavored to capture every ridiculous lump on Batman's hot, tight, spandex infused body no matter how taxing it was on my underdeveloped hand and eye. Such is the strength of a mother's praise and affection. That's not to say that praise was all I sought. There was, of course, the drawing itself. It was fun. But what I am trying to underscore is the importance of placing that 'fun' in a social context. It was Mom who imbued my many Batmans with significance, relevance, and meaning. Not me.

That explains how I got good at drawing. However, there isn't that much meaning to be had in drawing alone, at least not in the cheap, chintzy, aesthetically dysfunctional fluff I was dishing out. I needed to be worth more, I needed more meaning, and I got the stuff from other moms, moms all over the world. 6th grade teacher mom, weird Korean art tutor mom, high school mom, junior college mom, Art Center mom, all the internet moms—deviantART, conceptart.org, Facebook—and currently, grad school mom.

The future holds other moms. Gallery moms, museum moms, critic and curator and historian moms. There are many moms. There is a lot of love out there. I look forward to it all.

But.

I seem to have some motherly feelings of my own. Not only do I want to receive meaning, I want to give some, I want to make some. I want to mother. That is why, although I could have said my work is about *the conflation, blurring and heightening of seemingly disparate, culturally banal forms* and called it a day, I wouldn't. Because while it'd *technically* be true, it wouldn't be the motherly thing to do. That is why, for example, this show is the way it is, with everything I've made hung chronologically left to right. It's so each piece has its own sense of self, time, and place. It comes out of an inner infantile sensibility that demands significance from every single thing that's ever existed in a life. Dog, what am I going to do with you, dog? Car, what am I doing to do with you, Car? Thing, let us be candid in our desperation. How are we going to make this work? Because you and I know just how badly we need to mean something to someone.

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