Bio

Anela Ming-Yue Oh is a multidisciplinary artist in love with curry and the ocean. She holds a BFA in Studio Art from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University. Her art practice is deeply grounded in a sense of community and sharing her skills with others through playful experimentation and collaboration. She uses materials that have a life of their own such as clay, paper, and fiber to feed her studio practice and create environments full of color and texture. As a mixed race artist of Malaysian Chinese descent, she utilizes imagery, colors, textures, and smells from her cultural heritage to pay homage to the work of her ancestors as she builds new worlds and futures. Her work aims to inspire a sense of hope and proposes visions of a future that includes marginalized voices by choosing to take a joyful and playful approach while discussing immigrant histories. She has been an Artist-in-Residence at Sonoma Ceramics, and a Teaching Artist-in-Residence at the Oxbow School. Most recently she was the West Bay View Fellow at Dieu Donné Papermill. She has just started as a 2022-2023 resident at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts where she will be combining her love of materials in new and exciting ways.

Artist Statement

       As a cactus matures through harsh environments, it undergoes a state change through a survival technique called “corking”. At its base, soft flesh turns solid and bark-like to accommodate and provide a stronger support for the inevitability of green new growth. The prospect of future growth transforms its present reality.

        As humans, we consider the world we wish to build by evaluating our present reality and how we can use it to catalyze a metamorphosis. To build a new world, we must become achingly aware of our environment.  I am in love with the potential of the world and the spaces we create because I am constantly confronted with its failings to include and support me. As a person who is mixed race, I am in constant relationship with change and my surroundings; my identity and experiences are hybrid and constantly shifting based on my environment, how I identify, and how I am identified. I have to try and build space for myself in the cracks the intrusion of my otherness creates. We are constantly shaping our environments, just as they shape us; the process of changing, disintegrating, being reformed is constant. Transformation is the space where the past has a reckoning to becoming a future, where there is radical change under intense pressure.  In my artwork to build spaces I can belong to and in, I am constantly forced to confront how we divide and categorize ourselves. Is it that I exist fractured and unwhole across the intersection of my cultures? Or am I an opportunity to rethink our divisions?

        In my artworks, I utilize imagery from my Malaysian Chinese cultural heritage to draw the line between where I come from and who I will become. Batik patterning and the repetition of natural imagery is woven throughout all of my work. As someone who comes from a history of displacement, these cultural markers give me a sense of place and situate me where I am: home. My art physically manifests my own various states of transformation, as I bring into being environments that are conducive to my growth. I bring together dualities, transform reality, like the cactus who marries bark to flesh. My materials themselves go through transformations, state changes. They reflect physical dualities— hard ceramic, soft fiber— in an effort to reform brokenness into something beautiful and new. In the kiln, clay solidifies, quartz expands within its structure, sometimes cracking as it transforms. When paper dissolves into almost nothing in water, it is reformed through clinging to that which moves through it. I see cracks and fractures as sites full of potential for new growth, sites of change. My worlds are full of breaking, and rebuilding. They are futures for me to look to, environments for me to learn from.

        Change is sorely needed: the social and physical structures of our world are falling apart. We live in a state of chaos to which none of us can truly belong. This body of work is for those of us who are trying to grow amidst the brokenness of the world and are being reformed. Our transformation as individuals is inseparable from social transformation. We have to constantly be in a cycle of reflection and action to be in a dynamic state of transformation.

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