

Past Art Projects & Exhibitions



I AM All The Flowers

Mixed Media Oil Pastel and Collage Mandala, 8.5" x 11", for October 10th in the Mahala 365 Days of 2021 Calendar by Natalia Garbu of Butterfly with Parachute

In support of her new community project, Mahala Magazine, Natalia put together a unique calendar made by 231 people from around the world in which each day in the year is created by a different person. Her intention is to remind you daily about the small joys of life. She says: "You have the freedom to do whatever you want with a day!"

Her words struck me because we really do have the freedom to do whatever we want with a day. Although my birthday, October 8th, was already taken by the time I joined the Calendar project, I was given October 10th. Inspired by the autumn leaves and colors, I created this mandala of the womb to be vibrant, soft, feminine, warm and encircling to offer some hope and resilience during these times of Coronavirus and riots. With my day, I proclaim: I AM all the flowers, as you are all the flowers, and we all are all the flowers in the world. Beautiful, vibrant, full of light and color, life-giving co-creators of our sometimes infuriatingly maddening and always mysterious world.

You can buy the calendar here: <https://www.mahala.shop/products/365-days-of-happiness-mahala-calendar-for-2021>

Or keep up to date with it on Instagram [@mahala_calendar](https://www.instagram.com/mahala_calendar)

Confronting Love: Freeing the Dancer Within

Oil Pastel and Found Collage Self-Portrait, 8' x 6', and Video Recording of Live Dance Performance for Tamalpa Institute Level I Weekend Training on Personal Embodiment of the Life/Art Process on July 10, 2020

My personal journey has been to integrate my spacious and serene MIND with the realness of my BODY, and the compassion and pureness of my HEART. In integrating my 3 centers, I am now having to confront my relationship with my heart's expanding openness and with my actual capacity to love and let love in. Through this encountering, I am feeling the openings and closings held in this center. I dance with the current inquiry: What does it mean to surrender?

I have this dream of dancing with my inner child in wild abandon. No inhibitions, no constraints, no resistance - only the liberation of the dance and trust in my body. I believe when I am able to embody this dream, my whole self will be fully unleashed and both my inner child and me can be free. This wild, fully unleashed self is my dancer within, and it is she I am longing to meet through my integration. It is she who has been protected in my disconnection from my heart and my body. It is my hidden dancer within who I honor with my "Identify-Confront-Release-Change" dance.

Dancing in freedom. Dancing with love for myself, for this process, for my own growth and for my integrated selves! Dancing in full embodiment: free, unleashed, open and feeling! Dancing what one of my teachers calls - "this YES dance"! Yes, to it all. And in that yes, my self-portrait performance was a success in terms of my visions, intentions and truth of where I am at right now. I feel relieved, and I also feel liberated, soaring above the clouds at sunset - uninhibited, full and completely ME.

More information can be found on my blog post here: <https://www.dialogicalpersona.com/thoughts/s4sr5m5vkpeb0nmk33td2kfqrdcl5>



LIQUID STORIES 2016

THE VESSEL:

where once the stories Bloomed Like Teardrops

The Vessel: Where Once the Stories Bloomed Like Teardrops

Found Object and Mixed Media Installation for the LIQUID STORIES Exhibition,
Curated by Pallavi Sharma @ The San Ramon Community Center (12501 Alcosta
Blvd, San Ramon, CA) from Oct 3 - 27, 2016


Four things inspired the creation of The Vessel: Where Once the Stories Bloomed Like Teardrops. The first was Walt Whitman's poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd", though this piece is not meant as an elegy, but as a container for all the lost stories. Tales that have been forgotten, misused or that the world has simply moved on from. This idea is captured with the words that used to begin all Hungarian fairy tales: Where was it? Where was it not? rather than Once upon a time. It also holds the narratives that we tell ourselves and have moved on from

out of necessity. These types of narratives seem so fluid to me, and I wanted to pay homage to them with something as beautiful and impractical as the Pennsylvania home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Fallingwater. The third was the following words by Ezra Pound:

"The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough."

His poem "In A Station of the Metro" echoed in my mind while dreaming of this installation. To make the structure, I re-used an old panel from an art exhibition in Pacifica and ripped up an antique Baudelaire book I found in Healdsburg called Flowers of Evil. The rice paper is from my first batch of Japanese-style papermaking and was made from many trips to the watering hose at Judy Shintani's studio in Half Moon Bay. The wood pieces were collected by Stafford Lake in Novata at a friend's birthday party. All of these objects hold water and stories within them. What is found in their arrangement, I hope, is not just the sadness of loss, like the dying of rose petals, but the sense of renewal that comes after the tears have bloomed. It is this beautiful energy that carries us forward to more dooryards, different crowds, falling like water into new stories.





Contours of a Metaphor

Found Object and Mixed Media Installation for A PLACE OF HER OWN, Curated by Cynthia Tom and Maggie Yee @ I-Hotel in Manilatown Heritage Foundation (868 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA) from May 19 - June 30, 2016

In my first A Place of Her Own installation in 2011, I asked: "What is my life concept? What is my story? I need a new frame, but I don't know the old frame." I created two red doors that stood 14 feet high with 83 scarves spilling out from the edges and six red frames arranged like a stained glass window to represent standing on a threshold, where any possibilities could emerge.

I'm no longer standing in that place. I've found a new frame. It operates on the heart and crown chakras, symbolically merging the two. I left PLACE in 2014 to devote myself to matters of the heart, and now I've come back, not having figured it out. Through meditations here as well as Open Floor Movement Practice and 5Rhythms™, I know I'm still meant to be focusing on contours of the heart.

Milan Kundera begins his novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, with the words: "Metaphors are dangerous. Metaphors are not to be trifled with. A single metaphor can give birth to love."

A single metaphor can give birth to a new identity too. The bowler hat his character, Sabina, wears in the story inspired me to put on my own bowler hat(s). I wanted to know what it felt like to wear an object so charged with gender binaries, lightness, sexuality and persona. Over the years, I've adopted this imagery and created my own persona around the bowler hat because I like the feelings of power, lightness and freedom that emerge when I put it on my head.

The bowler hat used in this installation was my first. It came from Brooklyn, where a friend moved. The hat was on a shelf in her room when she arrived, and she had no idea what to do with it until I mentioned wanting one. It was a struggle for her to remove from the shelf it had been attached to, so I knew this hat had a history and story of its own. When I was at a low point, I wore it for hours sitting at a mosaic table in a coffee shop crying. When I got home, a long poem poured forth

and both my new writing practice and persona were created. I wanted to do something special with this hat, which is the center of a place of my own, and from that center, reach out with both hands to embrace life and movement. In one hand, I hold my heart, and in the other, greater possibilities.



"A Material Girl" came from a desire I had to tell stories through objects. Aside from consumer culture, I wanted to show how we relate to our selves through childhood and other symbolic objects. I had originally envisioned a girl entirely made of repurposed materials, but I was constrained by the panels.

50-50 SHOW IV, 2012

A Material Girl

Found Object and Mixed Media Panels for the 50-50 SHOW IV (Juried Exhibition) @ Sanchez Art Center (1220 Linda Mar Blvd #B, Pacifica, CA) from Aug - Sept 2012

Also shown for a Connect2Korea Art Exhibit, where I served as Coordinator and Artist @ Francis Hall in St. Mary's Cathedral (1111 Gough St, San Francisco, CA) on Nov 15, 2014

"A Material Girl" came from a desire I had to tell stories through objects. I grew up in the 1980's and 1990's in a generation that knows and loves excess, particularly in the form of material goods. It was a time when Madonna's "Material Girl" image reigned large, and the global impact of consumerist materialism can be seen and felt in today's society.

What I wanted to unpack in fifty panels is how we also are able to relate ourselves to certain objects that aren't merely a part of this negative cycle of materialism, but hold meaning in our lives because they tell the story of who we are and what we have lived. In that sense, these panels are autobiographical because they tell what I have lived since that is what I know.

Philosopher David Hume believed that our minds were like separate frames, and we lived each moment in the present frame. We had only what we could taste in our mouths, feel with our hands, smell in the air, hear and see in the environment around us. We had no way of connecting each frame. This way of thinking is anathema for a Kantian Idealist, but I found myself drawing inspiration from this idea while creating each individual panel.

Each panel is its own story for me and for you. They are not connected, and yet within the framework, you can see the outlines of a girl: her hair, her raised fist, her shaded eyes, booted feet, the hand that wears the glove, a whole person.



The Red Frame

Found Object Installation for A PLACE OF HER OWN (Juried Exhibition), Curated by Cynthia Tom and Kimi Taira @ SOMArts Cultural Center (939 Brannan St, San Francisco, CA) during May 2011

A place of my own is a space that can hold all of my questions and all of the possibilities in life. It is layered, and each layer is a part of me: a possibility, a memory, a question or an answer. In my piece, I follow different red threads to explore all of these possibilities for existence. I take the idea of the red threads from the Chinese adage that says an invisible red string ties us all to the ones we love. The ones in our past, future, and whom we never knew.

In my space, imagination and reality are blurred, but my objects are solid and concrete. The six frames symbolize my search for a way to frame my story, a

journey that is found in the liminal space between real life and what can only be conjured or imagined.

Standing in front of a door is a liminal moment. The door itself is a frame. What is behind it? What is beyond it? What does the frame itself hold?

Who we are shapes the questions we ask, and the answers we form. My doors are red-hot and ready to be reformed. They are large, narrow and full of possibilities.



"The Red Frame," originated from a desire I had to become more real, a desire that arose from being a Korean adoptee and realizing that part of myself was missing. Thus, I began a journey to locate those missing pieces, which led me to the questions: What is my story? What is my life concept? What is the frame for my story?

As I was writing, I realized the absence was that disconnection between the abstract thoughts and feelings in my mind and the physical quality of making something appear in the world, such as giving birth to a life or these objects in my installation. The space created here is another threshold.

Photo Credit: Bob Hsiang 2011



Artist Statement

From the heart of an inquirer. . .

Art, for me, is about the acts of seeing and being seen; that feeling that you have to share the beautiful, or the true self, with someone else. I look at myself, humanity and the world, and try to create something beautiful from the composition, and sometimes, from the wreckage. I also take that wreckage: what's frightening, fragmented, broken, abused and overlooked and shine the light on it. While that light contains beauty, I also hope it contains what is real.

My art used to be an aesthetic blitzkrieg. I saw myself as a mythic bird standing amidst an explosion of words, images, symbols, ideas and colors swirling up around me, and I was constantly reaching and struggling to grasp onto something concrete. As a Korean adoptee who grew up without any genetic mirrors, I decided to create them using those words, images, ideas and symbols and refashioning them into self personas to explore the questions: Who am I? and Where do I belong? I use found object installations, performance rituals and mixed media self-portraits to continue to explore the many facets of myself as I live and study my own life/art process.

One of my mentors told me that my work now contains all the mythic-ness of self persona that it used to, without the heart-wrenching quality. There's more healing.

I can see my whole self, accept all of it, and I've now integrated many of those pieces that used to feel so fragmented and overlooked. I'm still enthralled with the mythic-ness of living my own life/art process, and I know myself well enough to know I will continue to keep reaching towards new words, images, symbols, ideas and colors that capture the beauty and meaning in my bowler hat persona as I live my inquiry of becoming and creating myself and art anew.