



Jenny (Hyunjung) Choi

The Lotus World

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Daniel Glendening

Daniela Molnar, Morgan Walker, Nan Curtis

For my thesis, I will make four self-portrait paintings that are 30cm wide, 170cm tall, displayed side by side. Two of the paintings will be on unstretched canvas, and two will be on yupo-paper. A major inspiration for this work comes from my passion and deep connection to the ancient Asian style of scroll painting. I will be using oil paint on the unstretched canvas and ink on yupo-paper because it is an interesting material to play with and when I have fun with my work, viewers can more easily associate with it. I would like to combine these materials, ink and oil paint, which have differing characters, to break the rules. Plus, I like the way it looks as well!

The format of the scroll allows me to make various display decisions. For example, I can open the scroll to show the whole work or just a part, depending on how much I wish to share at that point in time. Which leads to my display: I want the scrolls to look like treasure maps with the raw edges to show that it's time to go to a new world, one where viewers of my exhibition will be drawn into the wonder and creativity I have embodied in my work. Additionally, a scroll form can help viewers dive into my indeterminate, non-existent world, reminding people of their childhood memories of curiosity and wonder.

I believe one of my goals in painting is to use it as a tool for self-reflection and to discover the real reason as to why I am a painter. That does not mean my work deals with serious content like feminism, or ecology, but also, I don't want to describe my painting as only "for fun". I look back at myself and ask questions in my mind. There is no answer to painting, or to one's life. So, I want viewers to feel the same as I do in this thought. Do not think too much about something, just let it happen, no matter what. Recently, I am broadening my curiosity through painting more classical subjects like flowers and leaves. The most important thing for

me in making these “standard” types of paintings is to not lose interest. I find that I feel relaxed when I paint flora. There is some research that shows plants play a role in meditation. The article titled “The Power of Nature to Heal Depression” says that plants can actually help people to reduce stress and improve their mood. Even in my botanical paintings, what I aim to do is based on, and part of, self-portrait and reflection.

Another one of my self-portraits is a painting titled ‘nu’ (meaning the new world) and is based on botanical elements. I love to draw and paint existing plants, but I also want to create unique looking made up plants from my imagination. For some reason, even if I aim to be realistic, the result looks dreamlike. I want to create a space in this painting full of unique looking plants. I desire to learn more about shapes through looking at seaweed and tropical plants because I find beauty in their curves. I am sure this learning process will help me to further broaden my range and depth, while at the same time, finding a space for meditation as I paint.

Next, I found some amazing contemporary artists that truly inspire me: Julie Breton, Squeak Carnwath, Dana Schutz, and Takasawa Keiichi. I find confidence in these individuals’ work. Julie Breton works with botanical abstract paintings that make me feel like I’m floating in a dreamy, unknown world. I think this is because of her pastel color palette and the mosaic or abstract brush marks which are not sharp but large, so it seems like there is no hesitation between the big brushes. Squeak Carnwath led me to introduce layering and overlapping in my works. When I overlap different elements, it makes me feel like I’m programming on the computer, designing my painting more systematically. Dana Schutz and Takasawa Keiichi’s

paintings are focused on a self-portrait, which is the best way for me to find meaning, and relate to all my past works.

Thinking back, growing up in Korea I was forced to train in realistic still-life drawings when I was in high school. There, they do not accept the student's opinion because there is always a certain right answer for the drawing. However, I learned here that there is no "correct" answer. Students choose and decide on their own with no limitation. Teachers offer some suggestion but no pressure. All decisions are up to me which makes me nervous and anxious but also, there is no blame. I think that's great. It was a new challenge for me as a freshman through sophomore.

The middle ground that I have found between my education in Korea and PNCA is in self-portraits. Unintentionally, I put natural, oriental elements such as the lotus, lotus leaves, mountains, and the moon, in all of my paintings. And they make viewers feel something stronger than just my still-life paintings. I did not notice this insight until someone told me this information in a critique. I'm sure my background relates to those elements. Growing up, my room was surrounded by little lotus things from my grandmother, even though my parents and I are not even Buddhist. She always told me to grow up like a lotus flower, meaning I should be pure and not lose my virginity until I get married. This is why even with the botanical paintings, what I aim to do is based on and part of self-portraiture.

I am starting with line drawings, which is comfortable for me, but I want to try unfamiliar methods such as color drawings without lines, in a combination of familiar and experimental methods. I believe it is a good idea to collect plant images, for instance, images of trees, grass, or flowers from walking or travel. Not only new images but also photos that I took

a while ago filled with many memories and stories I have. Those elements can be a good resource for me to take from. I do not think every painting necessarily needs to make sense to viewers. It's okay if my painting does not make sense for some of you. I am inspired by a film called 'The Lobster'. It is a nonsensical movie, with a weird ending. I liked the weirdness, and I am excited to make that happen with my painting. Let people not figure out what they see, sort of like Alice in Wonderland.

My paintings are meant to be left open to the imagination but also an escape from the strict binaries of reality. The meaning behind my paintings come from my desire to create work that is fun for me to make, look at, and for my viewers as well. My botanical paintings offer the viewer a break from reality and whatever troubles they may be going through. Painting as an artistic practice itself is a meditative experience for myself and it is part of what makes the lotus paintings so relaxing and enjoyable to look at.

## **Artist Statement**

My goal was to create a large nature scene, using elements based on my personal experience. The lotus world is that a place for the dreamy jungle of relaxation. This project started with my entire experience from not only pnca but also my time in the states. I put little symbols that have hidden meanings that make me feel happy and warm.

My paintings are meant to be left open to the imagination but also an escape from the reality. The meaning behind my paintings come from my desire to create work that is fun for me to make, look at, and for my viewers as well. I hope my botanical paintings offer the viewer a break from reality and whatever troubles they may be going through. Painting as an artistic practice itself is a meditative experience for myself and it is part of what makes the lotus paintings so relaxing and enjoyable to look at. ♡

## **Thesis Abstract/ Project Statement**

I used the painting for the tool of self-reflection. I am broadening my curiosity through painting and just let it all happen with different materials. I tried to create a space where I can relax. I put little symbols that have hidden meanings that make me smile. The meaning behind my paintings comes from my desire to create work, that is fun for me to make and look at.

My thesis proposal was focused on myself, my process, and my experience mainly related to the lotus flower. This is because the lotus flower came from my childhood memory. I have adjusted this to include, creating a large nature scene, using elements based on my personal experience. I had fun with backgrounds, mixing colors based on my preference. My expressions but also softness that represents the flower leaves. With thesis, I tried to create a place that exists in my head. I want to combine the elements of dreamy, self-portrait, and relaxation into painting.

## Writing for the Oral Presentation

### Intro

Hi guys welcome to my thesis defense

I'm Jenny. I'm a painting major

Today, I will show you guys about my project called "the lotus world". I create a place that exists in my head.

I'm going to explain about my project focused on myself, my process, and my experience mainly related to the lotus flower.

My goal was to create a large nature scene, using elements based on my personal experience.

The lotus world is that a place for the dreamy jungle of relaxation.

I could say this project started with my entire experience from not only pnca but also my time in the states. There was too much confusion, and different perspective.

I had hard time to figure out to be free from the direction. One of my goals in painting is to use it as a tool for self-reflection. Self-portrait means a lot to me. Self-portrait taught me how to communicate and share my story to the world.

My paintings are changed year over year. When I was in freshman year, [I was just confused](#).

The style of education was opposite than high school. Back home In Korea, my teachers were show me how to do things rather than let me do it and struggle with it. So, It wasn't about broadening my creativity, It was strictly learning techniques. I did not know how to find what I want to paint. This time art was not for me, for other people. Sophomore year, frustration. I felt



not creative enough. I compared myself to others. I just did the reproduction of my favorite artist Frida Kahlo's work, mostly.

Finally, The paintings done by Junior year I was more about myself.

So, I became more vulnerable with myself. I let myself to be comfortable and just enjoy the painting.

## **Myself**

My work is really about identity. Those of you who don't know me, I'm from Suwon, South Korea. Growing up, I was surrounded by artistic environment, my mom and aunt does Hanji craft which is a Korean paper art that takes single sheets of paper carving and layering to create a furniture, elaborate dresser to cute detailed hand mirror.

Also, my other aunt is an illustrator for children's books. I believe I was able to use more variety of materials than other kids. For example, when I was 5, I used oil pastel for princess drawings when others using just crayon. I carried that passion to high school after school art academy where I learned traditional styles and prepare for the art college. I got a few awards that they focused on realistic still life only with value, light and shade by pencil.

There was always an answer so I had no opinion in painting. Which really held back my growth and creativity.

However, art was no more fun works at that time, there was so much pressure to drawing something.

Luckily, from PNCA, I met great friends, mentor and faculties that listen to my voice and supports me with my work.

I found myself that I can relax when mixing the colors with big brushes. I wanted to give myself freedom. I always protecting myself from the stress of everyday life. It could be catcall on the street, walking to school from the max station, it could be assignment for art history class, or being homesick, missing my mom's food.

I create a space that I can escape from reality and only for me. Being in portland, I fell in love with the plants, so I incorporate that passion into the painting. And I just had fun with it.

### **Process**

Some of my past paintings are literal to me but hidden from other people, for example, using KOREAN WORDS.

Before I start to think about thesis project, I looked back of my past works. It was a black and white self-portrait using the elements of korean words but using the lotus flower as a main character. becuz

The lotus flower came from my childhood memory. My grandma was buddhist, and she always told me to live like a lotus flower. The lotus symbolizes pure and virgin til get marry. Even though my parents, including myself were not in buddhism little things in my house like candle holder, pouch, and the jewelry case, everything have the lotus image in it. So, lotus means to me family, love, and protection.

The meaning behind my paintings were come from my desire to create work, that is fun for me to make and look at. So, my thesis project is an imaginary place where I can be happy and relax. My paintings are meant to be left open but also an escape from the strict boundaries of reality.

I hope my paintings offer the viewer a break from reality and whatever troubles they may go through, as well.

(pause) Also, why using pastel color?

I found out that I always using the pastel color in my painting.

I was wondering where those habits coming from and I figure it out that this is because of my personal experience that I love cotton candy at the city fair, my favorite flower is cherry blossom, and my favorite smell is lilac scent.

That lilac scent always reminds me the time, when me and my mom went to walk when I was 7? So makes me smile and relax no matter what.

It is important to me that even my personal preference involved in my painting. I believe my paintings is part of me, so that includes my personality, [even if i don't want it](#).

To me, the orange color is anxious color but with a little bit of white, that becomes my favorite peach, salmonish, portland pink sunset sky color.

That peach color is my main color for my make up, eye shadow, blush to lips. I noticed that after a conversation with my mentor Morgan.

The black color represents a confusion for the viewers to floating in the water or standing in the dark night.

When I combined these 3 elements of lotus flower, pastel colors and black color, my paintings appear more attractive, in my opinion.

I am inspired by several artists, One of them, is Julie Breton, her paintings are mostly related to botanical matters. But not like others, who focused on the traditional beauty of botanical paintings. I felt more dreamy and free aesthetic from the drips and the brush marks without hesitation.

Henri Rousseau, he is famous for his jungle paintings which is fascinating. Full of natural elements, and line works reminds me seaweed, even if they are ground plants. Makes me calm and relaxing just looking at the nature scene, too.

Squeak Carnwath, I was fascinated by the way she playing with the little elements. I realized how playful vibes can be created by small objects.

Moreover, I found similarity from the local artist Elizabeth Malaska to Frida Kahlo and Philip Guston, the way that they think as an art or treating art makes me more confident. I love that they tell their story through painting. With all the troubled past in their life, that is one of the reasons I started to do self-portraits.

### **My Thesis**

I think we live in the age of fear facing the reality, I just wanna say it's okay. I wanted to encourage people like they did to me. No more pressure, just breath. I am broadening my curiosity through painting and just let it all happen with different materials.

I made 6 paintings. (pause)

I used acrylic paint on frosted duralar paper, because of the characteristic that dry quick, I did it without hesitation, expecting for the happy accident. I could say my works are intuitive which makes me not losing interests. However, I used oil paints on the traditional stretched canvas.

Oil paints take a while to dry, I spent more time to mixing the colors. It is also fun. This two paintings may looks opposite but they are interacting as a mirror.

With this one, like I said earlier, the black backgrounds makes me feels like floating in the water and standing in the night.

I put little symbols that have hidden meanings that make me feel happy and warm. FOR EXAMPLE, BANANA. There are pink bananas to a bunch of banana. The reason I put banana is because, what my dad used to call me, to make fun of me. He said I look asian but think and talk like an american.

And I realized the moon and mountains were always in my paintings. When it is a full moon in my culture, we make a certain food and make wishes for good luck. So, it became my good luck buddy since I was young and when I looked at the moon it was always above the mountains.

I love using those elements because I find it interesting that people look at my painting so different than me. I really like that different reaction.

I had so much fun with backgrounds, mixing colors based on my preference. Those color ended up looks like the portland sky. My expressions but also softness that represents the lotus flower leaves. The three elements of dreamy, self-portrait, and relaxation into my thesis.

## **Wrap Up**

(pause) Go back to my journey in the states,

There is no answer but I needed the answer from the way I trained in South Korea which has different education style. Now I got confidence and more brave than me before, thanks to pnca.

I learn a lot and met so many good people here. I feel lucky to have you guys here today.

I hope you guys also get relax and warm from my lotus world. A place I created, where you can be free and encouraged to be yourself. Thank you.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

Adriani, Gotz. Henri Rousseau. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

A detailed portrait of the life and career of Henri Rousseau. It tells of his petty bourgeois background, his attempts to establish himself as an independent artist, and his contact with other artists of the Parisian avant-garde. It also presents sensitive interpretations of his unusual art.

Asian Art Museum. Looking East: How Japan Inspired Monet, Van Gogh, and Other Western Artists (with open captions) YouTube video, 4:37. October 13, 2015.

When Japan opened its port to international trade in the 1850s and emerged from centuries of self-imposed isolation, Japanese prints, albums and objects arrived in Europe and North America in unprecedented quantities. In the frenzy of collecting and admiration that followed, Japanese art caught the eye of designers and artists seeking fresh solutions to artistic problems.

Botanical art & artists. "Why botanical matters." <http://www.botanicalartandartists.com>

This is the website that includes all kind of Botanical art and illustration combine art and science. Help people who aim to record accurate information about the shapes, structures, colors, life cycle and habits of unique species of plants and flowers while also providing a pleasing image.

Panero, James. "Outside The Frame: How Asia changed the course of American Art."

HUMANITIES March/April 2009,

<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2009/marchapril/feature/outside-the-frame>.

The influence of Eastern thinking over American artistic culture through paintings in the Japonism era. The show sets out to survey the East's cultural reflections in American art in the same dreamy manner that American artists often appropriated Eastern themes. A meditative peel of bells, courtesy of the artist Ann Hamilton, circles Frank Lloyd Wright's spiraling rotunda and sets the tone for an exhibition that seeks to be both didactic and contemplative, Western and Eastern.

Ou, Li-Chen and Luo M. Ronnier. "A study of colour emotion and colour preference. Part I: Colour emotions for single colours." University of Derby, Colour & Imaging Institute, 2004.

This article classifies color emotions for single colors and develops color-science-based color emotion models. In a psychophysical experiment, assessed 20 colors on 10 color-emotion scales: like–dislike, tense–relaxed, warm–cool, and active–passive. Experimental results show no significant difference between male and female data, whereas different results were found between British and Chinese observers for the tense–relaxed and like–dislike scales.

Stephen E. Palmer and Karen B. Schloss. "An ecological valence theory of human color preference." The University of California, Berkeley, 2009.



In this article, we articulate an ecological valence theory in which color preferences arise from people's average effective responses to color-associated objects. An empirical test provides strong support for this theory: People like colors strongly associated with objects they like (e.g., blues with clear skies and clean water) and dislike colors strongly associated with objects they dislike (e.g., browns with feces and rotten food). Relative to alternative theories, the ecological valence theory both fits the data better and provides a more plausible, comprehensive causal explanation of color preferences.

Taljaard, Tanja. "The Power of Nature to Heal Depression." Uplift, July 7, 2016.

<https://upliftconnect.com/the-power-of-nature-to-heal-depression/>.

This is the article explains how nature can help people's mental issues, for example, stress. Some benefits from tending a garden, such as immune system and psychology enhanced by frequent exposure to the sun, everything.