INTERVIEW

Digital Drawing Room: MFA Fine Arts
featuring Chenyu Zhu

Interviewed by Yang Li

Chenyu Zhu

Starting May 10, you can view work by students in the MFA graduating class on the website 2021.CCAMFA.art and in the Class of 2021 Showcase.

Works in this series were written by students in Glen Helfand and Maria Porges' respective graduate writing seminars this past fall and spring.

realism representation, 2021. Photos.

Yang Li: What has been the biggest influence on your work to date?

Chenyu Zhu: When I studied fine art in China, almost all my classmates expected to become teachers after graduation. I was shocked and confused at that time about why. What causes everyone with different backgrounds and different experiences to hope for the same career path, like copy and paste? It seems like people make their decisions based on a trend, not only for their career choice. I want to illustrate this trend with my work.

**YL: What are you interested in and how does it feed into your creative thinking?**

CZ: I started my practice by looking at the different ways in which information is spread. With social media, such as Twitter and Instagram, once the "likes" hit a certain number, people will define these as the information they need to gather, otherwise they might be out of date. Bookstores are also an influential medium. Bestseller books are tagged with lots of hashtags in their descriptions like "hot seller" or "Nobel winner book," when people search online. It is obvious to see how these standards created by mediums influence people's way of thinking. I dug deep into the operation methods on social media, and I found all these 'hot' messages have triggers. There are tons of ways to make the data look good through technical methods, making the information not that credible. My art practice focuses on the tension between "reality" made by the media and reality itself; on how information affects people's thinking, and my private feeling about the real world.

realism representation, 2021. Photos.

presentation and representation, 2021. Photos.
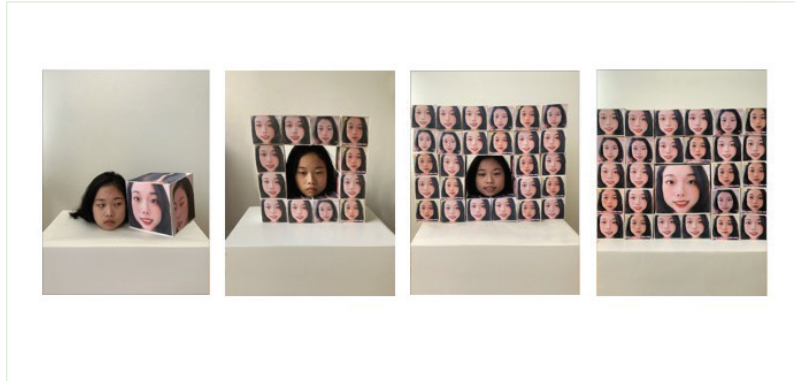
presentation and representation 2, 2021. Photos.

YL: Could you tell me about your most recent work?

CZ: I printed pictures of fruit from different angles and combined these photos into some "low-3D" (not the 3D print, but the rough combination of pictures) versions, like boxes. I put them beside the actual fruit. This transfer through various forms fits my understanding of contemporary art because it just reflects what I learned from the world.

My most recent work digs deep into this idea. I took pictures of my face from different angles and combined them into the "low-3D" boxes. In the first piece, I display my own head and one head-box. The second one is my head with a lot of head boxes around. In the third, I stick tags on the head boxes until the tags stick everywhere, even the floor and wall. These three pieces show a process of how things change as they spread on the internet. People think they can know me through all the information they gather from social media, and then define me from that information. People stick hashtags on me, but is that the real me or me in their imagination?