



maryland art place

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Polipop & Paintings
Mina Cheon

May 3 – June 30, 2012
Maryland Art Place
8 Market Place, Suite 100
Baltimore

Opening Thursday, May 3
6pm: Artist Talk
7-9pm: Reception

Maryland Art Place (MAP) proudly announces Mina Cheon's solo exhibition *Polipop & Paintings*, May 3 - June 30, 2012. The exhibition includes a series of digital paintings (8x5 feet each) coming from her mid-career solo exhibit *Polipop* (Political Pop Art) at the **Sungkok Art Museum** in Seoul, Korea; works that became an instant media sensation in Korea early this year.

After many years working as an installation and new media artist, the MAP solo exhibition illuminates Cheon's background as a painter by combining her new *Polipop* digital paintings with her last hand-painted masterpiece, *15 Billion Years Painting*. This mammoth 72x8 foot painting was created for the renowned abstract-expressionist painter **Grace Hartigan** between 1997 - 1998 while Cheon worked with her at the Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). Produced through the use of florescent acrylic on canvas, and lit under black light, MAP is showcasing this work for the first time under natural light. The *15 Billion Years* painting is a celebration of popular science and a cosmic portrayal of the Universe. The painting was also the starting point of her artistic development. Cheon's career communicates the relevance of working relationships between artist, institution and instructor over time, and the significance thereof.

Polipop is an art world that intersects politics and pop art. It takes serious discussions surrounding geopolitics of global, media culture and livens them up as accessible, eye-catching, fun pop art. With the use of strong primary colors and bold outlines, Cheon's large scaled digital paintings mimic the language of advertisements, political posters, and propaganda banners. Each unique digital painting is collaged with images from the Internet, rescaled on the computer, and printed on canvas.

Some History:

In 2004, Cheon showed at the first *Athena's Daughters* exhibition curated by Grace Hartigan for **Maryland Art Place**, where Cheon's very first "political pop art" *Half Moon Eyes* documented her visitation to North Korea. This visit highlighted Cheon's interest in political construction on beauty, and the triangular relationship between America and North and South Korea.

By 2008, Cheon's *Addressing Dolls* exhibition at the **C.Grimaldis Gallery** in Baltimore portrayed the stark contrast between communist North Korea and capitalist South Korea through girls' playthings; Cheon exhibited her North Korean doll installation *99 Miss Kim(s)* on one side and a series of South Korean life-size paper doll dresses *Dresses for Different Events* on the other.

Since Cheon's visit to North Korea in 2004, she traveled to places she considered 'contested spaces,' where geo-political anxieties demonstrated conflicts between neighboring, yet rivalry Asian countries. Cheon went to Japan during the 2008 Summer Olympics in China specifically to interview Japanese people about their thoughts of the Olympics in Beijing. Cheon also traveled to Dokdo in 2009, a contested island that sits between Korea and Japan, an island that is still territorially fought over today. The documents of these trips are included in her new body of work that constantly questions the relationship between the East and West, as well as the relationship between Asian countries such as South and North Korea, Japan, and China.

Today Cheon uses the plethora of images of President Barack Obama as *Polipop*. Drawing comparisons to Chairman Mao in China, Cheon refers to Obama as the *Polipop* icon of our time. From the iconic American President and the war in the Middle East, to the rise of the Asian Century and circulation of global media, the exhibition includes digital paintings on Obama, race, pop culture, technology, capitalism, and Asia.

Unlike many Asian students coming to and leaving Baltimore for study, Korean-American new media artist, Cheon stayed in Baltimore becoming part of the faculty at MICA; living between Baltimore, New York, and Seoul – three cities, which she considers home. This year, Cheon presents three consecutive solo exhibitions in these cities; MAP being the second installment after the Sungkok Art Museum exhibition earlier this year. Cheon will end 2012 this fall at the **White Box** in New York City. All three exhibitions include the *Polipop* title and theme, however Cheon keeps a sense of individuality between each.

From her time with Grace Hartigan to how Cheon situated herself in Baltimore; her course towards the creation of *Polipop* was charted. Cheon's artistic history cannot go unnoticed and as Hartigan once said to Cheon in 1998, "if anything, it is because you are a painter first."

Cheon's past solo exhibitions include showing at the Lance Fung Gallery in New York (2002); Insa Art Space, Arts Council, Seoul (2005); the C.Grimaldis Gallery in Baltimore (2008); and the Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul (2012). Cheon is a full-time Professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and was a visiting professor at Ewha Woman's University in fall 2011, her Alma mater. Cheon received her PhD in Philosophy of Media and Communications from the European Graduate School (EGS) in Switzerland, and published her book *Shamanism + Cyberspace* (Atropos Press, NY and Dresden) in 2009. Cheon received an MFA in painting from MICA (1999) and an MFA in Imaging Digital Arts from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (2002). Her BFA is in painting from Ewha Woman's University (1996), Seoul, Korea. <http://www.minacheon.com>

Available at MAP: POLIPOP exhibition catalog from the Sungkok Art Musum (Seoul, Korea, 2012) that includes writings from the Sungkok Art Museum’s chief curator Tcheon-nahm Park; art historian and scholar on race and culture, Leslie King-Hammond; cyber-feminist scholar Irina Aristarkhova; and cultural critic Pamela Haag. The catalog includes full color pages of Cheon’s digital paintings and her other video and sculptural installation works and is 170-page artist catalog. The exhibition at the Sungkok Art Museum that is documented in this catalog was covered in many Korean daily news, the Internet, radio, and television broadcast news including Korean Broadcasting (KBS), Seoul Broadcasting Station (SBS), YTN Korean 24 Hours News Channel, TV Chosun (Korea), and the English channel Korea’s Global TV Arirang.



1. Mina Cheon, *Yes, We Can! Obama & Me*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

Standing back to back, this is a portrait of Obama with his campaign slogan “Yes, We Can,” and the artist Cheon with “We Can Do It.” It appropriates the famous J. Howard Miller’s poster of Rosie the Riveter, the icon of American women in factories during WWII.



2. Mina Cheon, *The Scariest*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

Contrasting from the economic recession in America, Obama’s fierce killing of Osama bin Laden has punctuated his presidency with a flash of heroism. Given the fact that this event might be Obama’s lasting positive legacy, it is scary that Obama’s identity is being so closely tied to bin Laden’s with media’s slippage of Osama-Obama imagery. The two faces are merged, the image and idea of the image was so scary that a glare of a camera flash was inserted to interrupt the image of Obama giving his presidential speech to announce the victory. Here, Obama is wearing a turbin and looking “Bin Laden.”



3. Mina Cheon, *Ax of Evil*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

The three charters of the axis of evil as defined by George W. Bush are Iraq, North Korea, and Iran. Here, these “axis of evil” countries are adorned in devil’s horn head bands, and become not only “acts” of evil but the Ax of Evil.



4. Mina Cheon, *Pokeman*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

Kim Jong Il is turned into Pokeman, meaning jokes poked at, inspired by the 2004 film, *Team America: World Police*, the most popularized characterization of the man in power. This digital painting became an immediate media sensation in South Korea upon Kim Jong Il's passing in late December 2011.

5. Mina Cheon, *Tiananmen Square*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

Today's traditional China is flooded with franchises and capitalist goods. Here Tiananmen Square is housing Coca Cola, McDonalds, and BMW.



6. Mina Cheon, *Capitalism and Contest*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

This is an image of all the contestants on American reality shows from 2011, including the Bachelorette, Bachelor, America's Next Top Model, Survivor, The Biggest Loser, and Bridezilla.



7. Mina Cheon, *Own Royalty*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

With global obsessions over Kate Middleton's engagement and wedding with Prince William, Diana's ring has been reproduced for the masses, selling in America for under 20\$, so everyone can own a piece of royalty. Here, you see how Prince William's kiss can also be bought through Skype, except there is a limit of one kiss per household.



8. Mina Cheon, *Remote Your Natural Disaster*, POLIPOP Digital Painting on canvas, 8 x 5 feet, 2012.

The TV screen shows recent natural disasters around the world. Here you can remote them, meaning, be removed away from them. Or, you can change channels to get your choice of a different natural disaster. Technology mediates nature into screen experience.