Eunjung Hwang: Three Thousand Revisits

February 1 through April 2, 2011

The inspiration for some of my works comes from childhood memories—childhood BEFORE I started school. After school started, the reality wasn’t always fun. I remember distinct moments and thoughts from my childhood. One moment that stands out is when I got back inside the house after playing outside. I always felt cozy/sheltered/protected. I thought of it as being inside the layers of cabbages. I could escape from dizzying small rooms or sometimes running around outside the house over and over again. I would imagine being overtaken by some evil forces or disasters. These fantastic notions and the feelings they evoked remind me of the worlds of ghosts and goblins and go back to my boringly peaceful shelter. The inspiration for some of my works comes from childhood memories. I created a dreamlike world that might be interesting to echo your non-linear approach in the next stage of my work. I think about death and reincarnation a lot and try to express something in my work. Death is really the only concept that interests me. I don’t think about life termination, but I think about how humans can lead to an unbearable result. I try to find ways to lighten things up. In your narratives you eschew a legible story—human folly, fleeting realities, innocence, surreal dreams, fantasy/hell/afterlife, laughter and suffering, displacement, drawings that move through time, fantastic possibilities of animation, ghostly apparitions, magic, escape. These are some of the ideas that come to mind. I’ve presented them in no particular order. Please feel free to pick and choose and to respond in any manner that feels comfortable to you.

THREE THOUSAND REVISITS
EUNJUNG HWANG
February 1 through April 2, 2011
An Interview with Eunjung Hwang

Conducted via e-mail

January 2011

Corinna Ripps Schaming: Could you tell me about the title of your show, *Three Thousand Revisits*?

Eunjung Hwang: I like my titles to be somewhat ambiguous. In this instance, I’m thinking about all my ghost- and spirit-like figures that seem to come out again and again in my work, like an endless form of reincarnation or *déjà vu*. There’s a certain implied mysticism in the title—I think a lot about the Buddhist eternal life circle. It’s poetic and comforting to think about how when you die, your soul briefly revisits all the places you’ve been before you go to another level of space.

Where do your ideas come from? You seem like such a mild-mannered person, but the activities of your hybrid characters are truly perverse.

I have a fascination with all kinds of supernatural things: ghosts, superstitious beliefs. Sometimes I have vivid dreams that I think reveal fleeting, hidden truths about the human condition. I like to tap into these. I also love comic books and B movies and get ideas from them. The perverse elements are part of the fun for me.

Where in your work can we find these perversion and sentimentality? How does the character’s behavior change from one project to another?

I don’t see them as a separate entity. For me, they’re all related in some way. The characters and the actions they perform are all linked together in some way. They are a part of this incredibly complex universe that I’ve created.

Who are some of your favorite artists?

Francisco Goya, Hieronymus Bosch, Henry Darger.

Does all your work begin with a hand sketch?

Yes. I’m always doodling. It’s something I’ve done since childhood, starting at around four years old. My characters and images come out of this process in an automatic kind of way.

When did you start exploring digital animation? Could you talk about your animations and new media works in relation to your earlier paintings and drawings?

I didn’t start out at art college. Getting into art school was different in Korea. For example, you needed to be able to draw the figure super-realistically. It was a painful test that required costly training. I didn’t want to go through with it, so I took art classes outside my major. I made character-based images, and I began to think about making the characters move and adding sound effects. I met an instructor with a very old Mac and he showed me how to make simple flipbook-style animations. Shortly after that I transferred to art college, where I majored in painting, increased my picture-making skills, and made my first animation.

At what point do you develop the sound in your animations?

I always add the sound after I finish the visuals and the animation. For me, putting in the sound is the fun part.

The only digital sound program that I know is Pro Tools. I collect specific sounds—animal sounds, footsteps, et cetera—from the sound-effects library and then lay them in the right spot. I mix and match the sound footages and sound effects I’ve collected along the timeline of the animation. I keep playing with the sound until I hit on chaotic and weird sounds that I like. I also try to create my own strange sounds using my voice or other people’s voices, or by modifying music or existing sounds.

When did you come to New York City? How has your work changed since your arrival?

I came in 2000 to study at the School of Visual Arts [SVA] in New York City. I hadn’t used the computer that much in Korea, so I did mostly paintings. I majored in computer arts at SVA. Since then, I’ve done more digital work.

ABOVE : 
*Future Creatures*, 2010, animation stills

LEFT: 
*Fabulous Creatures*, 2004, animation stills

RIGHT: 
*Three Thousand Revisits*, 2011 limited edition artist’s book, 8 x 8 inches
Corinna Ripps Schaming: Could you tell me a little about the title of your show, Three Thousand Revisits?

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There’s an element of playful yet disturbing menace in your films. What role does violence play in your films?

On a very basic level, I think of it as a kind of spice. It can add a visually compelling element to something ordinary or familiar. For instance, when I draw a generic smiley face it looks boring and predictable, but when I add a drippy blood line, suddenly it becomes a funny character. And I like that.

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