

HAE-JUNG LEE

4110 Janet Ave, #2. Baton Rouge. LA70808 • 225.276.2528 • haejung1105@gmail.com • www.haejunglee.com

Artist Statement

I have traveled to and lived in many different countries outside my native country of Korea. These opportunities have allowed me to meet diverse people and learn about their unique cultures. While living in the United States, I have experienced culture shock in such everyday activities as observing students eating food during class, wearing pajamas at school, and other similar displays of informal behavior. I was taught to follow Confucian ideas (유교사상); the basic principles being to respect one's elders and to be considerate of other people. Compared to Korean culture, Western culture seems very open-minded and individualistic. Adjusting to the West has challenged me to negotiate conflicting impulses to reveal or conceal my emotions. I have experienced both confidence and insecurity speaking English and I have felt a sense of belonging and isolation, resulting from my appearance as an Asian.

Having these experiences, I have come to realize that invisible barriers exist between me and other people from different cultures. Before coming to the United States, I ascribed commonplace stereotypes to Americans. I believed that they all possessed guns, were tall and big, and ate hamburgers everyday, etc. These stereotypes and cultural barriers may have been created not only by cultural differences, but also through my own preconceptions. The Korean culture that I grew up in has impeded my full comprehension and assimilation into Western culture.

I want to integrate the traditions of my Korean culture with aspects of western culture in order to illustrate how both cultures are a part of me. Through the use of many different display techniques, I have created partially permeable barriers, such as a fence, a door and blinds from ordinary Korean objects like Kimchi jars, rice bowls, side-dish plates, and spoons. I have also invented a pattern as a hidden icon. I want to understand and make elements of Western life my own in the process. My work demonstrates this desire by creating partially open barriers to signal my cultural adjustment to life in the West.