

LEE, WONJAE

University of Iowa, Art and Art History, Studio Arts
1375 Highway 1 West, Iowa City, IA 52242
won-jae-lee@uiowa.edu
www.wonjaelee.com

Artist Statement

My path to visual arts has been far from direct, but I can confidently say it all started with the South Korean model of a practical pursuit of something that will lead to a secure life, and was followed by me progressively moving away from that cultural ideal to my own personal ideal.

I came to the United States as an undergraduate to complete a degree in some field of engineering. For my first three years of college, the engineering curriculum constantly left me amazed with how the use of mathematics and logic allow us to master the behavior of the landscape that surrounds us, and furthermore allows us to reliably change that landscape. However, while I was thrilled to learn these different skills that engineering entailed, I found that it was, for good reason, incredibly constrained by rules and regulations. These restrictions impeded my ability to be as open as I desired, and left a particular creative void in the various projects I pursued while in the problem.

This creative void is what initiated my first move away from engineering towards what I thought was a compromise between creativity and engineering. As a result, I completed a Masters degree in 3D-Design and learned a set of skills that I still use to this day, including using Adobe Suite, Auto CAD, and 3ds Max.

While enjoying learning the 3D-Design skills, I wanted to expand my ability to express myself. It was at this point I knew I would have to make a leap if I truly wanted to be making what I knew I was motivated to create. So, I finally settled into the world of sculpture, never with the intent to lose my interests in engineering and digital technologies, but to instead use them in the more imaginative way I had wanted ever since stepping onto American soil. Sure, I was not designing buildings, or bridges, or electrical grids, but what I was doing is using those abilities to speak to particular issues that concern me and echo throughout my work.

My latest pieces, "Older Posts", is "direct voice" of the social networking system and blogging "Habit", which are thought to be one of the most advanced behaviors of human in the 21st century. I am not necessarily judging an historical, social phenomena or behavior. Rather, I enjoy observing even participating and creating social behavior; believing humans are where we should be. Physical and tangible prints seemed to become our burden when the digital camera was introduced. The digital camera removed worrying about image focus, how long it would take to get the film developed and, yes, how disappointing it is to see bad prints, especially love ones. Now, the simple click does not provide what used to be a great amount of human emotion.

I believe that it is my duty and privilege to engrave historical and social phenomena. What I wrote in "Older Posts" does not necessarily relate to the objects framed within the piece. People often "post" without deep attention to association, which becomes a "habit". I will continue to engrave the 21st century historical and social phenomena into my works and encourage people to interact with their own body and mind.