

# Karen Wang

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2021 Multimedia Art Portfolio



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## ARTIST STATEMENT

Art to me, represents a never-ending opportunity for self-discovery and understanding the world. Most of my ideas start off as drawings only to be further realized in 3D, animation - and as of recently - creative code and virtual reality. A lot of my work ends up sharing a common theme of memory, especially looking back at the past. What I hope for these constructed experiences, is to inspire greater self-realization and reflection that escapes materialism, desire, and ego. I feel that the world we live in today is filled with so many distractions that fuel negativity and suffering, mostly in relation capitalism. As a Multimedia artist, I view technology as a double-edged blade; despite its cons and impact on society, its capacity to create and productivity never ceases to discover new forms of expression. I hope to continue exploring the relationship between aesthetics and technology through interactive designs that benefit other people.



## CATHARSIS

The poster Catharsis has a border comprised of various archived photography that takes a more formal approach to the "collage" medium; the photos feature historically significant individuals and events that altogether, help envision the context behind the "Model Minority Myth". From individuals like Yuri Kochiyama, Vincent Chin, Malcolm X, Richard Aoki, and Daryl Davis, to scenes of internment camps, the LA riots, and the Vietnam War - this selection was intended to provoke questions or discourse surrounding race relations in the United States. I included controversial individuals like Richard Aoki as he was not only a prominent civil rights activist, but he also went down in history as an informant of the Black Panther Party. Despite his paradoxical character and actions, he coincides with understanding the fragile and complicated history of race relations in America.

When viewing archival history, it is important to avoid personal bias and assumptions in order to understand the full context, and also possibly interpret new meaning. I attempted to reduce such bias by including contradicting points of interest - that altogether help construct a bigger picture. The focal point of the poster shows a cutout scene from Edward Yang's film *Yi Yi*, of a father and son eating McDonalds. As a supplementary theme, the "food" stands in the middle of the poster, and represents the Westernization of Asia, as well as Asia's romanticization of the West in some cases - historical context that is critical in understanding what it means to be Asian-American today. The McDonalds scene in *Yi Yi* also reminded me of many conversations with my own parents growing up - and as with the recent events and violence in America, this felt ever more relevant. The unsaid emotions of the two in this context, represents the generational and cultural gap between parents and children, especially in Asian-American families as they often struggle to understand one another. The traditional characters down the middle which coincidentally resemble a tomb, say "End All Oppression" in white, then in smaller text, "racial discrimination" and "police brutality".

10" x 15" Mixed Media Collage

# MIDSUMMER

Interactive VR Environment

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The interactive experience Midsummer was inspired by countless summers, spent at the pool. Every year in the last few weeks of spring, there was nothing more I looked forward to as a kid - besides summer break. Even as an adult, I find myself daydreaming about those days and nights, swimming at the house I grew up in. I think everyone has their "me" place - that recurring memory you constantly take yourself back to. Whenever I'd float on my back and stare at the sky, the back of my mind would worry that someday this would be my last swim here, in this specific

pool and house. Way before I even thought of majoring in Multimedia Arts, it was a distant dream of mine to somehow immortalize this experience. This project was built with Cinema 4D and Unreal Engine 4; users can walk around using W, A, S, D (up, left, down, right) and of course, swim.

adjusted to remain at night for optimal ambience. All Cinema 4D polygons were mapped with collision for realistic user interaction and to set physical limits on the map. The leafy plants and map interact dynamically with wind and gravity, as well as the pool water. All lighting for 3D assets like the hanging lanterns are generated with individual UV lightmaps.

The environment was first modeled in Cinema 4D, after sketching out the dimensions and measuring for reference. 3D assets and textures were then exported into Unreal Engine, and further developed using the native Water Plugin, additional textures, and a dynamic Sky environment. Sky settings were



## HI, I'M STEVE

<https://vimeo.com/524115533>

Animation made with After Effects, voice-over from Bill Wurtz's Youtube video "hi, i'm steve". With this project I experimented with re-drawing the same scenes to recreate a sketched "noisy" aesthetic. All imagery and assets used were personally hand-drawn with Photoshop and Illustrator. Steve says hi, by the way.



## GRAND SLAM

<https://vimeo.com/539347487>

Playing tennis and holding a camera without shaking seems easy enough. It was in fact, not that easy. This was an assignment for Motion Graphics ART374, made with After Effects. The assignment required approximately 30 seconds of footage with camera-tracked animation to simulate an augmented reality. The video features a tennis rally and glowing squares keyframed to match the tennis court. The squares illuminate whenever the tennis ball bounces.

## 1 LMU DR



1920 x 1080 Video Reel

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1:1 full-scale model of the Sacred Heart Chapel at Loyola Marymount University, created with Cinema 4D and After Effects. This piece materializes my first impression of the Chapel – impressive yet intimidating as it signaled the beginning of a new chapter in life.



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Inspired by Do Ho Suh's transparent fabric sculptures like 348 West 22nd Street, displayed at the LACMA, this 3D model of the Sacred Heart Chapel evokes similar feelings of nostalgia. Suh often recreated former apartments and personally significant locations as identical,

life-size installations made with thin silk fabric that created a ghostly yet sentimental experience as you walked through them.



## NOWHERE

Sometimes it feels like, to be Asian-American is to choose between a country where 90% of people accept me but 10% want to punch me in the face, versus a country where nobody wants to punch me in the face but 50% don't think I belong here. Drawing from the martial-arts TV series Warrior, this movie poster features the character "Young Jun" played by British-Chinese actor Jason Tobin, wearing a cowboy hat from one of many scenes set in the Wild West. Growing up as a 1st generation Asian-American immigrant who moved to California when I was barely 3 years old, I instantly related to Tobin's character Young Jun, who laments of belonging nowhere, even in this country he calls "home".

This series explores the historical context surrounding the plight of Chinese immigrants and the racial prejudice they faced in the 19th century. While the show made history in bringing to light, millions of forgotten stories and lives, it has also further challenged Asian

representation in Western media. Never would I have imagined to see Chinese cowboys, face to face with characters reminiscent of Billy the Kid, in scenes that could easily belong in any Western. My movie poster was especially inspired by a comment from Jason Tobin:

"When I was ten or eleven years old in boarding school in England we put on a play, I think it was a classic British farce but I don't remember exactly. But what I do remember was being upset that I didn't get a part and that evening back in the dorm one of the boys said to me, "well of course you didn't get a part, look at you, you're Chinese." Not English like the characters in the play. And when he said that I thought... oh yeah, that's right, that makes sense, and I accepted it. It wasn't till late into the night lying in my bed that it dawned on me that we were just kids. Kids playing adults. Boys playing girls. (It was an all-boys school.) Why couldn't I play? Isn't this just a game of pretend? When I turned 18, I packed one bag and moved to LA to pursue my dream of becoming an actor. And like in the play in boarding school, I never thought I would ever play a cowboy in an American TV show, I had never seen one who looked like me on TV or in a movie. But then this happened... And this time I was ready to play."

22.7" x 34" Digital Painting



## ENDLESS



1920 x 1080 Animation  
<https://vimeo.com/524122428>

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Audio visualizer initially synchronized to "Streetlights" by Kanye West , that adjust to different songs. Animation was created with After Effects and Adobe Photoshop.

## INSOMNIA



9" x 12" Graphite on Paper

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Sometimes I'll try to sketch whatever comes to mind, with some basic rules: no thinking, and the pencil cannot "leave" the paper. These rules aren't strictly enforced. Also I make sure to listen to music that matches my mood at the time. During quarantine, my sketch book accumulated quite the collection of these random drawings - this is my favorite one.

THANK YOU FOR VIEWING MY WORK

Feel free to reach me here:

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