

The Utah Review

Exhibitions about identity, body positivity, best of Utah design arts, a tribute to a beloved grandmother, artistic reflection on human mortality and realism highlight summer shows at Utah Museum of Contemporary Art

Les Roka | July 13, 2022

The newest main gallery exhibition at the [Utah Museum of Contemporary Art \(UMOCA\)](#) enlightens, elucidates and calls for an empathetic understanding of individual artists who give their identity an artistic voice decoupled from stereotypes, perceptions, mirrored images and mass media portrayals. The exhibition, *i know you are, but what am i? (De)Framing Identity and the Body*, runs through Jan. 7, 2023. The variety of the thematic objectives encompasses an impressive range of artistic treatments.



Ken Gun Min, Short Boy, 2021

One of the show's most striking pieces is *Short Boy* by [Ken Gun Min](#), a large mixed media canvas work with oil, Korean pigment and glass beads. Min captures beautifully the dynamics of critical questions such as does assimilation suggest that immigrants abandon their own cultures and embrace American values and traditions? Or, how one decides to assimilate into the mainstream of American society does not depend only upon an immigrant's subjective feelings or readiness in a new environment, but also how the economical, racial, and ethnic barriers imposed on them may be addressed.

Min's work is a meticulous, comprehensive portrait. There are digital elements, with images from smartphones, internet and ads interspersed and juxtaposed with the artist's drawings and paintings, fabric fragments and parts of folding screens and the use of Asian ink pigments with oils commonly used in Western art. Min's work emphasizes why an individual's unique hybrid sense of identity should not be subsumed into efforts especially in mass media and culture to reduce and collapse intragroup differences within Asian communities into a panethnic identity that is convenient for the wrong reasons. In a previously published interview, [Min explained his creative process](#): "Every day there is a countless number of visual information being dumped into our awareness. These images are being infinitely reproduced and distributed, passing through our cognition filters to either remain or be trashed.... The flow of images shows and influences the way I make art, more specifically, influences the way I see or I live. The diversity of categories—media, personal, and historical references—become materials to use. They are layers creating new context and flow."



Installation photograph, *i know you are, but what am i?*, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Jun 24, 2022–Jan 7, 2023, photo by Zachary Norman, © UMOCA