Maxine Leu

Made in the USA
When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes

The State University of New York at New Paltz
Sculpture Program

Master of Fine Arts
Thesis Advisors: Prof. Emily Puthoff, Prof. Michael Asbill and Lisa Mitten
Thesis Essay
www.maxineleu.com
May 2020
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my thesis advisors, Prof. Emily Puthoff, Prof. Michael Asbill, the external evaluator, Lisa Mitten for all their support, encouragement, and endless patience on my verbal and written communications in English, and for their meaningful comments on my thesis environmental work series.

Prof. Puthoff contributed and participated in every way to support environmental events, art shows and students' rights including offering transportation for my The Idea Puzzle Cube, recognizing my ability to lead as the Sculpture Instructional Support Technician, nominating me for the SUNY Chancellor’s Award, and protecting me from racists off-campus. One of the best lessons I learned from her was our first win- the sculpture, Multi-Species Commons for Pollinators at the Sculpture Jam competition at Sculpture Space in Utica. She used her eco-artworks and the immense knowledge of public arts as examples to guide me through the development of my thesis work.

Prof. Asbill always sees my good sides and encourages me to raise up my value to the maximum. He helped pull me out of my hard times and never gave up on me. He connected me with many specialists and organizations to assist and support my thesis works, mental health, and future employment. I am always inspired by his thoughtful comments, valuable ideas, humor and criticisms on my works. We worked together on the sculpture, Sky and Ground at Seligmann Art Center in Sugar Loaf. From that project, I thought more deeply about eco-arts and the relationship between people, environment and the possibility of sculpture.

I am grateful for Lisa Mitten, who invited me to her Sustainability Implementation Team weekly meeting, and contributed huge resources for my thesis research, Plady performance and video documentations editing.

I would like to thank my friend Arielle Ponder for the friendship and partnership on my Upcycling Recycling and O+X= Do and Don’t workshops and our interview on Radio Kingston. I must thank Sanford Fels for enacting Plady on The Earth Day Action and Stories of Water and Waste event.

I would like to thank my friends Celia Cuomo, Megumi Naganoma, Joseph Kattou, Rosa Loveszy, Rose Yu, Yuying Zhang, Abbey Fisher, Regina Zito and their families for the friendship, their support, love and trust from the very beginning of this study, for offering rides, joining my shows, sharing my art news, helping me with my thesis documentations, and for their comments on my thesis paper.

I would like to thank my ESL professors Lisa Lewis, James Phillips, Aiko Pletch, and Connie Perdreau for building my English skill and supporting my academic achievement, collecting materials for the projects on American Surface, offering exhibit space for Tongue Twisters and Well, that’s just happened!
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist Statement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Art, Earth Works, Eco-Art and Recology Art</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the American culture inspires my work</td>
<td>10-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Techniques and Materials</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public intervention</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark playfulness and critical humor</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnomes as a metaphor in the work</td>
<td>22-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnomes and trash</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display of Gnomes piece</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>38-39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Artist Statement

My work, *Made in the USA*, focuses on the environment, communication, and identity. Using critical humor along with dark playfulness, I open doors to difficult conversations relating to issues of overconsumption and the culture of waste in America, through the lens of my own awareness of cultural differences. The works are based on my experience of being a foreign person in America. I choose familiar, everyday objects and commonly considered waste materials as the raw materials for my work and for their potential to initiate cross-cultural, nonverbal communication. Then I transform those materials into situational, humorous, and metaphorical artworks that double back and question our relationship to the commonplace things I started with.

Foreword

In 2015 I moved from my home in Taiwan to New Paltz, and I felt that I was an outsider in this second home, the United States. The alienation of cultural shock and the language barrier opened my interest in “cross-cultural communication.” Nonverbal visual language became the new language in my artwork. Through my work, I discuss the cultural differences, prejudices and misunderstandings. I use my complicated outsider’s perspective to examine the environmental issues of excess and waste in American culture. As my stay in the US continued, my MFA works evolved through three distinct periods. During the first three year period, I created *Gaps*, a series about my language barriers and cultural learning. In the second period, I used myself as the main character in a comic, *Well, that’s just happened!* to describe my awkward and uncomfortable experiences with pronunciation, culture shock, and circumstantial misunderstandings as an outsider in the US. In the third period, *Made in the US*, I combined the first two perspectives with my interest in environmentalism to create the works *Blue Ocean*, *Plady*, *The Bags*, *Target*, *What Did We Eat?*, *Toxicar*, *The Main Street Two Hours Collection*, *The Earth Day Action* and *When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes*. These works focus on the culture of waste, consumerism, and garbage problems in the US. I use my mixed cultural identity and eco-awareness, along with dark playfulness and critical humor to describe my personal observations about the recycling system, American exceptionalism, and lack of sustainability education in the US. I create my work with the aim of raising eco-awareness and evoking change. In this essay, I will concentrate on my environmental work series from the third period, *Made in The USA*, to explore my motivations, track the changes in my work, and describe my methodology.
Motivation

I believe that visual art is a means of expression that incorporates content through forms. It is like compositions written by novelists, music created by composers and activities carried out by activists. The relationship between humans and the environment has always been a topic I care about. The documentary, *Beyond Beauty- Taiwan From Above* made by the Taiwanese director, Po-lin Chi (齊柏林) and the native Taiwanese artist, Rahic Talif (拉黑子.達立夫) gave me so much inspiration and strengthened my respect for the environment. Featured in the National Geographic article “*Planet or Plastic*”, Rahic Talif has been using driftwood as a major material in his artwork for more than ten years. When the amount of human produced marine debris was becoming more than the driftwood, he began thinking deeply about environmental issues. In his artistic process, he walks along the East Coast of Taiwan and picks up every single piece of trash from the ocean. His action was to respect the land and clean up marine debris. Then he piled, bent and assembled the debris he collected into new installations, community projects and public arts, including the work, *Action Project for Typhoon* from 2008-2013 (Figure 1), *A Beautiful Ocean?* in 2014 and *The Shadow of Island* in 2018.

![Figure 1: Action Project for Typhoon, Rahic Talif, 2008-2013](image.png)

I grew up in Taiwan, an island with a geographical area smaller than New York State, but with a greater population. Taiwanese people and the ocean are symbiotic, but the ocean has been seriously polluted and a lot of rare marine life has become extinct in the past ten years. Due to the high number of people living in a

---

small area, there is an immediate connection between the land and people. For example, due to the population density, a mudslide caused by a typhoon in a deforested area will have an immediate and devastating effect. Factory exhaust can be smelled from the balcony of a house not far away. Therefore, the Taiwanese of all political parties, ages and fields understand that global warming is caused by human destruction. This truth of climate change is taught in schools. I was an art teacher at an elementary school in Taiwan, but students in my class did not only learn art history and craftsmanship. I taught students the practical basics of carpentry, electrical wire repair, and sewing so they would be able to fix little things in their life. My class had rules including “do not waste materials.” I reduced purchases of new materials, while I encouraged students to reuse recycled items to do work. We also set up a material exchange activity for repurposing, sharing and treasuring materials.

However, in my five years of observation in the United States, I realized that creating a good sustainable environmental awareness and recycling system here is much more difficult than in Taiwan. Even though California has a well-developed system for the management of solid waste, not all the states in the United States have the same dedication to environmental awareness and recycling systems. For example in New York, comprehensive recycling is resisted by local recycling centers, because the small recycling centers do not have enough funding to process different categories like paper cups, glass, batteries, etc. So many materials that are recycled in other countries just become garbage in the US. Most people in New York were never taught proper recycling behavior when they were young. That makes most of them think that recycling is just following the symbols on the recycling bins, and do not know that unclean bottles will hinder the process, plastic rings and caps from bottles can not be recycled, old batteries should never be put in a recycling bin, etc. Additionally, there is the phenomenon of excessive consumption that feeds this culture of waste. The supermarket provides so much to see, and many more products than consumers truly need. Americans require a huge quantity of products, more than people from all other countries. Often I’ve seen Americans using two or three plastic bags for a bottle of Coke, then throwing the plastic bags into the trash afterward. Regrettably, facing this massive threat to the earth, a lot of them would like to blame other countries, which create most of the world’s products, as the culprit. When they only see the beautiful, clean and convenient side of a product, they do not think about the burden that has been outsourced elsewhere. They don’t think that most of the products these countries make are for American users, companies, and fashion. Since they grow up in this kind of culture, many of them don’t see this waste as a problem. It’s very hard for me to comprehend that New York, known as the World Center of progress in many traveler’s minds, has such limited understanding about overusing plastic products. These observations triggered me to raise eco-awareness through my art.
Environmental Art, Earth Works, Eco-Art and Recology Art

The term “Environmental Art” has been used in a wide range of circumstances to describe most art that is related to the environment or is about an environmental topic in the 21st century. I would like to take the time to do a brief introduction of the evolution of Environmental Art from the 1970s to the 21st century. Then, I will introduce my own environmental series.

We can see from art history that the term Environmental Art has evolved from Pop Art and the Art of Assemblage in 1950. At the time, Environmental Art did not discuss environmental issues or ecological protection or awareness. Environmental Art in the 1960’s was similar to what we call Installation Art, Environments, Happenings, and Situation Art. Then Land Art or Earthworks became a part of the evolution of Environmental Art. It pushed more ideas of creating artwork into surroundings like Valley Curtain made by Christo Vladimirov Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude in 1970 to 1972 (Figure 2). They used an orange curtain measuring 1,250 feet in length across two sides of a valley in Colorado. The work transformed familiar scenery by making the valley into a new space in people’s minds. Andy Goldsworthy is another example of someone who worked in the natural environment. He reorganized natural materials such as stones, branches, and leaves into new forms based on color, shape, and other properties in nature. His works reflect various changes in ecocentric beauty and time passing.

![Valley Curtain](https://example.com/valley-curtain.jpg)

Figure 2: Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado, Christo Vladimirov Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude, 1970-72 (Photo by Wolfgang Volz)

Nowadays, Environmental Art has become more diversified due to the impact of conceptual art, technology, media, and interdisciplinary fields. It is no longer only discussed in regards to aesthetics, but also addresses questions about art strategies, genres, senses, time, and space. Environmental Art nowadays is widely

---

discussed because of global warming and the climate crisis that continues to become more and more serious with each passing day. Environmental Art is more extensively about bringing attention to topics such as environmental awareness and education, environmental issues, and environmentally friendly materials through conversations integrating ecology, biology, and culture. It involves social participation and the improvement of community awareness in order to remedy and protect our ecology. An example is the interdisciplinary artist, Brandon Ballengee’s installation work *Breathing Space for the Hudson: Charting the Biodiversity and Pollutants of the Hudson River* (Figure 3). Comparing it to the aesthetics of other artworks, his work looks more like a research report due to the imitation of specimens found in the real environment, the schematic map with red stickers, public surveys, science, and biological research, and X-ray images of creatures.

![Figure 3: Breathing Space for the Hudson: Charting the Biodiversity and Pollutants of the Hudson River, Brandon Ballengee, 2001-2003](image)

In the evolution of Environmental Art, it is often paired and coexists with Eco-Art (Ecological Art). Eco-Art is also coupled with Eco-Materialism, which refers more specifically to the work being environmentally-friendly because it is made up of natural resources. The art materials will not damage the environment eventually the piece can decompose. In the book, *To Life!: Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* by Linda Weintraub, she mentions that the term “Ecocentrism” was actually used as early as 1970. She analyzes environmental artists like Joseph Beuys, Hans Haacke, Maya Lin, and about forty other artists’ work with four points: Eco-Approaches, Eco-Issue, Art Strategies, and Art Genres. She distinguishes their work in more detail by discussing Eco issues such as energy, waste, climate change, technology, habitat, sustainability, resources, chaos, complexity, systems, reforms, and approaches such as conservation, preservation, social ecology, deep ecology,

---


Another group of artists share a similar idea in regards to Eco-Art as Environmental Art, but instead of using natural resources as materials, they create artwork out of the trash, recycling material, or even human waste. Recycled Art or the relatively new term, The Art of Recology, started at the Recology San Francisco Artist residency which specifically refers to the use of waste or waste themes as a material medium. The well-known piece, *Midway: Message from the Gyre 2009* (Figure 4) by Chris Jordan, began with a documentary-like approach to discuss air pollution, waste, and plastic issues; in a clip, one can see a dead bird’s open body filled with bottle caps. From the work, we understand that some birds are attracted to the colorful item and mistake it as food or do not have other options if food is scarce. His artworks have at least two contrasting elements that take audiences into deep introspection. For example, being colorful was not a metaphor for anything playful. The colors were surrounded with rotten bones, and the bottle caps could exist much longer than us humans. Put simply the bird was murdered by humanity’s carelessness. More animals will die and eventually we could cause our own demise.

Another example of an artist using waste as material is the performance artist Chin Chih Yang (楊金池), who uses any kind of trash and daily waste in his performance. His work often takes a large amount of labor. In one of his famous performances, *Kill Me or Change* (Figure 5) at the Queens Museum of Art in 2012, he took 30,000 aluminum cans to represent the average number of cans one person uses in a lifetime. The cans hung in a net above his head about 60 feet up and he let the cans be released, ultimately burying him. This performance invites people to re-examine their habits of personal consumption and their impact on environmental waste issues.

---

An example of a Recycled Artist, Angela Haseltine Pozzi, is the founder and artistic director of the education nonprofit, Washed Ashore Project with the purpose of making Art to Save the Sea (Figure 6). She created many kinds of sea creatures including sea anemones, urchins, corals, tufted puffin, seal, shark, starfish, jellyfish, sea turtle, etc. There are over 10,000 volunteers involved in the project and they created animal sculptures using reclaimed and plastic debris to reconnect plastic to the natural world and convey an environmental consciousness of the animals affected by plastic pollution. This kind of art often walks on the border between waste and beauty.

Recycling artists like her, deliberately use repurposed materials to emphasize the source of the material and the causal relationship of the material itself. Found objects and repurposed materials have their own history, and most of these materials come from humans who have deemed them waste. Recycled Artists hope to make the waste beautiful, to give these thrown-out materials a longer life. It does not exude a natural beauty like ecological elements, and it forces the audience to be faced with

---

the reality of these long-forgotten objects and materials. Audiences are reminded that just because something has been thrown out it doesn’t mean it is gone; often the thing that is considered “trash” will be here much longer than any of us.

**How the American culture inspires my work**

Due to the different lifestyles, understanding of resources, education, and social participation in America and Taiwan, my work trends in the direction of education-based, community-engagement, performance and criticism. My series of environmental works is divided into two types. One is focused on community participation like public art, interactive installation and hosting craft workshops with recycled materials. The other type is created from my perspective as an outsider and a social observer. My community participation work is aimed at art for all, so I welcome audiences of all ages, not only those with an academic background or with deep art skills and training. The work I design for public participation is not about my self-expression. For these conditions, I chose practical content, simple techniques and common waste materials that can remind people of the environmental issues behind the work. The first type of community participation work is inspired by the American education which encourages self-learning. American children do not always need to force themselves to learn things they hate like Taiwanese children. In my observation, the role of the teacher is more like an inspirer and advisor here, rather than a role of imparting one-way knowledge. Therefore, some American teachers would prefer to take children into the real environment to feel, rather than having students take an exam on scientific data. American education is not limited to schools or universities, it extends well beyond. For example, the activist Rob Greenfield had recorded in the documentary in early 2020 titled, *I Only Ate Food That I Grew Or Foraged For One Year*¹² in which he used himself as an example to present a sustainable lifestyle. He stopped buying packaged food and anything that required long-distance transportation. He exchanged gardening tips with communities, used found object materials to build his barn to collect rainwater for bathing, and turned his own dung into garden compost. At the end of this work, he transformed his experience into an educational curriculum for the community. In 2017, he gave a TED talk, *Be the Change in the Messed Up World*¹³. He shared how he started and what he learned through each project, *30 Days of Wearing My Trash, Dumpster Diving Across The USA, and How to Live a Near Zero Waste Life.* “The average American uses about 80 to 100 gallons of water per day […] The average African uses 2-5 gallons of water per day, So for the person in Africa, it’s crazy to use 100 gallons, and for the person in America, it’s crazy to use just 5 gallons. I

---

¹² *I Only Ate Food That I Grew Or Foraged For One Year. YouTube, uploaded by BuzzFeedVideo, 28 Jan. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUR7_EmUy1k.*

¹³ *Be the Change in the Messed up World. YouTube, uploaded by TEDx Talks, 22 June 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhKevstJyrc.*
learned that since everything is a matter of perspective, once you change your perspective and you can change so much of the world around you overnight," he said. By reducing the daily demands of resources to achieve a healthier body and a world, Greenfield set a wonderful example for us.

I began my community work, actively participating in various environmental art exhibitions, workshops, and collaborations starting 2015 when I came to New York. I built *The dung beetle* (Figure 7) at Clearwater Park, New Paltz, New York in 2016. In order to promote the aim of the 2018 Zero Waste project, the New Paltz ReUse Center provided materials to five groups of individual artists, educators, and their students to create sculptures made out of the reused materials from the center. My other interactive sculpture is *The Idea Puzzle Cube* (Figure 8), presented at Artist Collective as part of the *O+ Festival* and the Kingston Library, Kingston, New York in 2019. It is constructed of three moveable tiers that allow a viewer to browse the collected contents. The cube has 36 sections that can accommodate 324 puzzle pieces. The public is invited to write their eco-tips on a single puzzle piece and add it to the cube, contributing to a community plan for a greener world. During the public interaction and as new ideas accumulate around the cube, environmental awareness is exchanged and spread over and over again.

![Figure 7: The dung beetle, 2016](image1)

![Figure 8: The Idea Puzzle Cube, 2019](image2)

I am also eager to share recycled craft work and sustainability with the community because this is the way that I can directly get to know people and learn about how their recycling system is doing. I enjoyed hearing that many residents here had their own way of reusing resources, for example swings made from old tires and newspaper used as wrapping paper. I received the Graduate Research and Creative Project Award from SUNY New Paltz for *Upcycling Recycling* (Figure 9) at the Woodstock Artists Association & Museum in 2018. Then I was one of Kingston’s O+ Festival participating artists and held another workshop, *O+X= Do and Don’t* (Figure 10) in the following year 2019. In those recycling craft workshops, my colleague, Arielle Ponder, and I taught audiences to use old T-shirts, plastic bags, straws, newspapers to create reusable bags, creatures, and decorations. The goals
of these workshops are to introduce a functional approach to crafting with trash, bring people’s attention to the waste problem, and remind people that artworks or crafts are created by everyone, not just by artists.

Figure 9: O+X= Do and Don’t workshop, 2018

Figure 10: Upcycling Recycling workshop, 2019

Another aspect of American culture that inspired my works is practical action together on activism campaigns. As I experienced the Women’s March in 2017 and climate crisis demonstrations in 2019, I found that the general public, self-organized groups, non-profit organizations, artists, and others have generally invested support and participated in political movements. People are willing to sign petitions, volunteer, and fundraise or offer resources for changing and improving their futures. The efforts that support these activities, that we often see in the news media, are also very diverse. We can see examples in the Harriet Tubman stamp\(^{14}\) (Figure 11), Fearless Girl in Wall Street\(^{15}\) (Figure 12), Nude Trump statues\(^{16}\) (Figure 13) and poster for the Women’s March by Shepard Fairey\(^{17}\) (Figure 14). These types of direct actions that cause controversy are not common in Taiwanese society.

---


Methodology

The second type of work that I do, as I mentioned above, focuses on mixed-cultural observations that are tied to my own perspective and experience. The works are more complex with dualistic, interpretations and metaphors at multi-levels. Through this work, I criticize American individualism, waste, and overconsumption. The process of my work can be described in four stages: Selection, Meaning-Giving, Transformation, and Presentation. Below, I will describe this process through an analysis of my own work.

Techniques and Materials

Selection is the first of the four stages of my work process. I used commonly found objects, such as light bulbs, old toys, erasers, pots, grocery bags, etc. Even though it sounds like a large range of the materials, they are chosen carefully to suit my selected topic. As the aforementioned recycled artists believed, the found object itself has contextual significance relative to the time in which it was made. It can be made into a universal symbol for people, a history for a place, a memory for an individual, or a metaphor for a new concept. In addition to using found objects, I also
use other mediums in my work if needed, such as paper, clay, wood, fabric, metal, natural materials, electronic components, and media devices. Using additional materials, relates to the second stage *Meaning-Giving* in my working process. In this stage, I decide on the setting relationship between the main-element and secondary-element in the works. This may involve including the original, unmanipulated object, combining the found material with different objects, changing the original shape, or using the material from the found objects for construction. The found materials in my work sometimes play a supporting role for promoting the subject story, and sometimes they are the major element for the content of my work. The *Meaning-Giving* phase rearticulates our understanding of the found objects as they became a part of the artwork, as their original function or meaning I replaced with a new one.

For example, my installation, *Blue Ocean* (Figure 15), is a tunnel composed of hundreds of plastic bags. Each plastic bag has the phrase “Please recycle me” (Figure 16) printed on it. At the end of the tunnel, I’ve placed a red sticker with the words “PAID Thank You.” (Figure 17) In terms of material, I only used plastic bags and a label sticker from the supermarket in this work, but the functions of these two found objects were no longer holding things and marking things that have been paid for. The audience is prompted to think more deeply about the relationship between consumer and pollution as the connections made between these two elements are that people prefer to spend money on buying pollution merely for the sake of convenience, but have not thought of the production and usage of plastic bags. In this work, we can also see the third and fourth stages, *Transform* and *Presentation* in my work process. As I transformed abstract and invisible feelings into visual emotions, people could feel the actual situation that I experienced or I was concerned about. When the plastic bags were reassembled into the installation space, there was a unique dull sound of friction as the audience passed through the plastic bags in the narrow channel. This sound and the narrowness of the tunnel represented a sense of oppression like sinking to the seafloor.

![Figure 16-17: Blue Ocean (close-up), 2017](image-url)
Public intervention

Public intervention, which is a purposeful interference in public areas, can involve direct or indirect audience participation. In most cases, people are participating in or seeing work without any preparation or advance notice. It can be a surprise like graffiti appearing on a wall overnight or an unexpected two hour street performance. It can be thought-provoking public art, like *Face 2 Face* by JR (Figure 18) or controversial, fleeting, and conceptual, like the performance work, *Mirror Box*, by the Feminist artist, Milo Moiré (Figure 19), or it might be permanent like the impressive sculpture, *Life Underground*, by Tom Otterness (Figure 20).

---

My environmental performances and sculptures often are a good fit for public
display, and the impact is greater than it would be in a conventional indoor venue. An
example is my work, Plady (Figure 21), a five and half foot tall character I created as
a mysterious environmentalist originated from my cultural shock of seeing waste in
the United States. The name “Plady” came from a combination of the words “Plastic”
and “Lady”. After the installation, Blue Ocean, I took down the piece and
reassembled it into this wearable Plady-suit, made with 300 TOPS supermarket bags
that I collected from my roommates. The number of plastic bags is actually fewer
than the 500 bags an average American uses in a year. I created two documentaries
with Plady before the plastic bag ban was enacted in Ulster County. The first video,
The Bags (Figure 22) documented Plady’s performance on December 12th, 2017.
She went shopping as a regular person, and bought bananas and grapes. She
separated them and put each one into a separate bag from her body. This action
simply represents that waste happens daily and we use plastic bags unnecessarily.
In the performance, there were actually three cameras, recording a panorama, the
audiences’ reaction and Plady’s perspective. Plady’s appearance confused and
surprised people because the performers did not inform the store manager, workers
and consumers. Therefore, most people were stunned by Plady and could not focus
on what they were shopping for. Some people pretended to be calm or deliberately
ignore it, while others came to ask about the purpose of the performance and take
group pictures.

The second documentary, *The Earthday Action*—*Main Street*—*Two Hour Collection* (Figure 23), was performed on April 22nd, 2019. This funny, but non-aggressive creature, *Plady*, along with two mysterious friends, drove her car,

---


Toxicar (Figure 24) to clean up every single piece of trash they could find on Main Street in the town of New Paltz. They carried a sign with the slogans “EARTHDAY -Bring Your Own Bag- Ulster County July 15” and on another side “EARTHDAY- STOP PLASTIC- We only have one earth!” (Figure 25) Many people rolled down windows, and used horns or gestures to cheer and express their support and praise. I think public intervention performances with an environmental theme cause an increased environmental awareness because they surprise people into thinking about these heavy topics that they are often unwilling to talk or think about or take responsibility for. When people see Plady spontaneously appear, their thoughts are suspended for a second and blank to a neutral side. Then they try to immediately interpret this strange situation and ultimately find the message behind Plady without any serious discussion or pressure. After these two intentional performances, Plady shifted her focus to champion responsible environmental awareness of all kinds. She works virtually on social media (Figure 26) and sometimes pops up in activities with environmental topics such as the Sustainability Fair and Better Together Event, a faculty environmental weekly meeting, and the Beyond Plastics lecture on campus.

Figure 23: The Earthday Action-Main Street-Two Hours Collection, video documentation of Plady performance, 2019

Dark playfulness and critical humor

In a classic example of dark playfulness by a contemporary artist, Steve Cutts's work has fully expressed criticism of human behavior in our modern culture.
His works, *Man, The Turning Point*, and *Wake Up Call*, have multiple meanings behind the unique, peculiar ironic approach he has created. He made his illustrations into an animated narrative story, and it strengthens the message. The whimsical stories have a strong connection and resonance with reality through metaphor, such as people’s numb pursuit of capitalism, environmental retribution on cruel and selfish human behavior, and society as a fake fantasy world. One of his remarkable works, *The Turning Point*\(^\text{25}\) (Figure 27), is a story about a world in which the roles of animals and humans are interchanged. He made the overall color of the film a single gray tone and only highlighted garbage elements in color. The first scene starts with a dolphin sitting on the bridge and throwing an empty bottle directly into the river after it finished drinking. Then the film follows the bottle down the river to the sewer, ending in an underworld-like place full of garbage hills and marine pollution. There are many deformities and nasty human figures eating waste to survive but choking on the garbage. Then the scene shows the viewer many examples of the humans dying because of the horrible environment that the controllers created. It strongly accuses unilateral violence done to other creatures in our real world. The final scene takes place in a natural history museum. Descriptive plates are engraved with the words “Extinct Mammals” and “Homosapiens.” By reversing the roles, Cutts created a compelling and dark way of warning people to face what we are doing to animals and the environment every day.

![Figure 27: The Turning Point, Steve Cutts, 2020](image)

Compared with Cutts, my way of operating with dark playfulness is slightly different. You can also feel irony and criticism from my work, but it does not have the same powerful cruel slander and deliberate exaggeration as most American political comics. The irony and criticism in my work is very subtle, a gentle but naughty way of satirizing the negative realities of society without creating fierce resistance. This subtle sense comes from “Taiwanese humor,” which is a part of my culture. In most cases, Taiwanese humor combines puns and creative parodies. I would describe that kind of humor as a bit of self-mockery and a way to bitterly enjoy the process

through difficult times. Sad acceptance combined with subtle humor, gives the work a bit of criticism. This kind of gentle negative portrayal produces introspection for most people. In my four-step working process, humor is an indispensable element. It’s a healing self-process because when I elaborate on a negative situation the second time, the situation has been interpreted lightly in various metaphors and forms. I use humor as a process of balancing a negative situation, and a means of coordinating and communication between my inner and the world.

In addition, humor can open a difficult topic, and it can present a complicated subject in a relaxed way. As Ludwig Wittgenstein said, “A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes.” In my work, regardless of color, size, texture or content, I frequently use contrasting elements to create a sense of contradiction, opening up multiple interpretations, such as “funny and serious”, “aggressive and peaceful”, “vain and shy”, “unique and kitsch” occurring together in the same piece. One of my works, Target (Figure 28), is a small catapult in 20” x 13.7” x 10.2” and a tiny recycling bin in 4” x 2” x 2”. In this work I draw on my foreign perspective to transform an ancient weapon, the catapult, into a metaphor for American power and lack of recycling awareness. In front of the catapult, a recycling bin is dumped to the side and spills cans all over. This setting questions the “self-righteous heroism” and “bullying culture” of America. From the setting and posture between the two elements, I deploy the “individual character” and “anthropomorphic” methodologies I often use. I used anthropomorphism to give the elements a new role with the different individual characters and human-like background stories. Each character has its own posture and personality and they all have a hint of hidden identity, drawing the story into deeper content and making people think about their own life experience.

Figure 28: Target, 2018

Target (close-up), 2018
My final thesis project is When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes (Figure 29). The piece has incorporated the concepts and features of all three periods of my MFA work by combining the perspective of mixed cultures, universal symbols, and critical humor. When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes is a nomadic installation that reminds people of superficial solutions to environmental problems, like solving a problem without stamping out its root cause. The trash-collecting garden gnomes are the mysterious hard-working mini-cleaners. Each of them is about 18” x 8” x 6” and made from waste materials. They appear mysteriously in random public areas, each with a unique personality and posture that symbolizes the different identities. The Gnomes pick up litter on the streets, then they disappear. No one knows where these mini-environmentalists come from and go to, but they leave the land clean for us.

Figure 29: When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes, 2020
“The gnomes are sighted curbside in a residential neighborhood where they quickly whisk away all of the trash.”

Gnomes as a metaphor in the work

Gnomes are mysterious characters that came from Northern European folklore. Some people said that they represented the four earth elements and some people said that they are one of the goblins in a fairytale. People often imagine the gnome as a small older man with a beard and wearing the red Phrygian caps, farmer
garb, belted, breeches, and boots. Because the gnome’s identity is mysterious and unknown, people also imagine many different personalities, abilities, and stories in various situations, such as a guardian of the land, a craftsman, a guardian of treasure, an exiled creature, or a humanoid that lives underground with exceptional ability in magic or alchemy. Around the 1700s to the 1840s, people began to make gnome figurines in the form of wood or ceramics as a popular home decoration. The term “garden gnome” was widely used as a proper noun in this period. Later on, garden gnomes one to two feet tall were manufactured in large quantities from around 1960-70s. People have different opinions regarding these mysterious characters appearing in public in real life. For some people, the gnomes may be thought of as existing in a fantasy. When their stories excessively show up in real-life it makes a garden kitschy and cliche. However, for other people, the gnome’s mysterious identity and various stories are attractive, and they think the gnomes’ existence is part of their folk culture. Whatever people’s impressions of garden gnomes, undeniably, they are a popular novelty in the western hemisphere, with gnome-themed parks, websites, picture books, commercials, and movies.

In this work, I particularly want to invoke the garden gnome. Even though garden gnomes are well-known in western society they have never been popular in Taiwan. However, American gardens resonate with me. That is because the American version of garden gnomes reflect a lot of features of both past and present American culture. You can find garden gnomes wearing a loose hoodie and holding a boombox, other gnomes may be dressed as hippies, in Yankees T-shirts, a limited edition a July 4th outfit, or Harley-Davidson Motor Club gear. There are even chubby police gnomes eating donuts. Their postures also express aspects of Americans’ lives, such as a gnome smoking marijuana or with a sign that says “Make Gnomes Great Again” with a thumbs-up gesture. From these numerous versions, we can know that many Americans welcome and accept the garden gnome and it has become a universal symbol of the kitsch culture here. The word kitsch usually refers to Pop culture rather than academic tastes. Sometimes, Kitsch Art also indicates work that is knowingly ironic or humorous. However, the various versions of these garden gnomes are often a pleasant surprise without any controversial issues of cultural appropriation or cultural appreciation. I regard the action of making various versions of garden gnomes as a cultural representation, using media to talk about a concept. The kitsch element of the gnomes is a widely-known symbol, which affords me the most effective method of non-verbal communication.

There are two reasons that I chose the garden gnome as the central character in my work. First, the garden gnome works as a satirical symbol for cross-cultural

---

26 Hippies were one of America’s major countercultural movements in the 1960s to 1970s. Hippie style included flowing long hair, scarves, ethnic clothes or tie-dyed T-shirts, headbands, beads, bell-bottoms, jeans.

27 The New York Yankees is one of the American professional baseball teams.

28 July 4th is Independence Day in the United States.

29 The adapted slogan came from “Make America Great Again,” which is a campaign slogan in American politics today.

23
communication. These mass-produced garden decorations usually only appear in those well-tended gardens as symbols of American excess and suburban lifestyle. Garden gnomes often exist in perfectly manicured lawns and environments that will never need to know about recycling or trash cleanup. Therefore compared to these cheerful garden decorations which people can easily buy in stores, my trash-picking garden gnome does not wear a happy expression and also convey the plot of the various workers in postures (Figure 30-31). This design came from my criticism of Americans’ careless hypocrisy and rampant individualism. Even though I have been living in New York for five years, I still have a hard time relating to American culture. It is difficult for me to understand Americans’ opposing attitudes towards private and public property- treasuring one’s own property, but being indifferent to public areas. Americans work diligently to plant in spring, mow in summer, rake fallen leaves in autumn, and shovel snow in winter. They carefully maintain their garden and are willing to spend money and effort on landscaping and decoration in their yards, yet they are silent about the environment outside the boundary of their property. You can even see some people throwing cigarette butts or sweeping garbage from their gardens into the public bushes.

Figure 30: When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes (close-up), 2020
Another common thing that I reflected upon was that the gnome is a mysterious, but seemingly friendly lawn ornament, and also a subtle spy. Garden gnomes are unrecognized migrants from foreign cultures, but no one ever doubts their existence. They seem to belong as a part of American kitsch culture, but are not originally from this land. However, even though the garden gnome is a well-known thing in Europe and America, people who grew up in Asia don’t recognize it. They may mistakenly think that gnomes are a mini-version of Santa Claus or the little miners in *Snow White*. For this reason, I emphasized identity through their postures so that people who are not familiar with garden gnomes can also feel the waste problem in our environment (Figure 32-33). This is my methodology of cross-cultural nonverbal communication. Let the cultural differences no longer be a barrier for people who do not share the same culture. I purposely arranged the gnome’s gestures and actions, such as holding small bags and trying to find the recyclable trash, carrying trash pickers, silently picking up trash, and driving a little car to collect litter. These expressions and postures are impersonating real human beings, portraying metaphorical roles that link janitors, members of the military, prisoners, immigrants, educators, activists, guardians, etc. Even though they look different, they do similar things with a faint sadness, migrating, caring for the environment as I do.
Figure 32: When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes (close-up), 2020

Figure 33: When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes (close-up), 2020
Gnomes and trash

In this work, I used trash in two ways to highlight the piece. The first way I used trash as materials was for the *Garden Gnomes*' structures. Under the *Garden Gnomes'* colorful humanoid outfits and the artificial grass landfill are armatures, and structures made from art students’ waste materials that I picked from dumpsters over several years (Figure 34). The waste materials I found include irregular blocks of foams, cardboard packaging, bottle caps, random sizes of plywoods, scrap metals, newspapers, etc. Most items were only used once after an exhibition. Using paint to cover the waste illustrates that the trash problem doesn’t disappear just because it’s not visible under the surface. Scavenging or dumpster-diving like Greenfield did, in many people’s minds, is a shameful behavior related to poverty and filth. However, I think it should be the opposite in the US. I am astonished that people can throw out an 8-foot piece of wood just because the wood has a few nails in it. “How many trees do they have?” is the question that pops-up when I see this happen. I noticed that Americans’ understanding of keeping and eliminating things is determined by their mood, without consideration of the material itself. Americans put bad furniture on streets as they do need it anymore, but walking on the streets of New York, I rarely see any furniture that is really bad enough that cannot be used anymore. Anything that Americans feel is dirty, used, not in fashion, or doesn’t fit their style, they throw out rather than donate or recycle it.

These materials are waste for most people here, but for me they are treasures. I reclaimed them by renovating old surfaces, wiping off dust, filling holes, pulling out nails, etc. Although these materials were not as easy to use as new materials, I believe that there isn’t a problem with using leftover materials to the maximum if we have enough knowledge and accurate calculations with the type and size of uses. In Taiwan, most of the art schools don’t have the same level equipment as art schools in the US. We also do not provide endless materials for students to experience. We focus on understanding the different types and attributes of the material, paying attention to manual technology and how to survive without equipment. So in the piece, instead of buying modeling clay and sculpting armature stands, I used wire to string up the form and carved the outline shape. Then I used the found objects I collected and tied old cardboard on to the outlined shape before I sculpted it with hand-made paper pulp from old newspapers (Figure 35).
Figure 34: *When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes* (production process of indoor display), 2020

Figure 35: *When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes* (production process), 2020
The second way I used trash in this work was as an essential element in the performance of the piece. It is not used as materials, rather it's a conceptual action to encourage justice and compassion for the environment. It had a robust causal relationship in the trash-picking *Garden Gnomes*' nomadic performance (Figure 36-37). This trash plays a supporting role at the same time during the performance. The trash-picking *Garden Gnomes* are not living in a clean and beautifully-managed garden. They appear and pay attention to street littering in those public areas that are deliberately ignored. The trash they found on the roadside was usually disposable products, such as used napkins, single-use utensils, empty cans, snack packages, crushed cups, dirty containers, dental floss, receipts, cigarette butts, etc.

![Figure 36: When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes (close-up), 2020](image-url)
Display of Gnomes piece

By seeing our garden friends clean up our messes, people get the environmental message behind this critical humor. The anthropomorphized Garden Gnomes in public evoke mysterious stories behind the project to the audience. The nomadic public intervention action by the trash-picking Garden Gnomes offers the critical humor and troubling correlation that reminds people of the unseen trash in our surroundings. Instead of critiquing people’s behavior, I intend to switch people on to question the problem and become more introspective. There are two words in the title “Gnome” and “Home” which is a connection to ask “If even the garden gnomes have to clean up their home, what kind of environment do we have?”

The behind-the-scenes work for this project includes hours and hours of cleaning action and it will not be just a one-time happening. I participated in these mini-environmentalists’ actions. We took physical actions in streets and forests (Figure 38-42). People who saw us were curious and surprised. They asked me jokingly, “Do these gnomes attack you? Did they force you to do this?” In fact, “plogging,” a combination of jogging and picking up litter, was popular as early as a few years ago. It started in Sweden then spread around the world. I also heard people say, “Look at those two buckets, they’re gnomes!” and “Wait, are they picking up trash?” someone said,” Oh my god! This is the funniest gnome I’ve ever seen.”
The trash-picking gnomes and I usually don’t elicit responses from people during our cleaning actions. However, there was one conversation with a curious neighbor who came up to us. He said, “Hey! Just wondering what you’re doing here? Are these gnomes?” I answered on the gnomes’ behalf “Yes, we are cleaning up the garbage on the street. These gnomes told me that they are disappointed with human’s behavior.” The man laughed, “Yha? So, you pick up trash while taking pictures?” I responded, “Yes, we pass here every day and see this trash stays here forever. Gnomes are worried that squirrels will eat trash by accident someday.” The guy said, “I doubt not, this (trash) is super gross!” I said, “Yes, they (squirrels) might hope humans throw a lot of pinecones on the street, don’t you think?” The man laughed again, “Totally!” and he stopped, “Um... yeah... thank you for doing this, I mean help me... um... I mean help clean up here, thank you...” I could feel the performance we did was a productive start judging by people’s reactions that ranged from curiosity, to laughing, to feeling a little embarrassed. We usually can pick one to four bags of garbage in an afternoon. The garbage we found were all inseparable from food consumption, napkins, empty soda cans, crushed cups, dirty aluminum containers, sauce lids, and plastic bags accounted for the half of each picking. Our actions began in May 2020 while the COVID-19 epidemic affected most countries. It was a nice thing to see people in New York start to wear masks for others, though we picked up more than ten rubber gloves, surgical masks, and N95 masks thrown away on the street during each of our two cleaning actions. For me, these cleaning actions are both an environmental art performance and a study of American lifestyle. I documented the trash-picking Garden Gnomes’ cleaning actions in photography and postcards. This performance was inspired by the “Traveling Gnome”30, a cross between a practical joke and a theft that occurred in the 1980s. Garden gnomes were stolen by unknown people, and the thieves brought the garden gnome to travel around with them and the owner photos of the garden gnome visiting other places before returning it. The trash-picking Garden Gnomes’ documentation is printed as a postcard as a metaphor that the trash-picking Garden Gnomes’ follow-up actions will be global. This also hints at a connection with my identity as a half-tourist in the United States.

---

“We want to make Peter’s sidewalk look nice for his front yard.”
Figure 40: *When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes* (gnomes and me), 2020

Figure 41: *When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes* (gnomes and me), 2020
The second half of this work was intended for an indoor display. After the cleaning action, Gnomes were to bring the garbage back and hide it in the 8’ x 8’ x 6’ garbage hill in a museum. The show was planned for May 2020. Regrettably, it was forced to be delayed by the COVID-19 epidemic. However, you can still understand the display by viewing the preview draft and floorplan (Figure 43-45). The contrasting this work is the comparison between the delicate garden decoration and valueless, forgotten, hidden trash as a museum spotlight. I also used these two elements to criticize “the green illusion” or “green-washing” that is actually behavior that “hides problems with luxury.” The audience can follow by the setting the gnomes are placed on and see the garbage dump that is covered in artificial grass. The artificial grass doesn’t look like mini-golf landscaping, no cues, small flags, and holes. It only has landfill pipes, which are part of the methane venting system that landfills often use as a precaution against methane and carbon dioxide exploding or burning in the airtight landfill. The inspiration for this landscaping came from Mount Trashmore that I saw in Florida. The official name of it is Monarch Hill Renewable Energy Park and it is a landfill owned by Waste Management. You can see it on Florida’s Turnpike between the mile markers 69 and 70. It’s a covered trash heap with grass to make it look like a natural landscape. The fake nature is very ironic for travelers. The garbage hill with lawn, gives the illusion of greening, and yet all that glitters is not gold. Garbage
problems and people’s excessive consumption do not disappear or change in this way.

Figure 43-44: When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes (floor plan and process preview), 2020

Figure 45: When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes (indoor display preview), 2020
Conclusion

Finally, I would like to quote the American disability rights advocate, Richard Pimentel, who had a speech in the LEAD Forum (Leadership, Excellence, and Development.) He never forgot that his colleague told him about “responsibility” in a war:

“Responsibility is a word made up of two words, the word response and the word ability. Responsibility isn't what someone puts on you. Responsibility isn't your job description. Responsibility isn't a paper you sign. We all find ourselves looking at situations and we all find ourselves with abilities, and what we have to ask is, given my abilities what then will be my response to those abilities?”

So let’s ask ourselves: Do we have the ability not to leave trash on the street? Do we have the ability to clean up our environment even if it's not in our garden? Do we have the ability to investigate and share sustainable practices for our life? Using my art as an example, this has nothing to do with responsibility, but this is my response with my artistic abilities. The only way the future will improve is if all of us take actual actions to change now. In my Made in the US series of works, from the series of recycled craft workshops, Blue Ocean, Plady to When Gnomes Need to Clean Their Homes, I have used different forms to discuss environmental issues of waste, plastic pollution, and excessive consumption with people. I have observed that people around me did not dare to talk at first, but then started to change in small ways. People who came to my workshop used to complain that the BYOBAG action in Ulster County was such an inconvenience until we talked about the comparison of what other countries did on this issue, the benefits of sustainable living and recycled crafts. They gradually agreed that reducing the use of plastic bags improves the mood and makes life much cleaner and healthier. I invited my friends to my studio, they even began to take an interest in what kinds of products can be recycled and how to reuse a single-use spoon. People also shared Plady's environmental awareness post with others. Many people try to find a definition for contemporary art. Actually, contemporary art is not defined by a particular form, faction, or new technology. It refers merely to the artwork that occurs now. Artists are like a combination of artisans, poets, and disciplinary philosophers. Environmental Artists have developed works in diverse directions from interactive work to activism campaigns to global cooperation.

Environmental artists use diverse media to raise environmental awareness, evoke change, and to let people know the ecological issues are never far away from us. We are all related to our surroundings. Art is a powerful tool for cross-cultural nonverbal communication because art connects to people’s profound emotions. Cross-cultural language touches our super-sensory perception and can make people see things from another angle.
Bibliography


*Be the Change in the Messed up World*. YouTube, uploaded by TEDx Talks, 22 June 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhKevstJyrc.


*Disabled War Survivor Tells It All | Richard Pimentel @ LEAD Presented By HR.com*. YouTube. uploaded by LEAD, 8 April. 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYIqNtPWnP4.


*I Only Ate Food That I Grew Or Foraged For One Year*. YouTube, uploaded by BuzzFeedVideo, 28 Jan. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUR7_EmUy1k.


EDUCATION

Master of Fine Art in Sculpture
The State University of New York at New Paltz
August 2017 – May 2020

Bachelor of Fine Arts
Major in Fine Arts (7-year college program)
Tainan University of Technology (TUT), Tainan, Taiwan
September 2007 – June 2014

COOPERATION & SERVICE

• Participating Artist in the upcycling crafts workshop, O+X= Do and Don’t, and the walking tour, Stories of Water and Waste, O+ Festival, Kingston, NY, USA 2019
• Teaching Artist in the workshop of Upcycling Recycling, Woodstock Artists Association and Museum, Woodstock, USA 2018
• Printmaking and Calligraphy of Chinese New Year Workshops, Elting Memorial Library, New Paltz, NY, USA 2018
• Identified the 19th Chinese painter, Ke-Chang Dai of a Mi Fu painting, The Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, New Paltz, NY, USA 2017
• Exhibition of Chinese Traditional Print in Asian Studies Spring Festival 2016, SUNY New Paltz, NY, USA 2016
• Designed Placard for Multicultural Festival, SUNY New Paltz, NY, USA 2015
• Mural teacher, Tainan Municipal Dagang Elementary School, Tainan, Taiwan 2015
• Beautification of mosaics public art in Daqiao District, Linbian, Pingtung, Taiwan 2014

COMPETITIONS / AWARDS

• $3,000 art grant for SunCommon’s Community Solar Array Project, NY, USA 2019
• ARTSPACE Student Award of The Earth Speaks V, Tannersville, PA, USA 2019
• People’ Choice of Recycle 2018 Art Exhibition, BWAC, Brooklyn, NY, USA 2018
• Selected Prize of International Biennial Print Exhibit: 2018 ROC, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan 2018
• The Best Show in 2018 Group Award of Sculpture Jam, Sculpture Space, Utica, NY, USA 2018
• Graduate Student Research and Creative Project Award, SUNY New Paltz, NY, USA Fall 2017
• The First Place Award in Peculiar Pumpkin Award of The Night of 100 Pumpkins, New Paltz, NY, USA -Fall 2019
• Merit Award of the Talking About Printmaking Art Exhibition, Tainan, Taiwan 2014
• Outstanding Student Award of the 2014 Graduate Exhibition, Tainan University of Technology, Tainan, Taiwan 2014
• Honorable Mention of the 2013 Tainan Local Fine Arts Exhibition, Tainan, Taiwan 2013
• The Second Place of the 3D Sculpture of the 3rd Southern Art Exhibition, Tainan, Taiwan 2012
• Silver Medal Award of the 3rd Southern Art Exhibition, Tainan, Taiwan 2012
• Judges’ Award of the 13th Huangsi Art Exhibition: 3D crafts, Changha 2012
Taiwan
• Merit Award of the 27th Annual Exhibition of New Year Prints, Taiwan 2012

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
• The Shape of Memories, The Loft Artists Association, Stamford, CT, USA 2019
• Eye of the Beholder, MD Federation of Art, Annapolis, MD, USA 2019
• Recycle Art Exhibition- Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition (BWAC), Brooklyn, NY, USA 2018- 2019
• Sublime Concepts- Bethany Arts Community, Ossining, NY, USA 2019
• The Earth Speaks V, Dunning Art Gallery, Tannersville, PA, USA 2019
• 2019 SUNY Student Art Exhibit and Best of Show Awards- SUNY System Administration, Albany, NY, USA 2019
• What’s Next? Experimental outdoor exhibition, Unison Art Center, New Paltz, NY, USA 2018
• International Biennial Print Exhibit: 2018 ROC, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan 2018
• ReUse Sculpture, Clean Water Park, New Paltz, NY, USA 2017
• Installations in White Cube, SUNY New Paltz Fine Art Building Rotunda, New Paltz, NY, USA 2017
• The Pastel Art Work Group Exhibition, Art Center of Tainan University of Technology, Taiwan 2015
• The 2014 Graduate Exhibition, Kaohsiung Cultural Center, Taiwan 2014
• Love Art in Life, Art-Gate Group Exhibition of Oil Painting, National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, Taipei, Taiwan 2014
• Unfathomable Mystery, Exhibition of the Art Education on Surrealism in Taiwan, PingTung Art Museum, Pingtung, Taiwan 2013
• Tainan Local Fine Arts Exhibition, Tainan Municipal Cultural Center, Taiwan 2013
• The 13th Huang Shi Art Exhibition, Changhua County Cultural Affairs Bureau, Changhua, Taiwan 2012
• The 27th New Year Prints Exhibition of R.O.C.: Dragon’s Blessings from Heaven, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan 2012

NEWS / INTERVIEWS
• Lots of guests, awesome tunes, massive plastic balls!- Radio Kingston Oct 1, 2019
• A Different Approach to Plastic Bag Waste: Plady Celebrates E(art)h- by Nicole Zanchelli- The New Paltz Oracle May 9, 2019
• Plastic bag mummy cleans streets in New Paltz- New Paltz Times April 25, 2019
• Michael Asbill and Maxine Leu awarded $3,000 art grant for SunCommon’s Community Solar Array Project- The Warwick Advertiser April 04, 2019
• “What’s Next?” at Unison Arts’ sculpture garden - The Almanac Weekly section, New Paltz Times August 9, 2018
• GALLERY: Sculpture Jam at SUNY Poly - Observer-Dispatch April 21, 2018
• How To Do Pumpkin Carving -VOLUME XIII ISSUE II - The ESL Tines, New Paltz HELP May, 2017
• Lady plays with technology and gentleman makes pottery, the Graduate Exhibition of Art- China Times March 20, 2014