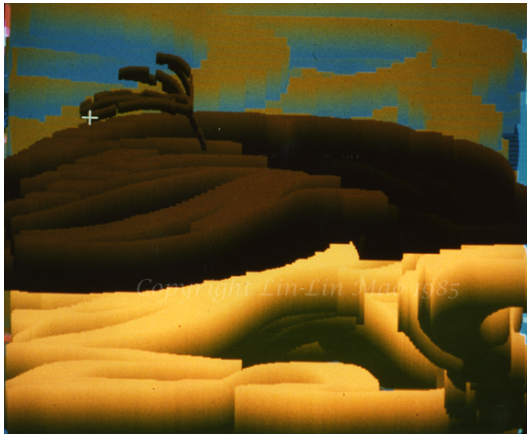


Lin-Lin Mao

BIOGRAPHY

“All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten”. Lin-Lin Mao immigrated to the United States from Taiwan just before she started Kindergarten in 1965, the same year a less restrictive immigration law was passed in the US known as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. She only spoke Chinese then and did not know any English. For Lin-Lin, Kindergarten was more than just learning to play well with others and how to behave in school. Lin-Lin had to learn how to communicate with others whose culture and language she did not understand. She remembers some students teaching her “American manners” and she remembers feeling alone and left-out one day when she saw all her classmates and teacher wearing costumes in class. That was the first she and her parents had heard about Halloween and that day in class could be a metaphor on many levels for the immigrant experience. Being a Chinese immigrant child in the US in the late 1960s has shaped Lin-Lin’s perspective on war, race, and class. She, however, strongly believes that the United States is still the best country in the world even with the challenges we are facing today.

As a young child Lin-Lin loved making things especially anything that required manual dexterity. She learned knitting and crocheting by watching her mother do those activities. She learned paper-folding in Taiwan when she was a preschooler after being intrigued at how someone could create animal shapes by folding a square sheet of paper. She loved playing the string game Cat’s Cradle. Lin-Lin has always been fascinated by the transformation of one type of thing into another, of a ball of yarn into a sweater, of a square sheet of paper into a crane, of paint into a portrait, of ground into figure, of a Chinese into an American. The last is an ongoing body of work that Lin-Lin has started which speaks to the Chinese diaspora in particular her ancestors’ continuous movement since the time of the Taiping Rebellion.



Alfalfa by Lin-Lin Mao, 1985. Digital painting.

At her parents’ urging Lin-Lin majored in Computer Science in college instead of Art. “Do not drive the train off the track. Your younger sisters look up to you,” was the response her father gave when she told him she wanted to major in art. He had also mentioned to her that their family lost everything after World War II and the communist take-over of China, and that he wanted the family to focus on building back its wealth and security in their new country. This was good foresight since a decade later, Lin-Lin’s father was forced to retire, and she has been able to help her parents financially since then.

In graduate school Lin-Lin was able to merge her passion for painting with her training in computer science. For her master’s thesis project in 1985, Lin-Lin created a digital color paint program on an early IBM PC which contained an experimental graphics board. The paint program allowed the user to craft a library of paint brush patterns that the user could select from later to paint with. While painting, the program allowed the user to control the digital brush mark’s opacity and size. Using her paint program, Lin-Lin created many digital paintings in 1985. Her digital painting titled “Alfalfa” was selected as one of 12 finalists for a magazine’s 1985 computer art competition. It was also selected by jury to be exhibited at the *SIGGRAPH 1985 Art Show*.

With her husband’s support, Lin-Lin went to art school in 2016 and earned an MA in Fine Art in England.

Lin-Lin is currently experimenting with mark making and the visual and emotional effects they create. In addition to 2-dimensional work, Lin-Lin is exploring ways of making marks in multi-dimensional space. She has used yarn, clothing, found objects, and origami in these installations which she sees as paintings. Marks carry emotional characteristics such as energy and memory in addition to their physical characteristics such as transparency, color or material. Good art challenges the way we see and think of things. She hopes her work will enlighten herself and others.