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Lifestyles

Hybrid art examines human form

by Jeffrey Lyles

Staff Writer

When Tai Hwa Goh turns on her TV, she wonders if she is watching a horror flick scary enough to make Freddie Kruger scream.

"People tend to view their bodies from what they see on television and movies," Goh, 27, says. "The body images we recognize on television and commercials have been distorted by [barely eating] and plastic surgery seem like monsters. [They appear] very tortured."

Exploring the theme of the "perfect" body as a monster, Goh combines prints with paper casting to create stark images of the never ending quest to remove all flaws from oneself in the "image era."

On the main wall of her College Park apartment, Goh has hanging one of the pieces, "Turning Back." The piece is made up of an emaciated right arm and a left arm with the muscle tissue exposed, two legs raised, and in the area where the chest would be, the person's back is shown. Goh says the piece is a symbolic escape from the world and its perception of beauty.

Goh will be exhibiting "Turning Back" and several other pieces as part of the Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month exhibition open through May 23 at the Montpelier Cultural Arts Center, 12826 Laurel-Bowie Rd. in Laurel.

While Goh enjoys printmaking because of its effectiveness in communicating some effects she wanted to convey, Goh says she wanted to deviate from the restricting two-dimensional world.

"I wanted to extend printmaking and break the tradition by making my prints three dimensional and more independent," she says. "Printmaking has to take a step toward a new direction while being an aesthetic work as well. That's

why I designed my sculptures. It's a medium that has so many opportunities and possibilities with what I want to create."

Inspiration for new pieces can come to her at anytime, says Goh, even in the shower.

After deciding on an idea, Goh draws multiple images of it in her sketchbook to develop a sense of how the image will best translate into a print. Once she has decided on the print's image, Goh makes a paper cast from her own body in her makeshift studio — her kitchen — and carves the appropriate look before wrapping the print around the cast. The process usually takes her a week to complete — if Goh is satisfied, that is.

"I may not be happy with the casting, the print or the finished product, so I may do it over and over again so I can make sure I get it just right," Goh says.

A native of Korea, Goh came to America last year with her husband, Namsuk Kim, who is continuing his education at the University of Maryland. Although she has received a MFA from Seoul National University in Korea, Goh says she would like to pursue another art degree in America.

"Her work is so highly innovative with its use of handmade paper and printmaking showing a high degree of craftsmanship," says



South Korean artist Tai Hwa Goh uses a mixture of printmaking and sculpture as a means to analyze the human body.

Valerie Watson, visual arts specialist for Maryland-National Capital Parks & Planning Commission (MNCPPC), in the arts and cultural heritage division. "She's a young artist and already has a very strong body of work. She's combining art forms that I've never seen an artist do before. It's done with bravado... she doesn't compromise. It has a quiet intensity to it."

For future projects, Goh says she would like to continue exploring the theme of the body to make people reconsider if they really want to become like their favorite television and movie stars.