

ARTIST STATEMENT

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Trained and educated as a scientist, I use my sharpened observational skills to help me investigate answers to scientific questions. However, I found that having acute observational abilities proved useful as an artist. Using my eye for detail and accuracy, I found myself able to render illustrations that showed viewers what I saw in that moment in time. A snapshot into my life, and how I see it. After discovering I was able to transport viewers to a specific moment, I experimented with trying to impart a specific emotion. Through this series of work titled: “The Self During Unprecedented Times” I draw upon my personal experience living through the COVID-19 pandemic.

I expect that I am not alone in saying that after the beginning chaos and panic, life slowed and calmed down. With nowhere to go, no one to see, I returned to an almost simpler time. Activities that would normally take too long to fit into my busy schedule were a welcome distraction. I started embroidery. Taking almost three times longer to fully complete an image than other mediums such as drawing or painting, it felt appropriate during a period where it seemed like all we had was time. For pieces of works so small, it took such a duration of time that I felt was appropriate to symbolize how something so small, such as a virus or vaccine dose, could affect the world in such large and lasting ways. The traditionally female role of this activity could not be ignored, nor its historical importance to my Chinese heritage. Therefore, even though it was not a direct representation of myself, it holds a certain reflection of myself as a medium.

For the directly representational works of self, I felt that as part of the Asian community it was important to me to show that we are resilient. Contrary to the stereotype that we are meek and docile, we will fight back against the hate, violence, and discrimination facing us more prevalently in the recent weeks and months. We are also affected by the virus, but we are not the virus. We are not the enemy to be fought, but an ally to fight alongside against the virus. We experience the same fear and frustration from the current circumstances. We can get sick and die along with the rest of the world. We want this to end as quickly as possible along with everyone else.

The level of protection needed during each phase of the pandemic varied and I chose to have that as an additional focus in my work. Along with additional degrees of protection came along additional degrees of isolation. We had to encase ourselves in our bubbles to protect ourselves and others but with that came less socialization. Our mental health took a sharp decline. As the world slowly opens up, we still need to protect ourselves but hopefully in the near future we can resume without any protective gear needed. However, all of us who have lived through these unprecedented times will be forever altered, if not physically, mentally, by the toll this pandemic took on each and everyone.