

Post-human Body and Cybersexuality: Pey-Chwen Lin and the Eve Clone series

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Pey-Chwen Lin (born 1959) has been creating the Eve Clone series since 2006. This series of digital works are based on the figure of Eve from the Bible but re-constructed by the artist as a virtual cyborg. The Eve Clone series visualises Lin's exploration of issues in cyberfeminism and the post-human which have been inspired by religious symbolism, and which have been major recurring themes in her work.

Across Lin's thirty-year career as an artist, it is not difficult to see several repeated concerns and themes emerging in her works, which have contributed to the creation of the Eve Clone Series. When she returned to Taiwan from America in 1989 and commenced her energetic participation in the activities and exhibitions of Apartment 2, she began to develop a new approach in her work. When examining Lin's early experiences and inspiration for her art, it is evident that a consciousness of feminism influenced her artworks from the outset. As a busy and productive artist and a teacher, she also had to negotiate the dual roles of wife and mother. Lin began to be influenced by Western feminism during 1993 when she studied for her PhD in Creative Arts in Australia. After returning to Taiwan once more in 1995, she attended several Taiwanese organizations and activities related to feminist art. Although Lin is deeply influenced by feminism from the 1980s and early 1990s, her recent artworks using digital art do not initially appear to directly criticise patriarchal ideology. On the contrary, with a more macroscopic view, it appears as if there has been a shift in the issues within her works from emphasising feminism to caring about life and nature in more general terms.

After beginning teaching in the Department of Multimedia and Animation Arts at the National Taiwan University of Arts in 2001, her direct engagement with science and technology to create art, led her to a digital rendition of the female body of Eve. Lin remains critical of a technocratic vision of civilisation as transcending and improving upon nature and rather seeks to reclaim the importance of nature, using the problematic figure of Eve to reconceive our relationships in a digital and technological world. To emphasise how the work uses not just technological but substantial views of feminist ideas, the concepts of post-human and cybersexuality can offer a different narrative about Lin's Eve Clone series. While formally innovative in her development of a figure created through or displayed via a post-human, Lin also explores how religion (specifically Christianity in this case) offers a different dimension to her work. The religious theme is not visualised in traditional iconography, as Lin transforms the religious theme into her art which is not predominantly about a religious reading of Eve.

Furthermore, Eve represents a kind of avatar that strongly re-presents different concepts of the body in Lin's work. The adaptation of a cyborg-like body in her work seems to relate to technophiles' dreams of uploading themselves onto the internet, refashioning their own bodies, or developing a perfect avatar in cyberspace. Lin's Eve Clone may appear to create the perfect being in cyberspace through artistic aesthetics and new media technologies, but she shows both its dark and strange sides simultaneously.

Collapsing the boundaries between humans and technology is often exemplified via sexuality (especially via women's bodies) in postmodern culture. Andreas Huyssen also argues that modernist texts tend to juxtapose machines with women, displaying and projecting fears of overpowering technology onto patriarchal fears about female sexuality. Thus, it is evident that

when humans interface with computer technology in postmodern culture and creativity, the process is not simply about adding external robotic prostheses to bodies; rather, human identities are integrated within the mechanised human forms. Lin's exploitation of a sensual and erotic woman's body to question the 'sins' people are experiencing suggests a kind of human fear about the future, echoing Springer's and Huyssen's points of views of cybersexuality.

Eve created from Lin Pey-Chwen's Eve Clone series symbolizes Lin's imagination and interpretation towards posthuman, especially a woman's body. Eve Clone not only carries the characteristics of femininity, but also religious significance. Despite Lin's work largely relies on technology and digital techniques, Lin actually criticizes the negative impact from technology on human. The cyborg body of Eve Clone also depicts the blind worship of a beautiful body in society, which responds to the sarcasm of technology via a woman's body in German expressionist epic science-fiction drama film, *Metropolis*, created in 1926.

Lin's video work, *Making of Eve Clone I* (2016), parallels the image of Eve Clone and Leonardo da Vinci's drawing, *Vitruvian Man*, in which a special texture combining digital and hand-drawing is created. Furthermore, through the constant changing and turning images of Eve Clone and da Vinci's drawing, this piece symbolizes the concepts of androgyny. In this piece, Lin presents the images of Eve Clone from imaginary hand drawings to human body's structures created via 3D Maya, and with different textures of medals, the Eve Clone looks as if having a cross-time, interdisciplinary and cross-space dialogue with da Vinci's drawing.

It is evident that Lin has been challenging the patriarchal order from within the value system itself. Lin created her Eve Clone series under a patriarchal ideology, i.e. Eve's 'beautiful and sexy' body represents easily recognisable stereotypes of women. However, it is interesting to consider whether Lin's posthuman and hybridised Eve transcends the religious and symbolic cultural connotations of Eve. It is also evident that there is clear transition in Lin's work from the earlier period when she focused predominantly on a feminist approach to the representation of women in the patriarchal culture of Christianity, to her recent critique of technology. Undoubtedly, it will be worth following the new perspectives on which Lin will focus in her future artistic creations.

1. More information about Pey-Chwen Lin's work can be found on her website: <https://linpeychwen.com/>
2. Apartment 2, the earliest artist-run alternative art space in Taiwan, was established in March 1989 by a group of 22 contemporary artists in Taipei. The initiative of establishing Apartment 2 came from the need for an exhibition space among the artists themselves. Pey-Chwen Lin was one of the artists who initiated the project. Apartment 2 closed in 1995 when Taiwan experienced a recession which affected the art market on the island (Liao, 1992).
3. Huyssen, A. *The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's Metropolis*, *New German Critique*, no. 24/25, Autumn 1981- Winter 1982, pp. 221-237, 1981-1982.

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Who is in the center? Pey-Chwen Lin's "Making of Eve Clone I" vs. Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man"

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Since the XIIth Florence Biennale 2019 will be related to the 500th Anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death, we will expect to find how contemporary artists reinterpret the influence of Leonardo da Vinci in their own ways. For example, Lin Pey-Chwen, a Taiwanese female digital artist, whose work named "Making of Eve Clone I" inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" is invited to participate in this biennale. As the curator of the project titled "Lin Pey-Chwen's "Making of Eve Clone I" vs. Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man", I will discuss their works in the used "body" from the concept of "Who is in the center". Both of them used the body to convey their rethink of human beings. Of course, they have totally different perspectives to construe the symbolic meanings of the body; their "bodies" undoubtedly reflected the challenges of their time.

Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian man" was inspired by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (70-25 BC), who was an ancient Roman architect and had presented the Tenth Book of Architecture to the Emperor Augustus. This book depicted the classic order of architecture, Leonardo referred to Vitruvius's scheme and created the "Vitruvian man". As Martin Kemp mentioned that "Leonardo was the first to tie the artist's notion of proportional beauty into the wider setting of the proportional action of all the powers of nature", and "it (the Vitruvian Man) has become its definitive visual realization, and is widely used in popular imagery as an immediately apparent symbol of the "cosmic" design of the human frame." Therefore, Leonardo's "Vitruvian Man" becomes the famous canon as humanism of the Renaissance.

Generally, the term of "humanism" has two characteristics: one is "limitation" and the other is "transcendence". First, compared with God, the life of human being is limited, and it cannot avoid all kinds suffering from birth, getting old, being sick and death. Compared with animals, however, the intelligence of human being is higher than that of animals and this "transcendence" is the important value of humanism. Therefore, based on a lot of meticulous drawings left by Leonardo, he shows us the positive side of humanism.

Leonardo da Vinci as a master of Renaissance has established a prominent position in the art history and his achievement in art and science has become a model for the descendant artists, because these artists often created their ideal works through retranslating Leonardo's masterpieces. For example, as a female digital artist, Lin Pey-Chwen's "Making of Eve Clone I" reworks the scheme of Leonardo's "Vitruvian Man"; she replaced the man to a woman. Lin also borrowed the idol from the book of Daniel and created a replica of Eve with gold head, silver body, copper belly, iron legs, half-legged half-mud and marked with the symbol "666" of the beast.

In addition, unlike Leonardo's manuscripts which has drew muscles, blood vessels, bones, and other human tissues through glazing, Lin's work deliberately left lines, meshes, skeletons, and materials drawn by computer software. Although both of them left clearly the tracing of process, they are totally different. Leonardo da Vinci's manuscript is his record of dissecting the human body, while Lin Pey-Chwen's "Eve Clone" is not a real body but a virtual figure, which was created by using the vocabulary of science and technology that rebuilds the world we live today. It allows today's audiences to join the dialogue between contemporary art work and

ancient masterpiece.

However, the development of civilization led to a rapid progress of science and technology. It certainly made our life more convenient but triggered some problems for instead. Did the technology improve the development of art history? The famous western art historian Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001), who wrote *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, has pointed out that the development of western art history is aimed at pursuing visual reality.

The masters of different periods were more forward-looking in the techniques of their previous generations. There is no doubt that the artists of Renaissance, such as Leonardo da Vinci, created the wonderful masterpiece to reveal the achievement of science and upgraded the value of visual art. Therefore, the Renaissance is regarded as the peak of humanism.

However, the "creation" behind the reality of art also stirred up some problems about human being and technology. The entanglement between human being and technology is especially a big issue today, that we called an artificial intelligence era. Lin Pey-Chwen's "Making of Eve Clone I" is a reflection on this issue.

Lin Pey-Chwen's "Eve Clone" is obviously different from the traditional figure who was evicted with Adam from the Garden of Eden. Eve, in Lin Pey-Chwen's works, showed up alone not with shy but instead of fascinating image. However, this seemingly beautiful woman has a symbolic marked of beast that is 666. In other words, the traditional "Eve" that was expelled from the Garden of Eden reminds us the weakness and limitation of human being. But the icon of "Eve Clone" with 666 implies us that people cannot replace the God nor play the role of creator.

In short, although using the image of "human being", Leonardo da Vinci and Lin Pey-Chwen tried to convey the different relationships between 'man and Nature' or 'man and God'. Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" highlights the value of "human being" and the harmonious relationship between man and Nature. However, Lin Pey-Chwen's "Eve Clone" reveals a sense of caution that human beings rely too much on technology and it causes the tension between man and God.

Pey-Chwen Lin: Eve Clone Augmented Reality

By Luchia Meihua Lee/ Curator and Executive Director of the Taiwanese American Arts Council

Venue: QCC Art Gallery/CUNY
Curators: Luchia Meihua Lee, Faustino Quintanilla
Co-organizers: QCC Art Gallery/CUNY and Taiwanese American Arts Council

Using abstract methods to describe an invisible spirit, a phenomenon, and concept is a free testimony. It is not an easy process to embody it, to digitalize religious prophecy and form it into a virtual world, where the foreseeable crisis is presented as an allegorical expression through the expression of art. There is a degree of difficulty in persuading the viewer and overcoming the belief gap. Although the extraordinary esteem accorded to science in our society is real, and it is also true that the ambition of biotechnology is also to predict the possibility of catastrophe. In the history of art, this has been expressed by the combination of objects in various time and space in surrealism or the use of semiotics for analysis. In another form, it is the mainstream of the art of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance.

Reconsider Kant's central question "What is the human being?"¹ For some, the answer entails embracing cultural diversity, for others being human is simply holding on to aspiration in spite of accidents of birth and nature. Yet another response to this question is a reverence for natural and social systems, as elaborated by artistic discourse. Pey-Chwen Lin approaches Kant's question differently. Uncertainty about and changing responses to "What is the human being" portend potential political, economic, and cultural crises. It is common to say that necessarily the future, and increasingly the present, belong to high technologies such as AI, VR, AR, and all kinds of new digital and mechanical implements. Robots are forecast to have a revolutionary impact on the global need for human labor. Humanistic concerns seemingly will be dissolved in a utopian future.

In this context, Stephen Fry² emphasized that we live in a flood plain and a great storm is coming; most urgently, in order to ready ourselves for a future bristling with technology, we must redouble our efforts to understand who we humans really are. We need to begin to understand what machines can and cannot do, and what human priorities they can assist. Art and humanity are more important than ever; we need to understand our soul, spirit, sense of beauty, love, inspiration, loyalty, and empathy. As machines can be programmed to do more, we will have more time so we need to know how and why we humans can fulfill our true nature.

Lin's Eve Clone is readily recognizable; nude, in a crouching posture with partly extended arms. Symbolism abounds in Lin's Eve Clone works; in her words, "The numbers, symbols, sounds and images in my works describe an important 'appropriation' concept." On one level, they support belief in the Christian bible and prophets. On another level, Lin clothes the demon in ideal, standardized human form. As an example, investigate the video *Making of Eve Clone* then the AR-enabled documentary prints *Making of Eve Clone Documentation*, five of which show the development of Eve Clone's hands and five of which show the development of Eve Clone's head – all of which featured in the exhibition *Urban Tribes*. While the prints show a mechanical – almost architectural – elaboration of features that become more detailed in each successive print, the chilling app allows Eve Clone's eyes to open and blink while head and hands rotate, as Lin's creature wakes from her digital stupor. In the artist's 2014 *Revelation of Eve Clone* video reflecting on global climate change and rising sea level, she gives us an animation of Eve Clone under water. Eve Clone's head is golden, with a triple 6 adorning the

forehead. In the video, its legs gradually turn to lead, matching the dream of Nebuchadnezzar as interpreted by Daniel.

Lin constructs another version of Eve Clone which is superimposed on and even obscures Vitruvian man, Da Vinci's ideal specifications for the human figure. Thus, the artist points to the danger that today's advanced digital technology is also creating an ideal. For the video, Lin used a virtual camera to show from various angles how Eve Clone has been shaped and to emphasize her digital nature. The wire frame and skeleton, VU texture mapping, and pattern engraving not only serve as documentation but also underline how Eve Clone is a digital product of human desire.

In another AR-enabled series, Lin explores the virgin Mary depicted as a classic and elegant renaissance woman head, recalling the series of prints showing construction of Eve Clone. In this digitally augmented reality, we have entered a qualitatively different era of information and new technological connectedness. As these prints suggest, it may be difficult or even impossible to distinguish the real from the fake, the robotic, and fetishistic.

Now turn to the Great Babylon video, which has Eve Clone high in the air above Babylon, at that time the capital of the most potent empire in the world, a great seat of learning and culture and law, famed for the Hanging Gardens of Babylon cited by ancient writers as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Lin based her video on the the Book of Genesis, chapter 11 which identifies Babylon as the site of the Tower of Babel. Eve Clone presides over the ruin of the mighty city below her, and the subsequent destruction of the world as caused by human beings, and then explodes in the sky above Babylon like a meteor burning up.

Just as the four evangelists transmitted their message through the medium of Greek scripture translated into Latin – utterly new to unlettered barbarians – so too does Lin employ the latest digital techniques to point out that the answer proposed by high technology is deeply flawed, tainted with over-reaching pride, and ignores man's place in the cosmos.

1. Louden, Robert. n.d. *Kant's Human Being: essays on his theory of human nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Accessed May 4, 2019. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f0e6/da6197978d213e17dc76dfa63448decff5b6.pdf>.
2. Fry, Stephen. 2017. *Shannon Luminary Lecture Series - Stephen Fry, actor, comedian, journalist, author*. Oct 3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24F6C1KbjmJ>.

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