Eve Clone Series Critiques and Satirizes the Creations of the Technological Age

New Media Artist, Pey-Chwen Lin, Rises to the International Platform of Art Stage Singapore

Lorenzo Rudolf, the former director of Art Basel and founder of Art Basel Miami Beach, establishes Art Stage Singapore with the goal of forming a location for gathering of Asian art that would become the most internationally renowned art exhibition in the Asia-Pacific region.   Since its founding, it has already deeply impacted the trends and development of Asian art.   For 2012, Art Stage Singapore announces that the top 100 art galleries and artists from the Asia-Pacific and other regions across the world will be invited to participate in annual exhibition.   With the mission of being an "outpost for the blending of Eastern and Western concepts," as well as garnering attention and exposure for contemporary new media artists of Asia as they rise onto the world stage, this exhibition will showcase their creative skills and energy.   In particular, the rare and precious *Eve Clone Series* by Taiwan new media artist, Pey-Chwen Lin, has been specially invited to participate the 2012 exhibition of Art Stage Singapore.

There is an important era-specific background implied within the works of Lin's *Eve Clone Series*.   In this modern age, the lives of people seem unable to be separated from the use of the Internet.   Distance education, online shopping, online dating, flexible jobs, and other functions are all able to be conveniently and rapidly accomplished through the Internet.   The creative forms of contemporary new media art also cannot avoid a process of mutually articulation with the Internet.   Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythornthwaite highlight how the Internet has become the center of activity for daily lives.   They point out that, though the development of the Internet is dazzling and seems to create a vast array of new possibilities, people must also concern themselves with whether it is also causing even more social problems (sub-cultures, the digital divide, social interaction, etc.). Moreover, Wellman and Haythornthwaite emphasize that the numerous studies involving

today's internet culture always tend to separate this phenomena from daily lives as they attempt to describe its effects.   However, they refute this type of discourse, and believe that activities on the Internet cannot, in fact, be separated from our daily lives.   On the contrary, they are intertwined and merged together.[1]

This intermingling condition is the focus of Michael Heim's critique.   In his article, "The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace," Heim states that the method that people use to understand the structure of cyberspace has already decided how reality exists within it all.   In other words, the phenomenon of Internet entities really exists within people's fascination with technologies.   Also, this fascination is similar to one holds with aesthetics.   In other words, people are like moths to a flame within cyberspace.   When the light dims, it could have all been just a dream or a desire for an illusionary light.   The emotions produced amongst us, our computers, and the Internet is much deeper than the fascination with aesthetics because what we seek is a home to rest our souls and minds.   Our fascination with computers is not just limited to a fulfillment of the senses, but also one for a "desire for love."   It not only has a practical use, but also provides "spiritual sustenance."   Even the relationship between these information machines and us is not limited to entertainment or tool functions.   The relationship is a symbiotic one.   Ultimately, it is a type of spiritual marriage! [2]   The perspectives of Wellman, Haythornthwaite, and Heim echo and coincide with the proposition introduced by the works of Lin's *Eve Clone Series*.   Through an arrangement of video, installation, interactive, and other multimedia devices, an inseparable relationship between the virtual "Eve" and real "technology" is materialized in an attempt to ironically criticize the unique situation of the "same" world in the overlapping of digital technology (including cyberspace) and real life.   Additionally, it further extends thoughts on how humankind's bodies are rewritten into the virtual world of the Internet.

For a long time, an important proposition has existed within Lin's works: "criticizing modern technologies to focus on the relationship between people and the natural world."   Whether it be her early works, such as *Substantial Life* (1999), *Chrysalis* (2004), *Virtual Creation*

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[1] Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythorntheaite, *The Internet in Everyday Life* (NY: Blackwell, 2002), p. 35.
[2] Michael Heim. *Reading Digital Culture* (London: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 70-73.

(2004), or *Eve Clone Series* (2006~Present); whether it be through the virtual "butterfly" or "female body," these virtual creatures that seem to be imbued with life are all living entities recognized by the world of human civilization transformed into art objects of "simulations" (seemingly false, yet even more real than real).   Dani Cavallaro once stated that the virtual reality contained within cyberspace is actually an environment in which reality is simulated by a computer.   This allows a physical body to experience a reality created "artificially" - it allows people to enter a virtual environment in which they can "faithfully" experience the many real sensations of the actual world.[3]

In today's digital media generation, whether it is television, media players, or the virtual reality of the Internet all lead humankind to an artificial world of "dematerialization" to some degree.   Through physical sensations, virtual reality brings the physical world to a virtual, imaginary world.[4]   People can even use this virtual technology to create a virtual world of their own imaginations because it depends on definitions set by a designer.   Being a "designer" is akin to taking on the role of "God, the Creator."   As long as a person can overcome technical problems, they can create any country in which they are the creator.   Within Lin's works, one is able to find an implicit criticism of a modern collective consensual hallucination that satirizes the desire of humankind to play God.   For this year's Art Stage Singapore, *Eve Clone Series* describes the expectations that modern society holds over technology and how it is like using a blind eye to view the world we live in.   However, all of this in fact comes from a cultish belief (such as reaching a realm of eternal life through the Internet) in "transcendence."   This is a belief that new technologies, such as virtual spaces, can enable one to transcend the limits of time and space, as well as the shackles of the physical body.   With this, people would be able to leave this imperfect world of reality. [5]   However, Lin's creative strategy utilizes the superiority of "mythologized" new media technologies to ironically criticize this belief.

It goes without saying that one can discover a unique "feminine narrative" within the *Eve Clone Series* that takes on a critical

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[3] Dani Cavallaro. *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Science Fiction and The Work of William Gibson* (London: The Atolone, 2000), p. 36.
[4] Margaret Morse. *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (Indiana: Indiana University, 1998), p. 25.
[5] Kevin Robins. *Cyberspace/ Cyberbodies/ Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 135.

discourse.   Lin's "female" (Eve) plays the role of a creation whose "masculinity (yang energy)" is symbolized by the power of technology.   Created through "male" technology, Eve has a wonderful posture and a delicately crafted body.   However, this seemingly pure form takes on the role of a being lost in confusion, presenting "a feminine body that exists between purity and evil."   For example, *Revelation of Eve Clone* is arranged in a dark space filled with "yin" energy and delivers an intense visual shock.   When participants enter the space, the path along which they walk activates the dynamic nature of the cluster of large Eve clones.   Additionally, a mechanical clock is activated that records the passage of time (or its accumulation); yet, this is no ordinary record of time.   On the contrary, the clock runs according to the Biblical concept of time, operated by a program and accumulating time by each passing millisecond.   The image featured in *Revelation of Eve Clone* echoes Revelation 17:18*:* "The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."   The many large images of Eve echo the following: "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages." (*Book of Revelation* 17:15)   The work uses Chinese, English, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew to represent ethnicities and nations, as well as the politics, economies, cultures, religions, and militaries of the world.   Through a "feminine narrative," Lin criticizes the attempts by technological civilization to mimic, control, and transcend nature.   More importantly, such imagery of Eve in a virtual world provides a reflection on the daily lives of modern people (e.g. being immersed in the virtual realms of online social networks or gaming).

The Portrait of Eve Clone, Mass Production of Eve Clone, and *Inspection Eve Clone* utilize a theme based on a Biblical prophecy regarding the Mark.   According to a prophecy in the *Book of Revelation*, those branded with the Mark of the Beast in the great tribulation will not be able to escape the Devil's grasp.   Because of this, *Inspection Eve Clone* features totem tattoos of dragons, phoenixes, snakes, and scorpions, alluding to beasts that hold humankind hostage.   Representing popular images that youngsters tattoo onto their bodies, they also criticize those who are held hostage by material objects.   For *The Portrait of Eve Clone,* the symbol of the Beast, 666, is represented in more than ten different languages.   Through holographic filming techniques, the graceful Eve held in captivity

looks back at the audience with seductive eyes to form a spiritual bond, and evoke paradoxical and confusing sensations.   For the *Mass Production of Eve Clone* series, small digital picture frames display Eve throughout the stages of her development.   This kind of "mass-produced" form of creation is akin to a manufacturing process that takes places at a factory's assembly line - it is devoid of life, feelings, and human interaction.   It is cold, emotionless, and alienating.   Through this method, Lin's works serves as criticism to the mindlessness of "cloning" and the lack of uniqueness that results in "mass production."

Based on mass production and copying, the creative language mentioned above adds to the critical nature of the two works, *Eve Clone Hands* and *The Fingers of Eve Clone*.   The imagery of "dismembered" limbs alludes to unassembled "parts" on an assembly line.   Each part seems unique and is neatly arranged like a showcase of "specimens."   They remind people of the cold and emotionless atmosphere of a biological or biochemical laboratory.   In an age when technology is developing rapidly, Lin criticizes humankind's desire to become God and create life.   Through dismembered limbs, mass production, and analogies to the *Bible's* prophecies, Lin's artworks prompt the question: Were people's desires the driving force behind the progress of technology, or was it the rapid advancements of technology that inflated our desires?   Is mankind held hostage by its own creations?

Arnold Hauser has pointed out that art does not merely reflect upon, but interacts with society.   For Hauser, art is inseparable from life, and must maintain contact with life as a whole to serve as the foundation for aesthetic behaviors.   In this way, art reflects reality in a vivid and profound fashion.   It can be said that the *Bible's Book of Genesis* is an ancient narrative about God's creation of Adam, and whose rib was used to create Eve.   In today's world, the digital technologies, which the "virtual" Eve is created from and featured in Lin's *Eve Clone* series, are analogous to Adam's role in the Bible.   This Eve is mass-produced through cloning.   For the *Eve Clone* series, Lin uses mixed media as her artistic language to create artworks that reveal her critical nature, as well as remind people to hold a vigilant approach towards technology.