



JOOYOUNG CHOI

**SONGS OF RESILIENCE
FROM THE
TAPESTRY OF FAITH**



JooYoung Choi: Songs of Resilience from the Tapestry of Faith

Through painting, video, sculpture, animation, music and installation art, multidisciplinary world builder JooYoung Choi documents the interconnecting narratives of a highly-structured, expansive, fictional land she has created and titled the Cosmic Womb. In her work, she explores issues of identity, belonging, trauma and resilience through the sci-fi/fantasy genre, inspired by the media of her childhood and her ongoing research on identity and the media representation of girls, women, intersex, transgender and non-binary people of color.

This exhibition introduces the Cosmic Womb multiverse and highlights some of its key characters and narratives. In creating a world that explores loss, healing and growth based upon a connective web of belief and faith in oneself, Choi expresses human resiliency and the strength that can be found through the power of storytelling.

JooYoung Choi: Songs of Resilience from the Tapestry of Faith was originally organized by the Crow Museum of Asian Art of The University of Texas at Dallas and curated by Jacqueline Chao. The exhibition is a part of a focused multi-year exhibition series dedicated to making visible the work of Texas-based contemporary Asian women artists. The artists presented in this program focus on contemporary issues both in Texas and abroad, giving voice to complex, humanized stories of identity, place, tradition and modernity.



FEBRUARY 12 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 4, 2022

CONTEMPORARY★

FEBRUARY 3 THROUGH MAY 7, 2023



ABOUT THE ARTIST

JooYoung Choi is a Houston-based multidisciplinary artist whose paintings, videos, sculptures, animations, music, and installations merge the autobiographical with the fantastical. She was born in Seoul, South Korea, and immigrated to Concord, New Hampshire in 1983 by way of adoption. She has a BFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design and an MFA from Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Choi's artwork has been exhibited in such venues as Crystal Bridges; Akron Art Museum; The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Project Row Houses; The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, Seattle; The Currier Museum of Art, NH; The National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago; The Art Museum of South East Texas, Beaumont; and Lawndale Art Center, Houston. Choi has received grants from Artadia, The National Endowment for the Arts, and the Idea Fund, and has participated in the Lawndale Artist Residency in Houston, TX and the Harvester Artist Residency in Wichita, KS.

Choi's work has been featured by numerous media groups and publications, including the PBS Digital Studios Art Assignment, Korean Global News Network YTN, *Los Angeles Times*, *New American Paintings*, *Arts+Culture* magazine, *Houston Chronicle*, *Glasstire*, *PaperCity Houston*, *Nat. Brut* and the *Huffington Post*.



SONGS OF RESILIENCE FROM THE TAPESTRY OF FAITH

ARTIST STATEMENT

**Destiny calls for us to be brave.
For us to be resilient—
even in the face of madness and despair.
Gather up your strength, wherever you can find it.
I have found mine in my love for all of you.
In the family, we have become.
A family built on kindness, compassion, patience, acceptance, and love.
May faith step in and see you through.**
—Volcana Divine, Spectra Force Vive Infinite Pie Delivery Service

As a child, I remember looking out my window into the nighttime sky. This was my time to wish my secret wishes on stars and to explore my deepest feelings with the moon. Being adopted, I didn't know who my birth parents were, but I found great comfort in knowing that no matter how far apart we were, we shared the same moon. Sometimes I would cry; other times, I would gaze in wonder.

Starry-filled nights were both a time and place for me to let free all the parts of myself I kept hidden during the day. This was the time when I could explore the feelings I wouldn't dare share out loud. This was the place where I could take out all the questions inside of me and explore each one. "What would it feel like to hug my birth mother? Do I have my birth father's eyes? Do I have my birth mother's smile? Do I have brothers and sisters? What would it feel like to be raised by people who look like me? Do they remember me? Do they love me? Will I ever find them, and if I do, could this emptiness inside me disappear?"

I imagine that this was the beginning of my fascination with outer space. It really was in the stars that I could be free to be myself. Often adoption is associated with feelings of hope and happiness. But there is also grief. There was the fear of being forgotten and the sadness of feeling unwanted. On these quiet nights, I openly explored all these thoughts, free from the guilt of hurting my adoptive parents.



Although my adoptive parents meant well, my home life was tumultuous and, at times, a very scary place. During the day, I found myself retreating into my favorite books, movies, and television shows. L. Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz* books, Walt Disney's animated films, Stan Lee's Marvel Comics, Sam Kieth's comic book *The Maxx*, Jim Henson's world of Muppets, Robert Zemeckis' *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, and *Pee-wee's Playhouse* were just some of the influences that brought me strength as a child. Not only did I find comfort in the stories they created, but I also found hope in knowing that they were once children. Each of them was once a child like me, and each of them grew up into adults to live lives fueled by their imaginations and creativity. These creative people inspired me to explore art, music, storytelling, and world-building.

The journey towards wholeness has always been a dance between reflection, expression, and creativity. Art continues to be a way for me to find meaning in the challenges I have faced; it has also helped me envision my hopes and dreams for the future. Originally, my motivation to become an artist was rooted in finding my birth family. I had hoped they might one day see me and my work, learn my story, and realize that I was their long-lost daughter.

While completing my undergraduate studies at Massachusetts College of Art and Design I was also actively searching for my birth parents. I was studying Korean through night classes and painting what I thought my birth parents might look like during the day. After my first year of college, I planned my first trip to Korea to meet my family. I photographed all my paintings so I could show my family how hard I had been working. I think somewhere deep inside of me, I felt that I needed to prove to them that I truly was worth loving.

When I met my birth father, I was shocked to realize that one of my paintings depicting what I imagined he might look like was strikingly similar in appearance! It felt as if my paintings had been showing me visions of a past I couldn't have remembered and preparing me for the future moment I was now experiencing. I showed him all the art I had been creating. My father smiled. He put the photos of my art aside and hugged me.

At that moment, I understood what unconditional love felt like. I could see it in his eyes. My birth father loved me for who I was, not what I could do. For the first time in my life, I felt whole. I felt like I was enough, just as I was. This journey towards wholeness is a melody that I keep in my heart—it is what I call a *Song of Resilience*.

In western culture, we continue to promote the idea of the rugged individual. We continue to perpetuate false narratives that are edited down to a single figure who accomplishes all he does on his own. In my opinion, the idea that



anyone is able to do anything without the help of others is nearly impossible. Everything we do is connected to those with whom we share this Earth, even those who came before us and those who will live after we are gone. The idea of accomplishing anything without the help of others is impossible, and the idea of pure originality is a myth. No person can truly be an island. Instead, we humans exist like a constellation of stars. Throughout history, celestial navigation has helped humans find their way. From constellations, we are reminded of the mythological heroes, legendary cosmic animals, and religious stories of hope and faith that fill our skies.

In my own life, nothing I have accomplished has been on my own. When I imagine the essence of my being, I imagine it to be quite small, but connected to it are millions of strands, each one representing a moment in my life where someone cared enough to help me grow. The authors whose books inspired me, the artists who created works that moved me, teachers who stayed after class to help me, activists and religious leaders who guided me, friends who've shared their lives with me, even my birth father who gave me that first hug that awakened my understanding of faith in the power of unconditional love. These people and their stories are all cosmic threads that make up my tapestry of faith. In the most challenging of times, when all hope seemed lost, I would find comfort and strength in their heart songs of healing, hope, and infinite love.

As an artist, I have created an imaginary realm called the *Cosmic Womb*. It is one planet within a larger multiverse I call the Wonderverse. The energy that allows this paracosm to grow and thrive is called *Quantum Soup*; it is made from the infinite nature of unconditional love and pure imagination. Beyond the atmosphere of the Cosmic Womb, in the upper regions of the ionosphere, lives a giant celestial spider named *Prime Weaver*. Just as I have shared my own song of resilience, the characters in my imaginary world have experienced their own great challenges and journeyed forward to triumph over despair. Prime Weaver gathers each of these songs and transforms them into cosmic threads. She weaves them into a patchwork of wonder known as the *Tapestry of Faith*. From her constant weaving, the cosmic strings vibrate and create a symphony of energy, sending messages of hope and strength to all who need it.

The idea of Prime Weaver and Tapestry of Faith is not unique to the Cosmic Womb. In *Star Wars*, it is called the Force; in the Marvel Comics Spider-Verse, it is known as the Web of Life and Destiny. The Unitarian Universalists describe it as the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part; in Taoism, it is called the 10,000 things. Even Astronomers would see the connection between Prime Weaver and the Magnetosphere that surrounds the planet Earth.



Each work chosen for this exhibition celebrates resilience and the power of faith. Epic battle paintings share tales of reawakened dreams, family members separated by a terrible intergalactic war are reunited in an immersive installation, supernaturally gifted orphans band together to form a new family and dedicate their lives to helping others in a sci-fi/fantasy film project. I believe that storytelling can be a powerful vehicle for exploring one's feelings; my favorite tales are ones that remind us just how strong, brave, capable, and loved we truly are. Of all the creative people who have inspired me, Fred Rogers' writings, interviews, and children's television show *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* have guided me most when it comes to creating work that is meaningful, challenging, inspiring, and accessible.

In an early episode of *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*, Fred Rogers uses the Neighborhood of Make-Believe to help children explore their ever-growing fears regarding the Vietnam War. He talks to his young viewers about resilience in both accessible and profound terms.

“Did you know that you can be brave and strong, and still cry sometimes? Oh sure. Even when you’re missing someone. Real brave and strong people are able to cry when things are hard. But the one thing they don’t do—is give up, they don’t give up because they know that there’s so much that is good in the world. They keep trying, and learning, and looking and listening.”

—Fred Rogers

Each day we are given an opportunity to acknowledge the Tapestry of Faith in our own lives. I hope that this exhibition invites viewers to reflect upon the people who have helped them grow up brave and strong. Who gave you hope during times of doubt and despair? Who encouraged you to believe in yourself? Who taught you to see the goodness in this world? Who helped you find your song of resilience? Whose love has helped you weave your own Tapestry of Faith?



JOOYOUNG CHOI: SONGS OF RESILIENCE AND THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

BY JACQUELINE CHAO

Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each “eye” of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering “like” stars in the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected *all* the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring.¹

Indra’s net is a Mahayana Buddhist metaphor that illustrates the interpenetration, inter-causality and inter-connectedness of all things. In the realm of the god Indra on sacred Mount Meru is believed to hang a vast net that stretches infinitely in all directions, where within each “eye” of the net is a single brilliant jewel. Each jewel also reflects each other jewel, where each of the reflected images of the jewels bear the image of all the other jewels infinitely. This metaphor has served an influential role in Hindu and Mahayana Buddhist literature and philosophy in how it symbolizes the universe as an infinite web of connections, not only understood from the macrocosmic sense, but also how all things from every phenomenal aspect, such as from who we are, to the environments in which we live, are ultimately reflected and connected with one another. However, today we often forget this possibility, and tend often to divide and limit these connections and definitions of who we are, and restrict our understanding of how we see ourselves and our world. What would it look like to understand ourselves and our world as a jewel in Indra’s net, interconnected with all? What would it look like to be able to see ourselves as expansive, as multiple, as contradictory, and to live in a world full of infinite possibility?

Through painting, video, sculpture, animation, music and installation art, multidisciplinary world builder JooYoung Choi documents the interconnecting

¹Francis Dojun Cook. *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 56.



narratives of a highly-structured, expansive, fictional land she has created and titled the Cosmic Womb. In her work, she explores issues of identity, belonging, trauma and resilience through the sci-fi/fantasy genre, inspired by the media of her childhood and her ongoing research on identity and the media representation of girls, women, intersex, transgender and non-binary people of color. Her narratives create space for manifestations for infinite possibilities, and elude rigid definitions of identity and being. She builds worlds in which her characters, in their multiplicity, can be present with each other in ways not bound by or imposed by any art historical restrictions or hierarchies. In her work, to be expansive means being fully inclusive, being able to embrace a world that could be, while always expressing the potential for infinite transformation.

This exhibition introduces the Cosmic Womb multiverse and highlights some of its key characters and narratives. We begin with the story of *Tourmaline the Celestial Architect* (2018) and the creation of the Cosmic Womb universe. Here, Tourmaline is shown resting on a giant turtle, and from her raised arm and hand there is a burst of an infinite rainbow of light and worlds. With Tourmaline's super power of thought materialization, she can create planets and galaxies with her mind. According to the artist, Tourmaline is understood to have hatched from a Cosmic Egg during the Big Bang, and lives upon a giant turtle named Yul, the Gardener of Time. Together they float on an ocean of ghosts made from the echoes of injustice, fear, and despair. Yul eats these ghosts and purifies their energy in his stomach, before releasing this energy in the form of an egg, after which Tourmaline infuses each egg with Quantum Soup. With these elements combined, Tourmaline is able to create whole galaxies, as well as each character in the Cosmic Womb universe.

While this story was created from the artist's imagination, the concept of a celestial creator and the idea of a giant turtle floating in a sea resonates with many other cultural creation stories. One could connect this image with Hindu interpretations of the creation of the world, where the great god Brahma is said to have created the entire universe. In Hinduism, the universe is conceived as cyclical; it is to be destroyed and reborn again and again. At the end of 1000 great ages, all life will be destroyed on earth, and only Vishnu will exist. A golden egg will appear, containing the seeds for all forms of life that existed in the world before, and as the world drowns, the egg will float safely. Vishnu sleeps as the world lies asleep. At the end of the long night, Vishnu will awaken, a lotus flower will emerge from his naval, and Brahma will emerge, the creator of life on earth. Brahma will break open the egg to initiate the process of rebirth, and will bring back water, fire, air, wind, sky, mountains, trees, and create forms of time, then gods, demons, human beings, animals, so on and so forth.

THE LIBERATION OF POUNDSEXMAN

JOOYOUNG CHOI 2018



In Chinese mythology, a giant sea turtle was present in the formation of the world, supporting the mother goddess Nuwa, who is credited with have created humanity by modeling each figure with clay. When the pillars supporting Heaven were damaged, Ao's legs were used to help mend the pillars.

Many intertwined narratives such as the story of Tourmaline the Celestial and the creation of the world are what build the Cosmic Womb multiverse. Through these superheroes, villains, and their adventures and worlds as built by the artist, we can find parallels and resonances to our own world and our lived realities today, through their stories. There are characters who are on the side of good, such as Queen Kiok, who is seen in the painting *Welcome Home, We've Been Waiting for You* (2015), and stars in several of the short videos in the collection of *Journey Vision 5000* (2014–2018). She is a protector of the Cosmic Womb universe and its heroic champions, the Veritas Circle, who fight against the power-hungry and evil Viridian Crown. There is green-eyed, green-skinned Lady Madness, who appears several times throughout the exhibition, such as in *Somnioplexic Resonance* (2016), and as part of the large sculptural installation *Like a Bolt Out of the Blue, Faith Steps In and Sees You Through* (2019), who is the classic super villainess out to destroy and claim all that is good and joyful. However, the artist's characters are not exclusive and one-dimensional in their intentions, rather they are filled with rich backstories and histories. One example is Pound Cake Man, as seen in *Discovering Truth Will Make Me Free: The Liberation of Poundcake Man* (2018), a single father who was brainwashed and made to serve as a henchman for the Viridian Crown. After his mind is freed with the help of others, he is able to make amends to those that he has inadvertently harmed, return to his daughter, as well as help the side of good. In *Somnioplexic Resonance* (2016), we are introduced to Prime Weaver, a large cosmic spider who weaves the Tapestry of Faith, and who joins together all the many stories of the Cosmic Womb, in order to send waves of hope. Then there are the sisters, Spacia Tanno, Pleasure Vision and Plan-genda, who represent space, sight and sound, and time, respectively, who are represented in *There's Nowhere Else I'd Rather Be All Through This Lovely Night* (2017). As a youth, Spacia Tanno was kidnapped by Lady Madness and was made to serve as a human battery, her life energy being drained. However, while asleep, Prime Weaver connected Spacia's dreams with the dreams of her sisters Plan-genda and Pleasure Vision to help her remember who she was, and from there she was able to break herself free from her prison. Spacia Tanno is also represented in *So This Is What Makes Life Divine* (2018). One does not have to be royalty, or even human, in order to be a hero to others. Through joy, pain, and adversity, we share in these character's journeys.

JOURNEY VISION 50



In creating a world that explores loss, healing and growth based upon a connective web of belief and faith in oneself, Choi expresses human resiliency and the strength that can be found through the power of storytelling. This strength is not limited to only the imagination and an imaginary futuristic realm; it is true to life today and influenced by the artist's own personal journey and quest for healing in her own life. Choi was born in Seoul, South Korea, and immigrated to Concord, New Hampshire in 1983 by way of adoption. Her personal experience as a Korean adoptee and its emotional complications has influenced some of the creation of her characters and narratives, such as the creation of C.S. Watson, the artist's alter ego, who is also a Korean adopted child who was raised in Concord, NH, who teleported to the Cosmic Womb in the fifth grade. In *Three Black Stars: Resilient, Brilliant & Creative* (2016), we see a portrayal of Nina Blue, who is a professional imaginary friend who has helped hundreds of children grown up, and who also helped C.S. Watson get through her troubled times and helped her teleport to the Cosmic Womb. According to the artist, Nina Blue was inspired by the tears of her adoptive parents when they realized they could not have another biological child, and the tears of the artist's birth parents when she was taken from them and sent to America. For the artist, Nina Blue was created to represent a spirit of hope.

Growing up in Concord, New Hampshire, the artist dealt with racist microaggressions on a daily basis, and it became deeply internalized and normalized at a young age. Whether it was from daily conversations with others, or in the media she encountered through her childhood, Asian representation and fullness of visibility were often absent. Artists and scholars have increasingly noted the lack of actual Asian presence in various forms of media, including in comics such as the Marvel Comics Universe, and in science fiction and fantasy genre film productions, such as *Blade Runner* (1982), *Minority Report* (2002), and *Ghost in the Shell* (2017), which portray futuristic worlds filled with an all-white cast and devoid of actual Asian people.² It has been more common to consider "Asianness" highlighted to the side or offscreen, such as via supporting actors only in major television programs and movies, or even worse, as Asian characters portrayed as a racist stereotype or as the punchline of culturally inappropriate jokes (Mickey Rooney as Mr. Yunioshi in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), or Gedde Watanabe as Long Duk Dong in *Sixteen Candles* (1984)). With the rise of the pandemic came also an increased rise in xenophobic hostility and Anti-Asian hate across the U.S, including attacks on

²Astria Suparak, *Virtually Asian*, short video essay, 2021. <https://astriasuparak.com/2021/02/02/virtually-asian/>

³Unfortunately, the surge of incidents of Anti-Asian hate in the U.S. during the coronavirus pandemic are too numerous to list here. One notable North Texas example: Ramirez, Marc, "FBI says Texas stabbing that targeted Asian-American family was hate crime fueled by coronavirus fears." *Dallas Morning News*, April 1, 2020, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/crime/2020/04/01/fbi-says-texas-stabbing-that-targeted-asian-american-family-was-hate-crime-fueled-by-coronavirus-fears/>



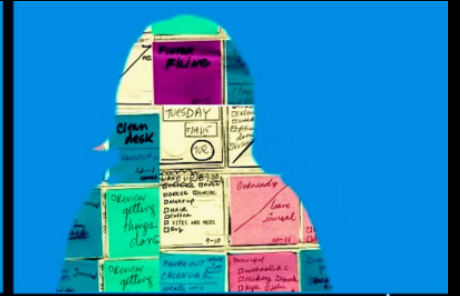
Texas Asian communities.³ It is only more recently that we are seeing the first Asian American superhero blockbuster movie in the Marvel Comics Universe with *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* (2021).⁴ Or that finally Sesame Street has introduced its first Asian puppet, Ji-Young, a 7-year-old Korean-American who loves playing electric guitar and skateboarding, only at the end of 2021.⁵ As such, the East Asian faces that fill many of the artist's paintings such as *Welcome Home, We've Been Waiting for You* (2015), or the multiple characters played by the artist such as C.S. Watson, Queen Kiok, and others in her short film *Journey to the Cosmic Womb* (2018), serve as both a reminder of the lack of Asian presence from these medias, but also a demonstration of the possibilities and confidence of what being Asian can be. The artist's interest in Comic book-style imagery, hand-made puppetry, and acting and telling of tales in the style of *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* intentionally serve as nostalgic pillars that connect and remind us of the formative imagery and media of our recent past. What better way to counter Asian racism, stereotypes and invisibility than to ensure that this generation of Asian Americans can see themselves as front and center, larger than life, and as powerful superheroes out in the world? And for all of us to finally see ourselves for who we actually are, as complex, layered, multi-dimensional human beings?

The narratives of the Cosmic Womb do not only counter Anti-Asian hate, but extend to all who have experienced any form of racism or hatred. In *Big Time Rescue* (2017), we are presented with Jade Weaver, who has the ability to pull the color green out of anything and transform it into cosmic ropes, threads, and fibers, which can move anything with superior level strength. This character was inspired by the artist's childhood friend, Jasmine Kelly. As children, they formed their own knitting and crocheting club in elementary school. Jasmine and her brother were submitted to racism from an unruly neighbor; so much so that the family decided to move away. Many years later, the artist was able to reconnect with her friend and asked if she would be willing to serve as a character inspiration, to which Jasmine agreed. The villainess Lady Madness is actually a conglomeration of a variety of bullies that the artist has known since childhood. Through art and creating stories, the Cosmic Womb functions as a safe space for herself as well as for others to retreat to.

Choi's work uses narrative, imagery and sound to address issues of invisibility, loss and displacement inspired also by her ongoing research on identity and the media representation of girls, women, intersex, transgender and non-binary

⁴ Chang, Justin, "Marvel's 1st Asian Superhero Gets The Full Blockbuster Treatment in 'Shang-Chi'", NPR, September 1, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/01/1032875594/shang-chi-review-marvels-1st-asian-superhero>

⁵ Holpuch, Amanda, "First Asian American Muppet Arrives on 'Sesame Street'." *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/15/arts/television/new-sesame-street-character-ji-young.html>



people of color. In her most recent film *Spectra Force Vive: Infinite Pie Delivery Service* (2021), through puppetry, video art, animation and music, Choi shares the tale of twelve supernaturally gifted children who were unable to reunite with their families. They band together to create an extraordinary interplanetary superhero family. Using their unique gifts they protect the Tapestry of Faith and deliver hope to those in need through the form of sentient pies called Infinite Pies, who share the message of self-worth and that we are enough just as we are. In an effort to further the artist's vision of diversity and inclusivity, the film features an ensemble cast of handmade puppets, animated characters, human actors, and contributions from voice talent actors, artists, musicians, and puppeteers from around the world. Every attempt was taken to try and find a suitable pairing of character to voice talent to truly embody and reflect the character in some way, as a mirror to our real world, in an attempt to highlight a diverse representation of not only racial, but also gender and sexual identities, in order to showcase and celebrate the complexity of fullness of each individual for who they are.

Choi's work emphasizes the role of memory, imagination and personal expression that provide messages of infinite possibility, transformation, care, and hope. Like Indra's Net, the Cosmic Womb universe is built on a Tapestry of Faith, a collection and celebration of ideas that make people strong, that reminds us of how all things are not separate from one another. The art and narratives of the Cosmic Womb, while seemingly distant and fantastical, are in many ways a reflection of our own lives. The Cosmic Womb is also a place of comfort and hope, reminding us to face our challenges with courage, strength and optimism. The stories of the Cosmic Womb are a way to showcase what the artist feels is missing from modern life, and a way to show us a world that could be. It reminds us how there is power and responsibility in the stories we tell, in who we choose to be in our communities, families and amongst those who we love and who love us. That we are all more powerful than we even realize, and that we should celebrate and spread the stories that remind us of this truth. The Cosmic Womb is a new vision of how storytelling can reinvigorate us to believe in ourselves and the world around us. Like the national motto of the Cosmic Womb, "Have Faith, For You Have Always Been Loved", we are enough and have always been enough, just as we are.

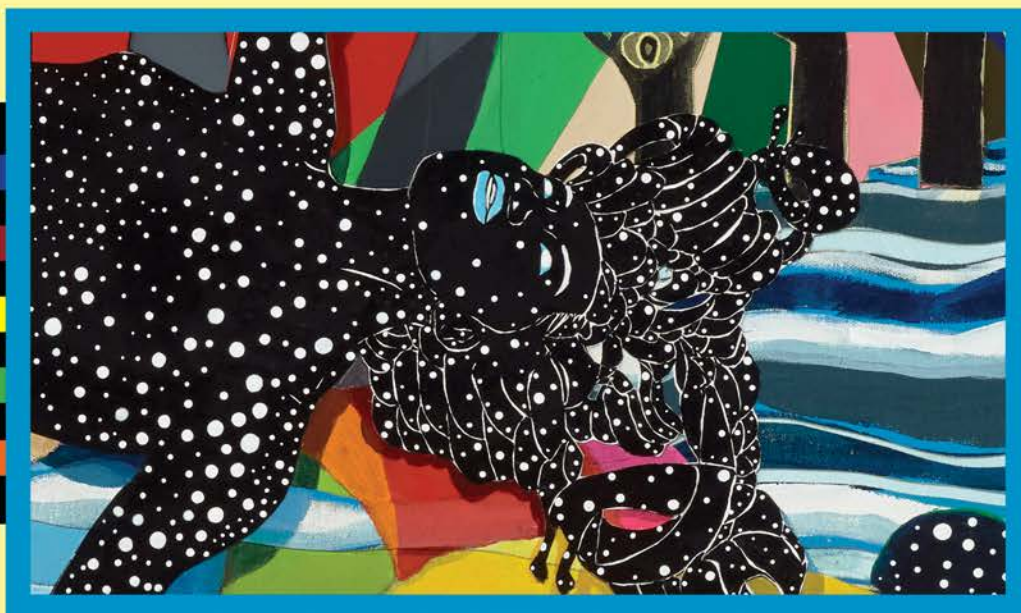
Jacqueline Chao, Ph.D. is Senior Curator of Asian Art, Crow Museum of Asian Art of The University of Texas at Dallas.

ARTIST INSPIRATION

Growing up, the Marvel Universe 3 trading cards made a huge impact on my understanding of world-building. I liked how Marvel Comics personified the universe as a character called Eternity. Tourmaline is in part a homage to my Marvel Comics roots. I love the idea that the universe she is creating appears outside of herself, it is all an extension of her being. She symbolizes how each of us can play a part in building the world around us, and that we all are given opportunities each day to perform acts of thoughtfulness that become extensions of the self. Tourmaline represents our ability to build lives filled with wonder and imagination. She is also inspired by the Korean Empress Myeong-Seong, Tourmaline's crown of celestial hair is styled in a manner similar to this legendary Queen.

TOURMALINE

THE CELESTIAL ARCHITECT



CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Citizen of the Beyonder Realm

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Unconditional Love for All

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Tourmaline is a shape-shifting gender fluid being. Generally, appears as female to Earthlings, most commonly referred to with the pronouns she/her.

GROUP AFFILIATION

Celestial Being — Unaligned Yet Connected to All

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Mother to Prime Weaver, Best Friend and Co-Worker to the Giant Turtle named Yul the Time Gardener, Creator of all beings and non-beings within the Wonderverse

OCCUPATION

Celestial Architect, creator of new worlds, production and distribution manager of Quantum Soup (the force energy of infinite possibilities) and Paracosmic Alchemist.

ABILITIES/POWERS

Possesses the power of thought materialization (if she daydreams about a new friend long enough, this person may appear through spontaneous generation). This power is limited to individual beings, thoughts, ideas, places, or things. She also has the ability to create entire planetary systems and galaxies from purified raw energy. She's a level 100 Paracosmic Alchemist (the ability to heal, grow or alter reality through the power of imagination and storytelling). She can also generate, store and emit pure Quantum Soup Energy. Other powers: flight, shapeshifting, Quantum Soup blast capabilities, and space/time/energy manipulation. Conscious and sub-conscious thought materialization.

**Have faith for
you have always
been loved.
—Tourmaline**

HISTORY

Before the Big Bang, Tourmaline hatched from a Cosmic Egg during the Big Bang. She lives upon a giant turtle named Yul the Gardener of Time. They float together on an ocean of ghosts made from the echoes of injustice, fear, and despair. Yul eats these ghosts and purifies their energy in his eight stomachs. He releases this energy in the form of an egg. Tourmaline infuses each egg with Quantum Soup. When these two elements are combined Tourmaline can create planets, suns, and whole galaxies. This is how each heavenly body you see within the Wonderverse was created.

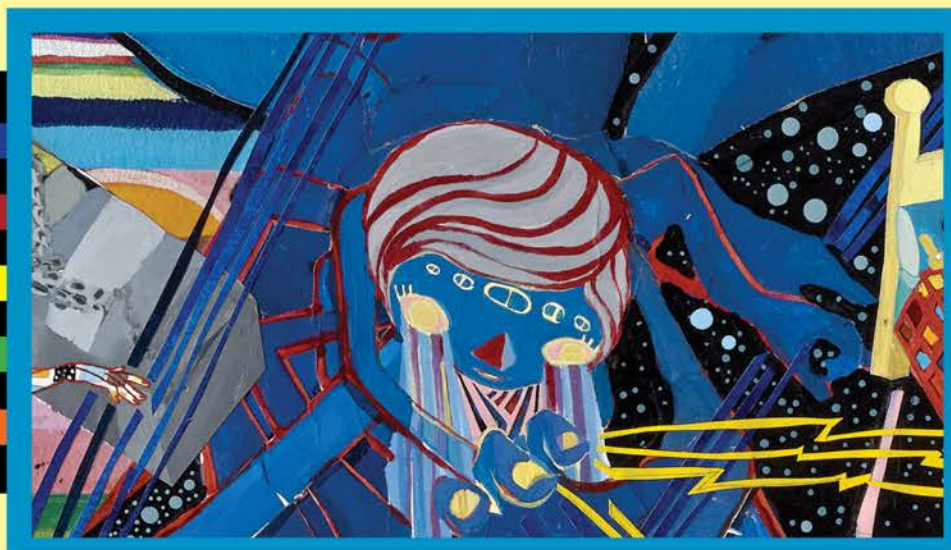
CELESTIAL BEING—UNALIGNED YET CONNECTED TO ALL

ARTIST INSPIRATION

At some point I realized I needed a character that would connect all the different narratives within my imaginary world. I envisioned all the stories within my world as colorful strands, it seemed only natural to develop a character who had the ability to weave these tales together. The idea for a Spider began with my reunion with my birth family. My cousin Yeh-Ji was a toddler when I returned to Korea. To entertain her I would sing the Itsy Bitsy Spider—including the hand gestures. Each year I returned she would ask me to sing it for her again. Years later in her English class, she taught her classmates our special song. I was so surprised she still remembered it after all those years. The spider and her tapestry represent the parts of myself and all those who have helped me grow into who I am today, it is woven with the memories of those who restored my faith when I felt I had none. The spider is also inspired by Louise Bourgeois whose interviews continue to bring me hope and strength. Lastly, the name Tapestry of Faith comes from the Unitarian Universalist Association, an organization I worked with through my teens and into my mid-twenties. Through this organization, I received years of anti-racism social justice training. Later on, I was hired as a youth programs specialist for their youth organization called YRUU, there, I learned how spirituality and social justice could be woven together and lived daily. From time to time YRUU would have meetings with the education department focused on lifespan learning their curricula was called Tapestry of Faith.

PRIME WEAVER

THE CREATOR AND GUARDIAN OF THE TAPESTRY OF FAITH



SECRET IDENTITY/ALIAS(ES)

L.B. Strand

CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Citizen of the Cosmic Womb

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Prime Weaver's love knows no boundaries.

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Prime Weaver identifies as a cisgender female infinite armed, celestial spider. She is referred to with the pronouns she/her.

GROUP AFFILIATION

Celestial Being—Unaligned Yet Connected to All

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Tourmaline is her mother and her daughter is Rem de Sheer child of Salcheya.

OCCUPATION

Prime Weaver creates and protects the Tapestry of Faith.

POWERS

Prime Weaver is a dream traveling, portal manifesting cosmic spider. She can amplify and transmit dream energy from one person to awaken a forgotten or hidden dream within another person, this process is called Somnioplexic Resonance. She can also transform stories, songs, and memories into cosmic strands, which are woven together into a celestial blanket that ensures the balance of the universe. By strumming the strings of the Tapestry of Faith, she can create music that restores hope, heals physical and emotional wounds, and enhances the skills or powers of those who listen.

BIO

After the Big Bang, a celestial Turtle named Yul birthed a giant egg. Tourmaline infused the egg with Quantum Soup. The egg sprouted eight limbs and soon became a giant infinite armed Cosmic Spider. Each of her hands began weaving a blanket called the Tapestry of Faith. Prime Weaver lives in the upper regions of the ionosphere surrounding a

planet called the Cosmic Womb. By strumming the strings that make up the Tapestry of Faith she sends cosmic music filled with hope to all. Every 100 years, Prime Weaver will transform into a mortal being and visit a planet of her choosing. Her first visit to Earth began on December 25th, 1911 in Paris France.

**Dreaming Star
Awaken! If you
wish to be free,
you could be . . .**

CELESTIAL BEING—UNALIGNED YET CONNECTED TO ALL

ARTIST INSPIRATION

Lady Madness is a patchwork of bullies I have known since childhood, she is a classic case of full-blown narcissism. I honestly feel kind of bad for this character, as I have continued to create work with her in it, I have seen how empty she is, and how much her motivations are ruled by a scarcity mindset. She is driven by fear and anger, she lacks the ability to process her emotions in a responsible manner and instead explodes in rage to hide any vulnerabilities.

On the other hand, there is a comical side of Madness that is inspired by the villains from the original Batman television show featuring Adam West. I loved the villains on that show because they were so cartoonishly horrible. They loved being bad and they weren't trying to hide it. I think as a kid I appreciated their honesty. Lady Madness knows she loves being a terrible person and she rarely hides the fact that she likes being one of the most feared villains in the Cosmic Womb.

Through my narratives, I am able to put characters like Madness in ridiculous situations that highlight just how stupid it is to be a greedy, horrible person. I like the idea that through imaginary foes like Madness we can use laughter to change our perception of imagined and real bullies.

LADY MADNESS



SECRET IDENTITY/ALIAS(ES)

Madness, Green Meanie

CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Unknown

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Heterosexual

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Cisgender Female, She/Her

GROUP AFFILIATION

Viridian Crown, Legion of Doom

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Adoptive mother to Spacia Tanno and
Glerna D. Gloppe

OCCUPATION

Lady Madness was the Captain of Volcano Island I. After her adopted daughter Spacia destroyed Volcano Island I, Madness became the Captain of Volcano Island II, a floating spaceship city. Madness is also a leading member of the Viridian Crown, and she is the president of her own Box Whine Company.

ABILITIES/POWERS

Lady Madness has a strength level that increases depending on how upset she becomes. At her regular level of grumpiness, she has peak human potential strength which allows her to lift 800 pounds with ease. If she becomes agitated, her strength level can jump to between 801 pounds to two tons. This level can be surpassed depending upon the circumstances. Lady Madness possesses superhuman durability and decoy manipulation

(the ability to create multiple false decoy versions of herself). She can also store her anger and release it as bolts of lightning through her fingertips, or release it as an electric energy field bomb, allowing her to propel herself forward or upward, and electric currents can also be released like an explosive full body electric shockwave.

HISTORY

The evil dictatress known as Lady Madness is a horrible person. Her skin is green with envy, she smokes three packs of Virginia Slims 100s a day, eats pandas, throws beloved school teachers into black holes for fun, and drinks "box whine" made from the sweat and tears of innocent Snowpeople.

VIRIDIAN CROWN, LEGION OF DOOM

QUEEN KIOK

(PRONOUNCED KEE-OAK)



CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Kiok was born on Kyoulseh Island. She is the first known person who resembles an Earth human to appear in the Cosmic Womb.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Pansexual

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Cisgender Female, She/Her

GROUP AFFILIATION

Children of the Stars, Veritas Circle, Team Cosmic

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Cosmic Sister and Creator of the Tuplets: Blue, Lady K, Aidee Three, Emo Flowers No. 36, Novem 9, and Big Six. Her birth mother is named Chalshigo. Her birth father's name is still unknown. Albeir the Miracle Bear is her Adoptive Father; her birth sisters are Glerna D. Gloppe and C.S. Watson.

OCCUPATION

Democratically elected Queen of the Cosmic Womb, member of the musical group Spectra Force Vive, Leading member of the Veritas Circle, Captain of the Dreamship Resilient

ABILITIES/POWERS

Queen Kiok can harness the power of the Tapestry of Faith to create quantum blasts of energy through her magical scepter. She has extraterrestrial ultra-resilient dendronic skin and the power of limb length manipulation.

HISTORY

Queen Kiok was born in the form of an egg by a giant shape-shifting firebird named Chalshigo; her father was an Astronaut and Scientist known for his Anti-Mining Activism who held Salcheyan citizenship (his planet of origin is unknown). Lady Madness ordered the Orionid General 486 to steal the eggs from Chalshigo's nest. A battle between the firebird and the general ensued. As 486 attempted to steal the eggs, Queen Kiok and her sister Watson hatched. Both hatchlings were rescued by Prime Weaver, a giant celestial spider. Prime Weaver hired a two-headed bird to deliver Kiok to Albeir the Miracle Bear while she journeyed to Earth to leave Watson on the doorstep in Seoul, South Korea. Unfortunately, the spider paid the Birds in advance, and once the Prime Weaver was out of sight, the birds abandoned Kiok in a forest of carnivorous trees. Kiok was eaten by a female tree, who soon grew ill with a terrible stomach ache. Kiok emerged from the mouth of the tree reborn. Her DNA was now imbued with qualities reflecting the extraterrestrial dendronic DNA she inherited while in her Tree

mother's womb. Luckily, Prime Weaver visited Kiok through a dream and showed her the way to Albeir's home. The clever infant walked to Albeir's house and informed him that he would become her new father. At this time, none of the animals in the forest knew how to talk. Kiok taught them all to speak a language called Maumeh. She taught the animals to sing special songs to MFTs (Magical Food Trees). These trees could create nearly any food imaginable, from lasagna to cotton candy ice cream. Now that all the animals in the forest knew how to talk to each other and no longer had to eat each other to survive, they enjoyed their new lives as members of a peaceful and progressive society. They elected Kiok to be their democratically elected Queen. Years later, the leader of the Viridian Crown, known as the parasitic Paryon King, kidnapped Queen Kiok. While attempting to dissect her to understand her mysterious biological makeup. From each of her wounds sprung the Tuplets. The Tuplets are humanoid variations of quantum potential locked within one heartbeat. Kiok's tears also helped contribute to the creation of Nina Blue, the imaginary friend and protector of C.S. Watson. The Tuplets freed Queen Kiok and escaped from the Paryon King. These days Queen Kiok continues to protect the Cosmic Womb by leading the Veritas Circle. She and the Tuplets and all the other members of the Children of the Stars continue their efforts to stop the evil Paryon King and the Viridian Crown.

CHILDREN OF THE STARS, VERITAS CIRCLE, TEAM COSMIC

C.S. WATSON



SECRET IDENTITY/ALIAS(ES)

Cosmic Creator

CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Korean Adoptee from Earth, born in Seoul, South Korea, raised in Concord, NH, immigrated to the Cosmic Womb around 5th grade.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Pansexual

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Cisgender Female, She/Her

GROUP AFFILIATION

Team Cosmic, Children of the Stars, Veritas Circle, frequently works with Spectra Force Vive

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Her birth mother is Chalshigo, a shape shifting firebird, her father was an astronaut from Salcheya. Birth Sisters: Queen Kiok and Glerna D. Gloppe. Cosmic Sisters: Lady K, Aidee Three, Emo Flowers (No.36), Novem Nine, Big Six, and Nina Blue.

OCCUPATION

Royal Artist and Historian of the Cosmic Womb, Lead Singer for C.S. Watson and the Children of the Stars Band, Earth Ambassador

ABILITIES/POWERS

For years Watson used the Quantum Brush to transform into a superhero known as Cosmic Creator. Recently, Watson learned how to split her creative energy into two beings through a method called transmedia projection. This allows Watson and Cosmic Creator to team up. Watson does not have the same level of super human durability as her sisters. This means if Watson is injured, her ability to transmedia project may not be possible. Both Watson and Cosmic Creator can bring two-dimensional images to life temporarily. Both characters are highly skilled in acrylo-chroma-kinesis—the ability to transform hues of paint into powerful blasts of colorful energy. They also can use their brushes to transform their companion Rainbow Rabbit into the enormous Hugh Hare (also known as Big Bunnie).

HISTORY

C.S. Watson was born in Seoul, South Korea, and immigrated to Concord, New Hampshire by way of adoption. In fifth grade, Watson teleported to the Cosmic Womb with the help of her imaginary friend named Blue. For an in-depth look at C.S. Watson's origin story please refer to Jade Weaver's history summary. After falling out of a cosmic portal, Watson fell into a giant

lake near Cloud Ten Kingdom, the capital of the Cosmic Womb. To her surprise a brook trout, the state fish of New Hampshire, had followed her to the Cosmic Womb. But the fish had transformed during the teleportation process into a giant mutated sea creature. Luckily Queen Kiok and a crew of talking animal sailors rescued Watson from being gobbled up by the terrible beast. Queen Kiok decided that Watson would become the royal artist and historian of the Cosmic Womb.

Watson studied under the guidance of the incredible Pleasure Vision, the force energy of Sight and Sound. This benevolent cosmic being helped Watson become skilled in the art of acrylo-chroma-kinetic defense and combat. She also taught her how to use her innate transmedia projection talents to transform into Cosmic Creator.

As mentioned earlier, with time, Watson learned to transfer her creative energy into a separate human form. This allowed Cosmic Creator the freedom to be a free-thinking, long term media projection. Together these two beings have traveled the universe with members of the Veritas Circle. Their band C.S. Watson and the COS play free shows at intergalactic reunion centers and help defend those in need from the terrible clutches of the Viridian Crown.

**TEAM COSMIC, CHILDREN OF THE STARS, VERITAS CIRCLE,
FREQUENTLY WORKS WITH SPECTRA FORCE VIVE**



ARTIST INSPIRATION

C.S. Watson is my alter ego, the C stands for Choi (my birth family's last name), and the S stands for Schwindt (my adopted family's last name). The Last name Watson is inspired in part by a painting created by John Singleton Copley called *Watson and the Shark*. The composition features an orphan who was almost eaten by a shark. The man who commissioned the work was named Brook Watson.

Watson was 14 when he was almost eaten by a shark, it took multiple attempts to rescue him. When I saw this painting I was completing my BFA in painting at MassArt, I found myself mesmerized by it. I remember reading an article about the piece where the author felt that this work depicted the moment when this 14 year old orphan "became a man".

I found this both amusing and interesting. Instead of asking myself, when did I become a woman, I pondered... when did I finally just feel like it was okay to be me?

Growing up in Concord, New Hampshire, I dealt with racist microaggressions on a daily basis. I found myself becoming disturbingly accustomed to them. "You're not Asian, you're normal, I mean... you're practically white!" "No . . . where are you REALLY from?" "What are you?" "Are you from China or Asia?" "Why can't you just be a good, quiet little oriental?"

After a while, I worried that these ideas would someday consume me.

As I looked at the shark in Copley's painting, I imagined it to be a giant mutated brook trout (the state fish of New Hampshire, minus the mutated part). I asked myself, who or what could rescue me from being consumed by ignorance and hatred?

That is when I realized how much my imagination, art, and story telling had helped me get through those difficult years. Soon after, I created a painting similar to *Watson and the Shark*, titled *Watson and the Trout*, over the years I have created three different versions of this same event in Cosmic Womb history. I am currently working on a new version, each time I return to this origin story, it reveals to me something new about the characters or about the impact art and world-building have made on my life.



POM POM THUNDER



CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Pom Pom Thunder emigrated from Concord, NH. She currently lives in a secret realm called Jayu, hidden within the NGC 6891 Nebula located about 7200 lightyears away from Earth. She is a citizen of the Cosmic Womb, the Jayu Realm, and the United States.

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Cisgender Female Sentient Bed, She/Her

GROUP AFFILIATION

Veritas Circle, Member of the Resilient Heart Black Star Family (by way of adoption)

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Grew up with C.S. Watson in Concord, NH, sister to Everlasting Spirit and Brilliant Mind (by way of adoption), daughter to Resilient Heart (by way of adoption)

OCCUPATION

Originally C.S. Watson's childhood bed. Currently, she is a Big Time Rescue Reunion Specialist.

ABILITIES/POWERS

Pom Pom Thunder can travel faster than the speed of light on a superhighway of dreams using magical dream trekking shoes. Her empathic geolocational tracking skills allow her to locate those lost in battle with their family members and their families.

HISTORY

Pom Pom Thunder was originally C.S. Watson's bed when she lived on Earth. After C.S. Watson was teleported to the Cosmic Womb, Watson began to have trouble falling asleep. Queen Kiok, the ruler of the Cosmic Womb, asked Prime Weaver, a giant celestial spider, to teleport C.S. Watson's childhood bed to the Cosmic Womb. The spider wove a magical door into her magical Tapestry of Faith and teleported the bed from Concord to the Cosmic Womb. To everyone's surprise, the teleportation process changed Pom Pom Thunder into a sentient magical bed with newly discovered powers that allowed the bed to locate people by tuning in to their emotional frequencies!

Watson was finally able to sleep peacefully. Soon Pom Pom and Watson became good friends and fought side by side in many battles.

Unfortunately, Pom Pom Thunder was destroyed during the Black Star Liberation of 2016 (featured in the painting Somnioplexic Resonance). Her remains were left in an unoccupied prison lab dungeon cell. In 2019, Pom Pom Thunder was discovered by two humanoid stars named Brilliant Mind (a Lapis Star) and Everlasting Spirit (a Kokino Star). These two stars were separated from their mother, Resilient Heart, during the 2019 Attack on Jayu. Using Brilliant Mind's Engineering Skills and Everlasting Spirit's power of regeneration, they were able to revive the broken bed. Brilliant Mind engineered a unique pair of shoes that allowed Pom Pom to travel on a superhighway of dreams. Using Pom Pom's empathic geolocational tracking abilities, they escaped through a dream portal and reunited with Resilient Heart. Pom Pom was soon adopted into the Resilient Heart Black Star Family. Pom Pom is now a Reunion Specialist. She works with art museums like the Crow Museum to create new reunion centers for families who've been separated due to the Viridian Crown's unquenchable thirst for power.

VERITAS CIRCLE, MEMBER OF THE RESILIENT HEART BLACK STAR FAMILY

JADE WEAVER



SECRET IDENTITY/ALIAS(ES)

Jasmine Kelly

CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Earthling, originally from Ohio, lived briefly in New Hampshire, currently resides in the Cosmic Womb.

GROUP AFFILIATION

Team Cosmic, Children of the Stars, Veritas Circle

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Jade Weaver has a brother, mother, and father who all live on Earth, and she has a daughter who lives with her in the Cosmic Womb. Occasionally, her brother visits the Cosmic Womb (his pet turtle lives in the Cosmic Womb and is second cousins with the Giant Turtle named Yul the Time Gardener).

OCCUPATION

Member of the Children of the Stars Band, Bassist in Hoskin's Dance Party Band on the Late Night with Akshay TV Show, Leading Council Member of the Veritas Circle

ABILITIES/POWERS

Ability to draw pull the color green out of anything and transform it into cosmic ropes, threads, and fibers. Anything she pulls, lifts, swings, or lassos with her green cosmic rope energy can be moved with a superior level of superhuman strength. Jade Weaver can fly and has genius-level intelligence.

HISTORY

My childhood friend Jasmine Kelly is the inspiration for Jade Weaver. When I was young, Jazzy briefly lived in Concord, NH. Jazzy's father had moved the Kelly family to New Hampshire because he wanted his kids to grow up in a safe and friendly environment. We

started a knitting and crocheting club. During recess, we'd weave up a storm! Sometimes, we'd take a break from our weaving and make up dance routines or break into song. Unfortunately, the racism that Jazzy and her brother faced daily became unbearable, and they decided to move away. While building the Cosmic Womb narrative, I often thought about my dear friend and how I had wished there was a place our younger selves could have grown up together free from racism. Luckily, we reunited through social media, and I asked if I could make a character that honored her and our friendship. After corresponding with her, I created Jade Weaver; her name is an adaptation of Jazzy's daughter's name. Also, I chose the color green as her power source because it is a color that symbolizes healing, growth, regeneration, and resilience. In the painting titled Big Time Rescue, the model for Jade Weaver was my dear friend, artist, and curator Sidney Mori Garrett.

TEAM COSMIC, CHILDREN OF THE STARS, VERITAS CIRCLE

ALBEIR

THE MIRACLE BEAR



CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Albeir is a Cybernetic Space Bear of Maumeh descent and a citizen of the Cosmic Womb.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gay

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Cisgender Male

GROUP AFFILIATION

Veritas Circle, Team Cosmic

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Albeir is the adoptive father of Queen Kiok

OCCUPATION

Head of Operations at Poly-Speak Incorporated

ABILITIES/POWERS

Albeir possesses the power of personal size manipulation based on his emotional state. His body has been enhanced with mechanical alterations. He can also store objects and people inside his mouth without eating them.

HISTORY

Albeir is a cyborg space alien bear who named himself Albeir after hearing it spoken by someone with a French accent. Since he didn't know how to spell it (he is a bear after all), he did his best and came up with Albeir. Since then, he has learned to read and write, but he has decided not to change his name to Albert.

One day, Albeir was leaving his home when he was greeted by a toddler standing outside the mouth of his cave! The child proclaimed that Prime Weaver, the Great Cosmic Spider in the Sky, has decided that he is to be her new father.

Albeir was a loving and attentive father. He tried his best to give her a well-rounded education. He taught Kiok all these things a cybernetic bear knows, and when he had taught her all he knew, they traveled the Cosmic Womb and learned from other creatures who were brave, wise, and strong. Years later, this little girl would become the Queen of the Cosmic Womb.

Albeir is head of operations at an intergalactic translation transmission

station called Poly-Speak Inc. Now that his daughter is all grown up, this single cybernetic bear wants to settle down. He's searching for a life partner who likes film festivals, gourmet food, and intergalactic sightseeing.

In the film Spectra Force Vive Infinite Pie Delivery Service, Albeir is voiced by Frankie Symonds. She is an incredible filmmaker, painter, sculptor, writer, and host of the television show Queer Cats.

It happens to the best of us . . . one time, I ate about 400 marbles before I realized that they weren't fancy grapes! I guess what I'm trying to say . . . is that I'm looking for a life partner who can accept a bear like me . . . a bear who can't always tell the difference between marbles and grapes.
—Albeir the Miracle Bear

VERITAS CIRCLE, TEAM COSMIC

ARTIST INSPIRATION

Growing up I was often told that I didn't 'get along with time and space.' I thought it would be interesting to build a relationship with space and time by personifying them as characters. Spacia became my symbolic representation of space, and Plan-Genda became my representation of time. Later on, I realized Pleasure Vision, a character that represented Sight and Sound was in fact their sister. The motivation behind the Spacia narrative was to give myself a challenge and to improve my storytelling skills. Through this process, I constructed a meaningful and complex coming-of-age story that could be told using a variety of media. Her tale spreads across many paintings, installations, soft sculptures, and video projects.

SPACIA TANNO



SECRET IDENTITY/ALIAS(ES)

Captain Spacia Tanno

CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Sentient Black Star, born near Jupiter, lives in Bentonville, Arkansas

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Heterosexual

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Black Star Force energy of Space personified in a chosen Female humanoid Form

GROUP AFFILIATION

Team Cosmic, Children of the Stars, Veritas Circle

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Married to Amplexus, adopted son Momo, guardian of Perennial Favorites, sister to Plangenda and Pleasure Vision

OCCUPATION

Veritas Circle Captain of Black Star Rescue Team #143, Cosmic Womb Ambassador

ABILITIES/POWERS

Ability to manipulate space, shape shift, wield space force energy, space portal generative capabilities, flight, space travel without protective gear, super human strength

HISTORY

Spacia Tanno was kidnapped during one of Lady Madness's raids to "harvest" Black Stars to be used as living batteries for her floating island space ship called Volcano Island I. Madness desired to have one more daughter, and upon reviewing Spacia's unique skills as a shape shifter she decided she would make a sufficient replacement for the daughter she was not able to conceive.

Unfortunately, Spacia failed to live up to expectations and was soon banished into a battery prison tank. She along with all the other imprisoned Black Stars were tranquilized into a constant state of sleep and hooked up to machines that siphoned their life energy.

The giant celestial spider known as Prime Weaver noticed Spacia's story while weaving the Tapestry of Faith. It

didn't take long for the cosmic arachnid to realize that she must awaken Spacia's faith through a method of dream energy transference called Somnioplexic Resonance. The balance of the universe depended upon it!

Through a series of dream messages, Prime Weaver connected the dreams of Spacia with her sisters Plangenda and Pleasure Vision's dreams. Each night Spacia began to remember what her life was like before the Harvest. As time progressed she connected her to the dreams of C.S. Watson and to those of her soul mate Amplexus, the greatest consensual hugger in the universe.

Finally, Prime Weaver appeared in Spacia's dreams and said to her, "You know my dear, if you wished to be free, you could be! Don't you know? Why you are the strongest living being on this island! Awaken! Discover the truth within you!" And with those words, Spacia's eyes opened and her spirit was renewed, she effortlessly broke through her prison battery tank and led the first successful Black Star Rebellion in Cosmic Womb history!

TEAM COSMIC, CHILDREN OF THE STARS, VERITAS CIRCLE

ARTIST INSPIRATION

Nina Blue represents the tears of my adoptive parents when they realized they could not have another biological child, and the tears of my birth parents when I was taken away from them and sent to America. Together these tears merged together to create a spirit of hope in the form of an imaginary friend named Blue.

BLUE



SECRET IDENTITY/ALIAS(ES)

Nina Blue, Haneul-Sek

CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Citizen of the Cosmic Womb

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Pansexual

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Force energy of the color Blue personified in a chosen female humanoid form, She/Her

GROUP AFFILIATION

Children of the Stars, Veritas Circle

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Sisters with Queen Kiok, Aidee Three, Emo Flowers, Lady K, Novem Nine, C.S. Watson, and Big Six

OCCUPATION

Professional Imaginary Friend, manages the Helping Hands Body Shop—a hospital that heals and regenerates imaginary friends after long missions.

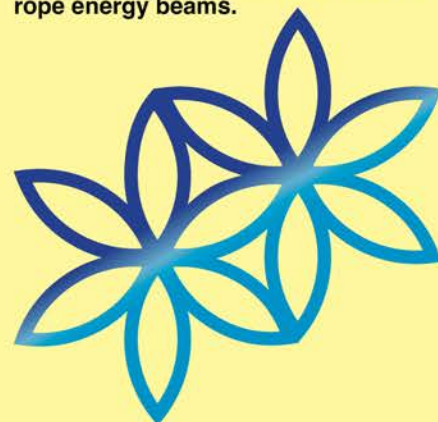
ABILITIES/POWERS

Ability to teleport through any blue object, ability to hide within any blue object, superhuman enhanced strength, power of flight, ability to travel through space without any protective gear. Psychic awakening abilities

HISTORY

Nina Blue is a professional imaginary friend who has helped hundreds of children grow up. Occasionally she will aid adults who have lost their way and help them reawaken their inner voice. Blue is best known on Earth for her work with C.S. Watson, an adopted child who was raised in Concord, NH. Each day Nina Blue would visit C.S. Watson and tell her the national planetary motto of the Cosmic Womb: "Have Faith For You Have Always Been Loved." One of the responsibilities of an imaginary friend is to watch out for the safety of the child you have been assigned to look after. After learning about racism through an article in the local paper about Watson's classmate Jasmine Kelly, Blue decided Watson would be safer if she teleported her

to the Cosmic Womb. Soon after Watson arrived, Blue and her sisters realized that Watson was in fact their long-lost sister! Since then Blue has become a legendary figure within the Professional Imaginary Friend Community. Later on, she learned that a part of Jasmine Kelly's spiritual energy had gotten stuck in Concord, NH. Blue returned to Earth to teleport her remnant spiritual energy to the Cosmic Womb. To everyone's surprise, the being that emerged from the teleportation portal had transformed from Jasmine Kelly into Jade Weaver, the incredible superhero who can draw power from the color green and transform the pigment into powerful rope energy beams.



CHILDREN OF THE STARS, VERITAS CIRCLE



POUND CAKE MAN



SECRET IDENTITY/ALIAS(ES)

The spacing and capitalization of Pound Cake Man's name varies depending on his mood. Sometimes he will write it as Pound Cakeman, Poundcake Man, or Pound Cake Man. He also goes by PCM, Emma's Appa, and Papa PCM

CULTURAL/PLANETARY BACKGROUND

Pound Cake Man is a collective entity made up of a cooperative community of Globbernauts, he is a citizen of the Cosmic Womb originally from Hensoria

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Heterosexual

GENDER/SEX/PRONOUNS

Cisgender Male, He/Him

GROUP AFFILIATION

Veritas Circle, Team Cosmic, Member of the Simone Biles Intergalactic Fan Club

KNOWN RELATIVES/ SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

Emma Bamford Poundcake Girl is his daughter, he is currently dating Resilient Heart

OCCUPATION

Interplanetary Conflict Resolution Translator, creator of the Poly-Speak-O-Meter (an invention that can translate 93% of all the known languages in the Universe, the other 6% have yet to be translated, and 1% don't want to be translated), President of Poly-Speak-Incorporated, Doorman for the alleyway portal to Snow People Island, Ex-Boxer, Ex-Henchman for the Emperor, Amazing Single Dad from Outerspace, President of the Simone Biles Intergalactic Fan Club.

ABILITIES/POWERS

Level 100 Super human strength, ability to consume and host the consciousness and appearance of other beings on the surface of his body, ability to translate almost any language in the universe, super speed, amateur gymnast.

HISTORY

Poundcake Man is a single dad from the planet Hensoria. After dropping his daughter Emma off at school, PCM (aka Poundcake Man) was abducted by the evil Viridian Crown and brainwashed into an obedient henchman. Years later, Nina Blue, a professional imaginary friend, freed PCM's mind and helped him remember his daughter Emma. Poundcake Man learned that his daughter had been kidnapped by the Viridian Crown during a recent battle on Mouse People Island. PCM joined the Veritas Circle and embarked upon a journey to find his missing daughter.

Pound Cake Man represents the power of unconditional love.
—JooYoung Choi

**VERITAS CIRCLE, TEAM COSMIC,
MEMBER OF THE SIMONE BILES INTERGALACTIC FAN CLUB**

PUPPETS



JooYoung Choi, *Jonipher Puppet*. Polyfoam, fleece, felt, puppet rods, wooden handles and found object accessories. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art

Jonipher (he/him) is a 36-year-old single cisgender male Infinite Pie. He is known for his excellent dancing skills and his optimistic outlook on life.



JooYoung Choi, *Bunnie Puppet*. Polyfoam, fleece, felt, puppet rods, wooden handles and found object accessories. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art

Bunnie (she/her) is a transgender female cybernetic rabbit from the future. She can shoot lasers from her eyes and is known for baking magical Infinite Pies.

SITTING ON BUNNIE'S ARM: JooYoung Choi, *Sweet Slice Puppet*. Polyfoam, fleece, felt, puppet rods, wooden handles and found object accessories. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art

Sweet Slice (she/her) is a 48-year-old cisgender female Infinite Pie slice. She likes horses, going on vacation, and karaoke.

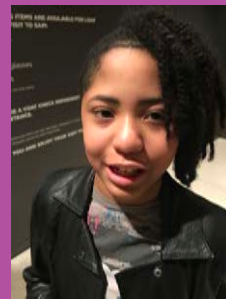


JooYoung Choi, *Dee Puppet*. Polyfoam, fleece, felt, puppet rods, wooden handles and found object accessories. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art

Dee Jones (they/them) is a non-binary 12-year-old comic book artist from the planet Jarthoo. They possess Super Melting Abilities, and their brother is Mondo Jones.

VOICE TALENT:

Tsukiya (he/him) is a young digital artist from Washington state. Spectra Force Vive is his first voice acting related project.



JooYoung Choi, *Volcana Puppet*. Polyfoam, fleece, felt, puppet rods, wooden handles and found object accessories. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art

Volcana (they/them) is a non-binary hoverboard Olympian from the planet Multatis-Or. They are the leader of Spectra Force Vive Infinite Pie Delivery Service and possess Magma Blast Abilities.



VOICE TALENT:

JV Hampton-VanSant (she/they) is a voice actor and seamstress, teller of stories, server of looks, and maker of fabulous clothing.



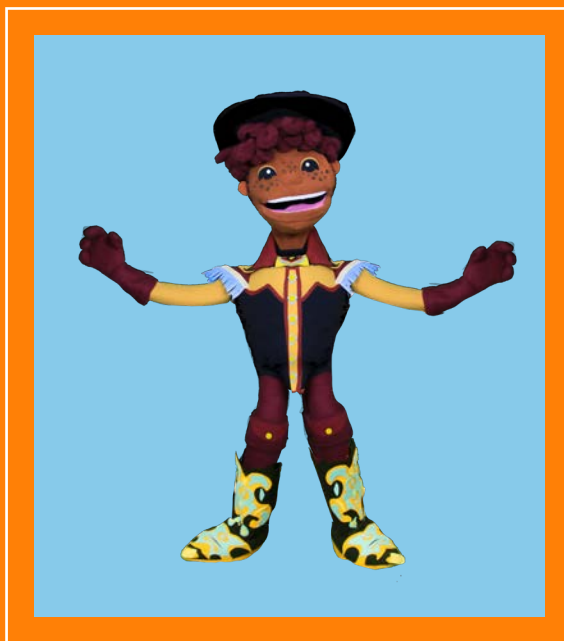
JooYoung Choi, *Mondo Puppet*. Polyfoam, fleece, felt, puppet rods, wooden handles and found object accessories. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art

Mondo Jones (he/him) is a Jarthoovian teenage transgender male space cowboy. He is a professional laser lasso engineer and keeper of the Cosmic Rewind.



VOICE TALENT:

Anthony Dunkley (he/him) is a 27-year-old trans man and Detroit, Michigan native. He loves spending time at the dojo practicing martial arts and spreading body positivity amongst the transgender community via Instagram (@moon_martian1)



JooYoung Choi, *Roro Puppet*. Polyfoam, fleece, felt, puppet rods, wooden handles and found object accessories. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art

Roro is an intersex gender-fluid warrior from the planet Kordalys. Roro's powers include electro-power blasts and cosmic healing. Instead of using pronouns like she, he or they, Roro's friends refer to Roro using "Ro" or "Roro."



VOICE TALENT:

Koomah (any pronouns) is an intersex performer, trained in a sumo stable, and known for their karako hairstyle.



FRONT COVER AND PAGE 22: JooYoung Choi, *Big Time Rescue*, 2017. Acrylic paint and paper on canvas. 84 x 84 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art. Photo: Thomas R. Dubrock.

PAGES 2: JooYoung Choi, *Like a Bolt Out of the Blue, Faith Steps In and Sees You Through* (detail), 2019. Wooden armature, fabric and hardware, paint, vinyl dots. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 4: JooYoung Choi. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGES 6: Still image from *JooYoung Choi's Spectra Force Vive: Infinite Pie Delivery Service*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 8: Still image from *JooYoung Choi's Spectra Force Vive: Infinite Pie Delivery Service*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGES 10: Still image from *JooYoung Choi's Journey to the Cosmic Womb*, Part 1 & 2, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 12: Still image from *JooYoung Choi's Spectra Force Vive: Infinite Pie Delivery Service*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 14: Still image from *JooYoung Choi's Journey to the Cosmic Womb*, Part 1 & 2, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 16: JooYoung Choi, *Tourmaline the Celestial Architect*, 2018. Acrylic paint and paper on canvas. 60 x 48 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 18: JooYoung Choi, *Discovering Truth Will Make Me Free: The Liberation of Poundcake Man*, 2018. Acrylic paint and paper on canvas. 48 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art. Photo: Christopher Henry

PAGES 20: JooYoung Choi, *Journey Vision 5000*, 2018–2022. Flatscreen TV, plywood, digital video art files, acrylic paint. 24 x 24 x 7 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art. Photo: Thomas R. Dubrock.

PAGE 24: Still image from *JooYoung Choi's Journey to the Cosmic Womb*, Part 1 & 2, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 34: JooYoung Choi, *Watson and the Trout*, 2013. Acrylic and paper on canvas, 52 x 77 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

PAGE 36: JooYoung Choi, *Like a Bolt Out of the Blue, Faith Steps In and Sees You Through* (detail), 2019. Wooden armature, fabric and hardware, paint, vinyl dots. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 44: JooYoung Choi, *Like a Bolt Out of the Blue, Faith Steps In and Sees You Through* (detail), 2019. Wooden armature, fabric and hardware, paint, vinyl dots. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

PAGE 46: Still image from *JooYoung Choi's Spectra Force Vive: Infinite Pie Delivery Service*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

**The artist would like to
dedicate this exhibition to
Shari Walters and E Williams**

Founded in 1998, the Crow Museum of Asian Art of The University of Texas at Dallas inspires and promotes learning and dialogue about the arts and cultures of Asia through its exhibitions, the research and preservation of its collections, artistic and educational programming, and visitor experience and engagement. The museum accomplishes this in accordance with the highest professional standards and through collaboration with diverse audiences and community partners within North Texas and throughout the world. Free and open to the public, this museum celebrates the arts and cultures of Asia—from ancient eras to contemporary times—through a variety of permanent and traveling exhibitions that showcase the arts of a multitude of countries. With an array of beautiful spaces and galleries, the museum offers a serene setting for quiet reflection in the heart of the Dallas Arts District. Learn more at crowmuseum.org.

