

REFLECTION

## MFA @ Home: "My Second Year MFA"

by Wendy Liang

Studying for MFA at home didn't turn out to be as demoralizing or traumatizing as it sounded at the beginning. It became a memorable part of my life journey that I won't ever regret. First of all, I got to save the time I would have had to spend on fighting the traffic going to and from San Francisco to attend classes. I ended up using the saved time on reading and contemplating. As a result, I have

become so philosophical that I often surprise myself with how much wisdom (and weight) I have gained in just one year. I sometimes regret not having applied for a dual degree in art and philosophy. Without having to travel back and forth, I ended up being more productive in art making than ever before. Second, an MFA is, after all, all about visual art. Lots of class materials have to be presented on the computer screen, whether or not the class is conducted online or in person. If this had been a degree in ballet performance or acrobatic techniques, I would have been devastated. Last but not least, for me, the best learning never happens in the classroom. I am slow and like to think about things at my own pace. The best learning happens when I figure out something by myself, alone. What happens in the classroom can be a good influence, but I believe that it is the time and efforts we spend outside of the classroom that will determine how far we can go in what we try to accomplish.

Are there things that I wish I could have done without the COVID restriction? Of course. I wish I had seen, touched and smelled the CCA campus. I wish I could have taken some fun, hands-on classes such as ceramics and printmaking in real studios. Most of all, I wish I had made some friends and connections through physical interactions. I wish my classmates were not flat images that could talk on my computer screen. I even dreamed of running into my favorite professors in the hallway or at the campus cafeteria and having a little chat with them. Leaving CCA without ever seeing the professors who taught us, the administrative faculty who went all the way to help us, or the classmates who shared this isolated learning experience with me, in real life, does make me feel sad, lonely, and lost.

But, I have decided to end my reflection with a funny anecdote. After all, this is a time to celebrate and to move on.

Three weeks ago I went to the Wattis gallery to drop off my paintings for the graduate showcase exhibition. For the first time I met this person that I had had classes with for two semesters. When he appeared at the gallery entrance and



*Morning, 2020. Watercolor, 26" x 32".*



*Afternoon, 2020. Watercolor, 18" x 24".*

said “Hello” to me, I was confused. I had trouble matching his face with his tall, grownup body. I felt that the smiley baby face that I had seen for almost a year should belong to someone with a childlike build. This couldn’t be him! This was wrong!

Later on I realized that subconsciously and inevitably, we must have all imagined and visualized what each of us looked like in person. Our imaginations can be right or wrong. It’s a pity there’s no way to prove either way just yet. I hope that sometime soon we will be able to play this mix and match game in person. I am sure there will be lots of surprises, laughter, and tears. I am hopeful that one of these days we will be able to make up for all the fun that we missed out this year.

This piece is part of a series of reflections by graduating MFA students on their experience of completing school at home.