

Sylvia Kim

My Asian roots permeate my studies and daily perceptions. I am a Korean American who attended international school and spent the majority of my youth in Seoul, South Korea. For this reason, my friends and I have always considered ourselves to be TCKs (third culture kids). I believe that my personality matured by learning to embrace two cultures, Korean and American, from an early age.

My interest in trees developed two years ago as a summer student in landscape architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. The class took field trips every afternoon to examine plants in their natural environment. Looking through all forms of life whether human, animal, or plant, I found that no two things were the same. Fascinated by the fact that just as no two trees were exactly alike, so too were no two people, I consequently began to notice many other parallels.

After returning from RISD, I studied positive and negative spaces, perspective, mark-making, and the tradition of East-Asian philosophy and landscape paintings. Subsequently, I want to reveal the personalities of trees in their individualistic texture, personal characteristics, and age.

The concept of "nature versus nurture" signifies that humans obtain behavioral traits and develop personalities through both genetic makeup and cultural background: family upbringing, personal experiences, and societal issues. Similarly, trees grow in response to their DNA and environmental factors. Temperature, weather, and the nutritional value of soil can become the "cultural" influence on tree growth, just as a social environment shapes people.

My senior thesis exhibition reflects an exploration of the meeting of traditional East-Asian values and contemporary concerns. My work is an accumulation of expressive marks which attempt to depict the physical, perceptual, and philosophical elements found in both tree and human.