

*Korean-American*, a simple label for my complex identity. While bonded by the singular dash that seemingly appears to connect my ethnic and national identity together, it rather represents two ways a person can view me: Korean or American. As such, I wanted to capture the disconnection between my two identities and how they affect the way I navigate my life. When first researching my topic, I realized my past reluctance to explore my Korean identity was due to my fear of making a mistake and raising questions about my identity and if I am truly "Korean" enough. I wanted to be naive about the culture I didn't understand in order to not feel excluded from what I *could've* had. Despite the disparity I had in the past, I wanted to embrace the conflict between my two identities, as I will always be perceived as American in Korea, and vice versa in America.

For my painting, I wanted to work with acrylic as it is a relatively new invention of paint compared to traditional oil paints used in the earlier eras of life. I felt it exemplified the idea of being unnatural as acrylic was made from plastic. Just like my identity, I feel that I am not a "traditional" Korean girl, feeling foreign to my own culture (not knowing the language, the holidays, places). The drawing subliminally shows mistakes in the outfit, the juxtaposition between a traditional American house and a traditional Korean dress, and the dead eagle. With this composition in mind, I want the viewer to be uncomfortable with the eye contact they share with the subject, as well as feel a sense of dread with the chaotic structure of the painting. This entire piece is representative of the collision between my Korean and American identity, and how difficult it would be to truly "fit in" with either label.

KOREAN OR AMERICAN

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