

Cecile Chong

Artist statement

I juxtapose appropriated images from vintage children's books along with other found and original images to address the process of cultural assimilation and the development of individual identity. I am especially interested in this subject having been born in South America to Chinese parents and having learned about my ancestors' culture as an outsider. I create my cross-cultural narratives using encaustic and other mixed media including oil, pigments from Morocco and India, volcanic ash from Ecuador, rice paper, silver/gold/copper leaves, beads, and electronic components from circuit boards.

My exposure to different cultural objects and ideas has driven my fascination with how these influences are visually acquired, represented and interpreted. I am interested in how cultures copy others, and how borrowed ideas often find their way back to the original culture. This entanglement of culture, history, place and interpretation are themes that I explore in my work.

I use the image of swaddled babies, which is a tradition from my native Ecuador. A tightly wrapped baby placed into an oversize shawl or blanket and strapped onto the mother's back is a familiar scene throughout the Andes. These "guaguas" or "thumb babies" in my work suggest a blank slate, ready to witness and experience cultural encounter. I also use humor and memory to communicate the displacement and alienation we often experience in our changing world.