

Social Homelessness on US Campuses

Yeohyun Ahn
Art Department
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI, USA
yahn27@wisc.edu

ABSTRACT

It is a series of selfie (self-portrait photograph) with light and computer algorithm, compared to photography, drawing with light. Initially, it began with an interactive art, Being Ignored Version 1.0, to recognize the dignity and humanity of those who are homeless, being invisibly treated, and ignored, in Porter County, Indiana, which is relatively a wealthy county, compared with neighboring counties in Indiana. Later it has extended to the project, the Social Homelessness on US Campuses.

It was inspired by the book, "Here I am, Faith Stories of Korean American Clergy-women". It defines that social homelessness has no friends with whom they can associate or count on, they have no place to go. They seem to be very isolated, and alienated [1]. Asian female faculty on US campuses may experience the highest levels of isolation, and marginalization on US campuses [2], compared with other minority faculty groups. Particularly the Asian female faculty from predominantly patriarchal Asian cultures may be deeply challenged to navigate where they belong between two distinguished communities, Asian, and American. For instance, their conventional social role as being a full-time mother would be more supportive, inclusive and welcome in their traditional ethnic groups, but working as Asian female faculty may occasionally face less hospitable and somewhat harsh responses from the groups since their existences may impact negatively their patriarchal hierarchy led by men. Simultaneously the Asian female faculty may invisibly being demanded to be more persistent, dutiful, and non-complaining for extra service activities without compensatory supports on US campuses. Also, they may be subject to harsh teaching environments by student resistances and lower student evaluations on US campuses. It is routinely challenged for the Asian female faculty to find psychological and social comfort zones to rest between two exclusive communities, Asian, and American.

The social homelessness on US campuses is a multidisciplinary art research project to raise awareness of the Asian female faculty on US campuses by using a series of self-portrait photograph with the software, Being Ignored 1.0. as a mobile application.

KEYWORDS

Social impact, interactive art, selfie, self-portrait photograph, computational graphic art, Asian female faculty, diversity on campuses, generative art, social responsibility

1 INTRODUCTION

Initially this research began with an art installation, Being Ignored Version 1.0. It was a site-specific installation to recognize the dignity and humanity of those who are homeless in Porter County, Indiana. Porter County is a relatively wealthy county in Northwest Indiana compared to neighboring counties.

This was a part of the Invisible Project, which is a mobile exhibition designed to increase public awareness and understanding of homelessness in Porter County, Indiana. It was a collaborative project with the Welcome Project, Professor Yeohyun Ahn's Graduate graphic design class at Valparaiso University, the Porter County Coalition for Affordable Housing, Housing Opportunities, Gabriel's Horn, and Dayspring Women's Center.

The Invisible Project began with a casual conversation with homeless women at Dayspring Women's Center, in Porter County, Indiana. Dayspring Women's Center is a day time shelter for women and their children who are or were homeless. They started sharing traumatic experiences of being ignored by the public and their unique stories inspired the artwork, Being Ignored Version 1.0, created by the author.

The artwork, Being Ignored Version 1.0, experiences the moment being brushed off. The computer screen displays real-time images captured through the web camera installed invisibly on the top of the computer screen. As viewers move toward the screen, the web camera captures the viewer's self-portrait and display it on the computer screen. The computer code eliminates the viewer's facial expression to convey the concept of being avoided and rejected [Fig. 1].



Figure 1: Screenshots of the Being Ignored Ver 1.0.

The visual style was inspired by Impressionism, which is a 19th-century art movement that captures a moment, such as Claude Monet's Sunrise, and Expressionism, expressing inner troubles and

feelings of anxiety rather than technical skills or beauty, a traditional goal of art [Fig. 2].



Figure 2. Left: Sunrise (1872), Claude Monet, Right: The Scream (1893), Edvard Munch

Later the Being Ignored 1.0 was upgraded to the project, Being Ignored 2.0. The Being Ignored 2.0 is an ongoing generative documentary selfie by using the Being Ignored 1.0.

2 CONCEPTUALIZATION

Asian female faculty is a small but growing population of higher education faculty in the United States. Asian females include a wide variety of ethnicities, distinct by geography, culture, language, economics, and history. This project particularly focuses on Asian female faculty bonded with the local and global experiences of 'Asian Women' in the United States [3].

According to the paper, "Women of Color Faculty at the University of Michigan: Recruitment, Retention, and Campus Climate", women faculty of color might be the most marginalized faculty on US campuses. Challenging areas are isolation, high attrition, student evaluations, peer perception, more service responsibilities, etc [2].

Being professors were predominantly conceived as male positions in the Asian cultures. It was a social privileged and highly respected position in the patriarchal Asian cultures. Asian female faculty occasionally encounters circumstances to be less inclusive and invisibly exclusive in the Asian communities since their emerging populations may threaten their well-established patriarchal hierarchy being controlled and led by men in the Asian communities.

Asian female faculty in the United States struggles to navigate between two exclusive communities, Asian, and American. The Asian communities give Asian women pressures to perform traditional roles as perfect mothers and ideal housewives without mutual spousal supports. Asian female faculty bonded with the cultures is inevitably destined to being isolated and marginalized by their ethnic groups to avoid criticisms toward their traditional roles.

On the contrary the Asian female faculty suffers from stereotypes being perceived as uncomplaining perseverance and submissiveness to authority in predominately white institutions. Their classroom may be a minefield of student resistance and negative attitudes [3]. The Asian female faculty is an underrepresented and less illuminated population on US campuses. The Being Ignored 2.0 is an ongoing documentary selfie to portrait Asian female faculty on US campuses by using the generative art, being ignored 1.0.

The title of the project, the Social Homelessness, was inspired by the chapter, "What is Homelessness", in the book, "Here I am, Faith Stories of Korean American Clergywomen". It defines that social

homelessness has no friends with whom they can associate or count on, no invitation, they have no place to go. They seem to be very lonely, isolated, alienated, belonging nowhere, to nobody [1].

The social homelessness on US campuses is a multidisciplinary project consists of a series of selfie (self-portrait photograph) by the software, Being Ignored 1.0, site specific art installation, public speaking, and Asian Female Scholars, social group to support Asian female faculty on US campuses in predominantly white academic institutions.

3 DEVELOPMENT

The Being Ignored 1.0 was initially implemented by using Mirror library, developed by Daniel Shiffman in Processing. Processing is a basic programming language for artists and designers, initiated by Casey Read and Ben Fry. It transforms each pixel from real time video source to each rectangle on the levels of brightness by using an internal web camera. Each shape is transformed to each line to draw the moments being brushed off and added several variables, functions, and color palettes to express the visual theme [Fig. 3].

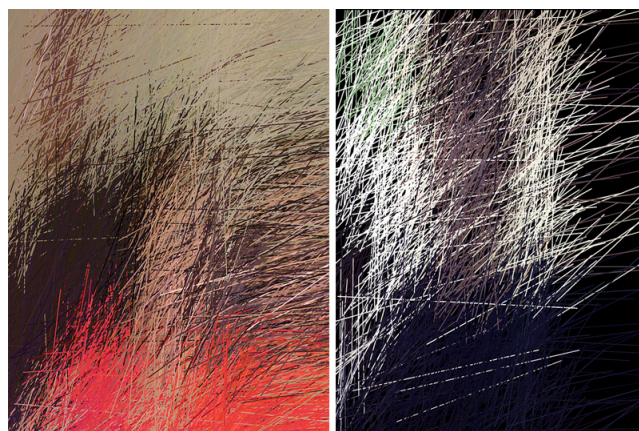


Figure 3. Initial sketches by using the Being Ignored Ver 1.0

The series of the selfie were taken in the author's office space in a white institution to represent a space for Asian female faculty on US campuses. The office light was intentionally controlled to be darker to express an isolated and marginalized space. An internal web camera captured the author's self-portrait photograph by using the Being Ignored 1.0, and eliminated the facial expression to express being treated as less valued, unremarkable, and not worthy of attention. It was taken by different angles and levels of the light repeatedly and sequentially. The process was similar to professional photos taking in photo studio [Fig. 4]. The Being Ignored 2.0 has extended to a series of generative selfie with the title, Selfie + CODE [Fig. 5], to capture psychological moments to express that individual identities are devalued and deconstructed by homogeneous institutions and ethnocentric groups in the United States.

Insert Your Title Here



Figure 4. Final outputs by using the Being Ignored 1.0



Figure 5. Selfie + CODE

4 APPLICATION

The captured real time images on the screen were converted to PDF and printed out on canvas with gallery wrap as generative self-portrait painting. As a site-specific installation, these were displayed at Faculty Arts Exhibition at Brauer Museum at Valparaiso University from April 15 to May 8, 2016 [Fig. 6]. During the opening of the exhibition, a female faculty who has got recently tenured at Valparaiso University witnessed, “I felt heart broken when I was looking at the piece”.



Figure 6. Faculty Arts Exhibition, Brauer Museum, Valparaiso University, 2016.

WOODSTOCK'18, June, 2018, El Paso, Texas USA

It was invited as a digital mural, a linear 3-minute motion graphic, on a large scale LED screen 50 feet by 6 feet at Media Arts Nexus at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and Web3D Art Gallery at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, in 2017 [Fig. 7].

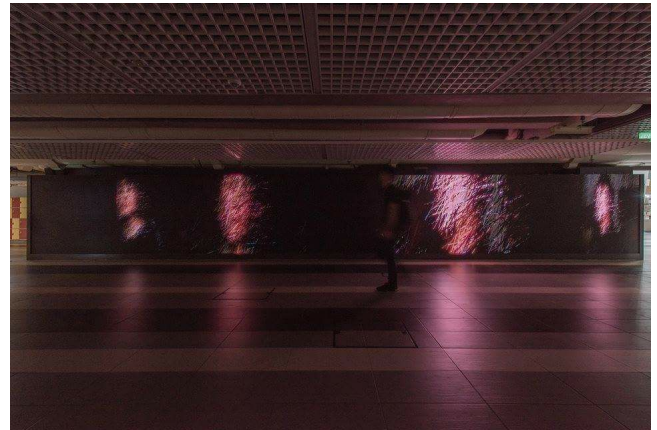


Figure 7. Media Arts Nexus, Nanyang Technological University, 2017

The project, Social Homelessness on US Campuses, officially debuted as a Guerrilla projection in Chicago on May 10, 2018. The Guerrilla projection is an art medium to deliver messages at the large scale display on the exterior of buildings with a single high-powered projector nightly [4]. It was projected on Chicago Symphony Orchestra building, as a result of the workshop, Design Activism, and the Role of the Graphic Witness, led by Adam Del Marcelle, at DePaul University [Fig. 8].



Figure 8. “Social Homelessness on US Campuses”, Guerrilla projection, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, May 10, 2018.

It was presented at Design Incubation Colloquium 5.1: DePaul University on Oct 27, 2018. Design Incubation Colloquium is a public colloquia hosted by design institutions for communication design academics and professional designers to present research, creative projects and practice, and receive feedback from peers [5].

As a part of the multidisciplinary research, the author co- founded the group, Asian Female Scholars, with Mary Szto, a former law professor at Valparaiso University. It was a social group consisting of around 40 Asian female faculties from northwest Indiana, USA, where white populations are relatively dominated in the academic world. The group provided regular workshops and social gathering for mentoring, connection, networks, and, resources such as pedagogical strategies for Asian female faculty to survive and succeed on US campuses. It was held at Valparaiso University and Purdue University Northwest from 2015 to 2018 [Fig. 9].



Figure 9. Asian Female Scholars, September 30, 2016.

The social homelessness on US campuses consists of the Being Ignored 2.0, a series of selfie (self-portrait photograph) by the software, Being Ignored 1.0, site specific art installation, public speaking, and Asian Female Scholars. The Being Ignored 2.0 is a generative selfie software system and documentation to portray Asian female on US campuses. The mobile version of the Being Ignored 1.0, Being Ignored 2.0, is developed to enhance public exposures and participation by using mobile phones and social media. It can be downloadable at www.socialhomelessness.com.

4 CONCLUSION

Asian women faculty on US campuses is a underrepresented group in the United States. Their challenging areas encompass isolation, and lack of supporting systems from both exclusive communities, Asian, and American. They suffer from stereotypes to be treated as uncomplaining female figures for extra service activities without compensatory supports on US campuses. Their growing populations might be less expected with concerns to impact negatively in predominantly patriarchal Asian communities led by men. Asian female faculty serves as mentors to students of color and junior faculty of color and bring unique and creative perspectives to institutions, and in some degrees they bring about social and institutional changes. The author has shifted the

challenges to a pedagogical opportunity on US campuses. The project has been branched out as class projects for students in the course, ART598 User Experience for Graphic Design, taught by the author. The class has developed mobile applications for students who may feel isolated and marginalized at the University of Wisconsin Madison to enhance diversity and inclusiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mary Szto, Adam DelMarcelle, Heather Quinn, Stacy Hoult-Saros, Pam Saylor, Sri Frazee, Art Department at the University of Wisconsin Madison, Phillip Powell, Asian Female Scholars, Michelle Alexander, Deepa Majumdar, Kam Chi Chan, Fontaine

REFERENCES

- [1] Jean Kim, 2015, What is Homelessness, Here I am: Faith Stiores of Korean American Clergywomen, PA: Judson Press, pp. 19-20
- [2] Amiee Cox, 2008, Women of Color Faculty at the University of Michigan, MI: University of Michigan, 2008, pp.2.
- [3] Celeste Fowles Nguyen, 2016, Asian American Women Faculty, San Francisco, CA: University of San Francisco, 2016, pp.129-136
- [4] Samantha Corbin and Mark Read, Guerrilla Projection, 2019, Retrieved from <https://beautifultrouble.org/tactic/guerrilla-projection>
- [5] Design Incubation, 2019, "Colloquia", Guerrilla Projection, 2019, Retrieved from [https:// designincubation.com/colloquia](https://designincubation.com/colloquia)