

# reIMAGination

by **Cecile Chong**

**January 14 – April 4**

I create cross-cultural narratives using encaustic painting and mixed media. Encaustic painting involves melted wax and resin, and my mixed media may include oil, pigments from Morocco and India, volcano ash from Ecuador, rice paper, silver/gold/copper leaves, beads, electronic components from circuit boards, and appropriated and original images. 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 because I was born in South America to Chinese parents and learned about my ancestors' culture as an outsider.

I was also exposed to many different cultural objects and influences. I developed a fascination with how these things are visually acquired, interpreted and represented. I am also interested in how cultures copy others, and how borrowed ideas find their way back to the original culture. This fascinating entanglement of culture, history, place and interpretation are themes that I explore in my work.

In my recent 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 "thumb babies" in my work are a blank slate, ready to witness and experience cultural encounters. I use humor and self-referential memory to communicate displacement and alienation at a universal level.



***Cecile Chong** has exhibited work at El Museo's (S) Files, Danny Simmons's Corridor Gallery and Kenise Barnes Fine Art. Her work is also in the collections of El Museo del Barrio, Citibank Art Advisory, Peggy Cooper-Cafritz, and Joseph and Carmen Ana Unanue, presidents of the board of trustees at El Museo del Barrio. In 2008, she participated in the Aljira Emerge 10 program and in a residency at Vermont Studio Center. She is also a Joan Mitchell Foundation MFA Grant 2008 recipient and her work was selected for the Lynn Gumpert Award at ISE Cultural Foundation. She earned a Master of Fine Arts from Parsons, a Master of Arts in education from*

*Hunter College and a Bachelor of Arts in studio art from Queens College.*

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