Hernandez, Emily

Artist Podcast Script: Nomi Chi

“As the spirit wanes, the form appears.”

Nomi Chi is an illustrator and tattoo artist residing in Vancouver, Canada. Her strengths as an artist lie in her versatility, which allows her to ostensibly navigate through different mediums effortlessly to produce dreamlike, visceral works that delve into the absurd and macabre.

Chi’s style is unique; it can be described as a fusion of both traditional European and East Asian graphic styles that are representative of her mixed ancestry. This marriage of cultures creates a distinctive style that becomes immediately recognizable.

Chi is interested in narratives that surround the macabre and cultural ephemera that are, for the most part, based off of her experiences. The ending result is facetious subject matter that illustrates a juxtaposition of childlike whimsy with the grotesque and erotic. As a proclaimed emotionalist, she believes that the success of her illustration is dependent on her mood. Due to the unforgiving nature of tattooing, Nomi claims that her visual illustrative works overall tend to be more liberated and successful.

Another distinctive quality about Chi’s work is that the vast majority of it features women as the subject. Chi would find a kindred spirit in Lewis Caroll because even though her conceived sceneries can appear hostile or frightening, the female always appears to be both understanding and sometimes even contributing to the madness, never static or passive.

Nomi has struggled in both her illustrative and tattoo career to maintain her independence from commercial art. She has received such positive reception from her paintings and illustrative work that she has been asked to recreate works into tattoos. Nomi describes this as an exciting challenge for her because it pushes the limits of her practice to create an interesting fusion of two unlike styles.