Jen Yoon’s witches fight inequality through illustration

One of the biggest news cases to come out of South Korea recently was the case of the so-called ‘Nth Room’, a chatroom on messaging app Telegram that was used to share exploitative pornography and blackmail victims.

A national scandal, the case reignited discussion on women’s standing in Korean society, as Seoul/NYC-based book illustrator Jen Yoon tells me.

“Politically and socially it had a gigantic impact since it involved so many under-aged victims; yet still some people blamed victims’ behaviour, which felt like a witch hunt to me,” Jen writes. “Therefore, I needed to address this inequality and claim justice.”

The artist accordingly created a personal project called the *Four Virtues*, each an illustration of a witch that draws your eye with colour, conviction and a certain intimacy. The iconography of each piece still shines strong with all their detail and attention, making for an exciting new talent indeed (.)

“I believe illustration is a different form of speech that can move peoples’ minds without a word,” she says.

Jen took inspiration from the Jeffrey Deitch Gallery exhibition *All Of Them Witches*, amazed by how well the LA gallery had curated a group show based on a witchcraft theme.

In her pieces, Jen decided to focus on the connection between the classical subject and modern morality.

“Courage, temperance, justice, and prudence are still the same virtues that we should remember in our daily life to make a better society and achieve equality,” as she says. “I wish this project will be a voice to raise awareness about that.”

“I mainly used Procreate for the drawing process since its texture resembles pencil on paper a lot. Then I coloured in Photoshop as it is easier to play with colours on a bigger screen.”

“For the *Temperance* piece, I referenced (performance piece) The power inequality between one holding a bow and the other holding an arrow was the perfect fit for depicting the power difference in one scene.

“I’m hoping it will be a reminder in real life before someone releases an arrow.

“Other than *Temperance*, I used a lot of preconceptions and

stereotypes about witches like black cats, the stake, or magical objects. This was to say how witches live in the image that society creates towards them (and) in the end, they break the restriction and walk out of the stake alive, showing courage.”

For the *Justice* work, Jen returned to her feeling about the Nth Room scandal.

“I didn’t understand why these criminals were sentenced to less than 10 years of jail time, and their personal information was not disclosed to the public. *Justice* represents that anger and frustration, claiming the proper justice.

“Also, misogyny is an ongoing issue in South Korea (where the victim was killed in a public toilet, her death memorialised with Post-it notes.)

“It wasn’t surprising that hate crimes happened again, ever since nothing changed after so many people raised their voice in 2016 and fought for it unprecedentedly. This is because the sentencing guidelines are especially low for sexual assault, stalking, hidden cameras, etc.

“I therefore wish my art to help people to be resilient and persistent, helping the power to last long. It is such a tiring and long process to change the world, but it cannot be overlooked since it is a necessary one.”

Follow . The artist is looking to do a witch-themed group show in South Korea, do contact her if interested.

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