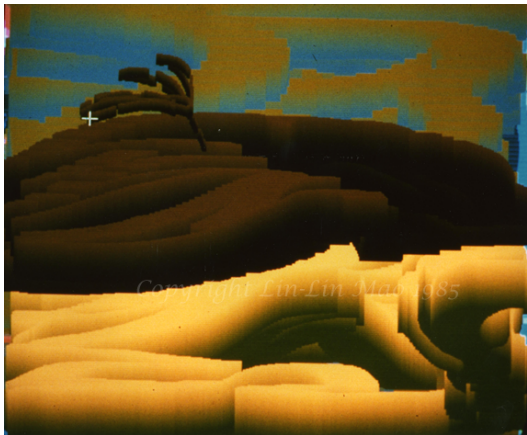


Lin-Lin Mao

B I O G R A P H Y

“All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten”. This statement rings true for Lin-Lin Mao in how she sees the world, what she values, what she seeks, and how she lives day to day. One of her first memories was when she was 4 years old and her mother’s friend showed them a bag which had a beautiful textured pattern. She was attracted to it because she could not imagine how the texture and patterns were created. She learned later that it was done by something called crochet. The transformation of one object, in this case a one-dimensional string, into another object such as a 2-dimensional pattern is something she has always been fascinated by. Around the same time, Lin-Lin learned how to fold square sheets of paper into 3-dimensional objects called origami that looked like an ape, a hat, a piano, a balloon, to name a few. Crocheting and folding origami have been life-long fun activities for her to do ever since.

In 3rd grade, Lin-Lin learned that she was skilled at drawing and had good hand-writing. However, unlike crochet and origami, she practiced these skills so people would value her. A boy who sat next to her in class bullied her to draw an American flag for his assignment. To his surprise and hers as well, the flag she drew looked great. From then on, she became obsessed with drawing and the attention from her classmates encouraged her. Lin-Lin’s teacher also noticed that she had good hand-writing so the teacher asked her to write the weekly spelling words for the entire school year on large paper that the class could study from. Lin-Lin, who was always picked last in kickball, found her “value”.



Alfalfa by Lin-Lin Mao, 1985. Digital painting.

At her parents’ direction Lin-Lin majored in Computer Science in college instead of Art. “Do not drive the train off the track. Your younger sisters look up to you,” was the response her father gave when she said she wanted to major in art. Fortunately the field of computer graphics took off when Lin-Lin applied to graduate school at her parents’ urging. In graduate school she was able to incorporate her passion for creating visual art with her training in computer science. For her master’s thesis project in 1985, Lin-Lin created a digital color paint program on an early IBM PC which contained an experimental graphics board. The paint program allowed the user to craft a library of paint brush patterns that the user could select from later to paint with. While painting the program allowed the user to control the digital brush mark’s opacity and size. Using her paint program, Lin-Lin created many digital paintings in 1985. Her digital painting titled “Alfalfa” was selected as one of 12 finalists for a magazine’s 1985 computer art competition. “Alfalfa” was also selected by jury to be exhibited at the *SIGGRAPH 1985 Art Show*.

Looking back, Lin-Lin realizes she has always been interested in mark making and how experimenting with mark making can create new gestalts. “Alfalfa” is an example of this. Is it a landscape or a portrait? Her intention was to create a quick portrait of Alfalfa from *The Little Rascals*. The use of 3 shaded brush patterns created a kind of depth or landscape that was unexpected to Lin-Lin. Lin-Lin’s current work focuses on expanding the definition of what a painting is and what a paint mark is. She is experimenting with the idea that beyond pencil marks and brushstrokes, a mark can be a strand of yarn, a loop of crochet, an origami crane, or a dirty plate from last night’s dinner. Anything that has been manipulated by human hands can be used as a mark in a “painting” because like traditional brushstrokes they also contain human energy and memory. Lin-Lin’s definition of a painting is any 2-dimensional or multi-dimensional surface or space that contains marks touched by the human hand.

Lin-Lin went to art school in 2016 and earned an MA in Fine Art. She is now that Kindergartener again who questions and learns through making things. She has opinions against the blind-following of cultural norms such as filial piety and stereotypes. She believes that children must be seen and heard.