

Expression: A Female Subject

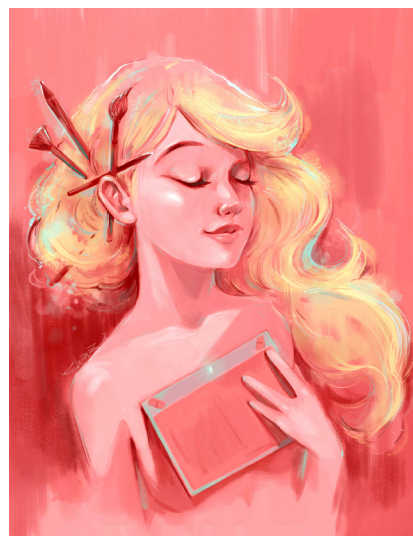
Girls Drawin' Girls

Art by Christine Chang

The one hundred years since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment is still not enough time to fully counterbalance the weight of the preceding millennia during which men defined and controlled virtually every aspect of human society. But the feminist movement is slowly changing that history.

As visual mass media flourished in the twentieth century, the inertia of western patriarchy persisted in the representation of women in film, television, advertisements, and erotica. Perhaps nowhere else was men's idealization of feminine allure more vivid than in the artistic genre of the pinup.

Like their counterparts in other industries, women have slowly made inroads into the elite, male-dominated commercial art and animation studios that produce the images that fill our screens. In 2006, veteran *The Simpsons* animator Melody Severns teamed up with storyboard artist Ann Walker to create the artist collective Girls Drawin' Girls (GDG) as a way to showcase the talents of female



"Muse"



"Goddess of Taiwan"

illustrators, animators and artists by reclaiming the art of the pinup. (See girlsdrawinggirls.com)

"Historically, pinup art has been a medium in which men create images of women that they find sexy ... it's men creating art for other men," explained Severns in a 2014 gallery talk. "What we do here is redefine pinup art to show sexuality and femininity from our point of view, and give it a voice for ourselves."

When women draw pinups, the images communicate beauty through facial expression, gesture, costume, and context. And instead of vulnerability, the female subjects convey strength, intellect, even supernatural qualities. It's a far more complex — and realistic — portrayal of feminine allure that transcends gender-specific archetypes and exceeds titillation.

As GDG Artist-in-Residence, [your town] illustrator Christine



"Lady Summer"

Chang has been recognized for her talent and commitment to the group, and for her unique contributions to the genre of pinup art. Like the 200+ other female artists of GDG, she also serves major national clients as a creative professional, and her extensive resume includes book illustration, mobile app artwork, and the McDonald's lunar year calendar as well as private portrait commissions.

She is also a big fan of superhero and fantasy characters, and creates art for large and small comic cons around the country. She was on site at Imago Creative Studios in Elgin for Geekzcon 2.0 on March 9th.

"I see myself as a Taiwanese woman artist," she said in a recent spotlight interview. "What I do is basically who I am: I love storytelling, the beauty of women characters, pop culture and delicious Taiwanese food."

But motherhood is also a feminist choice, and Christine is a full-time mother with more ideas than time.

"Right now my biggest struggle is not having enough time for all the projects I've planned," she said. "To balance work time and mom time is hard for me, especially when you were raised in Asian culture, where not giving your kid 100% is simply unac-

ceptable."

Without going into detail, she admits she didn't fit into the educational conventions of Taiwan — even in an art school — and that's what launched her journey to America's west coast, where she excelled as an illustration student at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

"San Francisco really opened up my eyes and mind. I fell in love with the beautiful city and the amazing creative vibe."

In working with BRAVO to choose the artwork for this month's cover, she told us "Taiwan just passed the same-sex marriage law [on May 17, 2019] ... I think it would be very fitting." Her tiny home country is now the only place in Asia to support marriage equality.

Christine's art has been featured in gallery exhibits around the world, at pop-up shows and comic cons, and the GDG website. Her online portfolio and social media posts display the wide range of styles and subject matter she works with. While pinup art is one of her chosen genres, it's only a part of her total outlook on empowered women that is expressed in her art.

"If you like to draw princesses, draw on! If you wanted to be a princess, slay your own dragons. You are so much stronger than you realize, and everything you need to be awesome is already inside you." —JP

