

## Art in America

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# Cindy Ji Hye Kim

by editors



The seven large black-and-white paintings and two small color works (all 2017) in “Tick,” Korean-born artist Cindy Ji Hye Kim’s first solo exhibition in New York, present twisted, claustrophobic scenes inspired by comics and noir film. Kim, who studied illustration as an undergraduate at the Rhode Island School of Design and painting at the Yale University School of Art, could be grouped with other painters who borrow tactics from illustration, like Mark Thomas Gibson or Jamian Juliano-Villani. But her perspective and subject matter imply a kind of violence and sadomasochistic romance absent from the work of her peers. The silhouetted woman in *Demonstration / Illustration* has been rendered as a cardboard cutout. Her perfectly coiffed bob recalls Popeye’s Olive Oyl, and a strand of pearls hangs around her fleshless neck. A kitchen knife pierces an ink-splattered glove directly over her face. Although she does not possess any facial features, these traditional feminine signifiers, present in several works, impart narratives of unhappy housewives and domestic abuse. Kim uses multiple mediums (acrylic, ink, pastel, and oil paint) to inject her works with darkly poetic painterly gestures. A swarm of festering flies cover the featureless face of the despondent, thumb-sucking figure in *Love Letter*. The precise, delicately rendered bugs are a symbolic reminder of Beelzebub—Lord of the Flies—and, by association, the two-pronged seduction and repulsion of darkness. —Julia Wolkoff