

With Ears for Wings

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Coffee Shop Notes

Sara Stallard

"Bent-backed Atlas, our traveled prawn." These words from Sylvia Plath's poem "You're," which was featured in her last volume of work, *ARIEL*, immediately came to mind upon encountering Hoon Jeong's vision what it means to be deaf, with his composition of a lone figure carrying a giant ear on his back.

Hailing from Seoul, South Korea, Hoon Jeong is currently an art student at Gallaudet University, with the goal to major in both graphic design and deaf studies. This past fall semester, he has been conducting a DeVIA-focused independent study in studio art, under the tutelage of instructor Paul Johnston.

This featured piece, which is untitled, was on display at the STUDENTS ART SHOW 2003 that opened today at the Washburn Arts Center. It is a surprisingly enticing creation, for its rather small size, an approximate foot across, perhaps because the framing effect draws one in to contemplate the subject closely. The central image is placed on a background which used to be the bottom of a box, about 2-3 inches deep, and the brown acrylic coat around the thick frame is etched with slash marks, which reinforce the painful mood surrounding the subject.

When asked about his inspiration behind this piece, Hoon Jeong shares his experiences with discovering his Deaf identity upon coming to the USA in 2000 and how he learned to recognize the forces of oppression that were present in his life. Confirming the initial impression of a bent-backed Atlas, Jeong refers to the Greek myth, "It felt like I carry the world on my back."

Indeed, who can deny that, at times, we carry such burdens? This is why, in our visual vocabulary, we do not have angelic wings assisting us on journeys.

Instead we have giant ears.

View Hoon Jeong's work at: <http://www.thetactilemind.com/weekly/jeong.html>

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