

## WORKS BY THREE WOMEN AT BROOKLYN'S ROTUNDA GALLERY

# Making Art In Their Own Image

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STAFF WRITER

**S**PEAKING FOR one's self, expressing one's viewpoint or creating art in one's image is considered a right, not a privilege, among Americans.

But three artists participating in "Speaking for Myself," on view until Feb. 16 at the Rotunda Gallery in downtown Brooklyn, take issue with that premise. The three — Diane Edison, Margo Machida and Yong Soon Min — say that as an African-American, as Asian-Americans and as women, their images are rarely represented in mainstream culture.

"Most of the images we see of women are created by men," said Edison, who lives part of the year in Park Slope and part of the year in Georgia where she teaches drawing at the Savannah College of Art and Design.

"Most of the women's images down through the ages have been nudes," she said. "So I think it is important for women to create their own images. Women have been creating images, but

we don't see them displayed, they're stored away."

The work that Edison, a 40-year-old native of Piscataway, N.J., has chosen to speak for her in the show is a series of big, bold graphite drawings, rich in tone and detail, of herself: an ample woman with dreadlocks that have grown long over three years.

She has devoted herself to portraiture for six years, and occasionally chosen herself as a subject for the last four. "Most important is being able to put my image down as a black woman," she said. "I want it to be there so everybody can see it."

In addition to picturing their selves, Machida and Min include autobiographical material in their work. Machida's mixed media series in the show, "Seeing Sansei," uses symbols and her family name to focus on her family's Hawaiian and Japanese heritage, its strong matrilineal tradition and the close relationship that developed between her, her mother and her grandmother. Her father, who was away during much of her childhood working as a



Newsday Photos / Ari Mintz

## Margo Machida with her acrylic canvas 'Baby Makes Three'

traveling salesman, makes only a cameo appearance in her painting, "Make Room for Daddy" along with the trappings of his work: a suitcase, travel alarm and a liquor bottle.

"I see self-definition as central," said Machida, a 40-year-old artist who lives in downtown Brooklyn and has had many solo and group shows in New York City. "It allows you to link your personal and political struggles. The Asian-American women's experience is rarely put forward by them."

Not all of her images and symbols are positive. A baby doll's head, painted grotesquely red, is attached to all three canvases, and many of her figures, painted with a silvery tone, have a ghost-like quality.

"I think you have to be willing to show images that are more ambivalent," she said. The doll's head, for example, she said, refers to pain passed down through families.

Min's work talks more about her individual and family interaction with mainstream America and American values. Using photographs of her family, she creates a personal and historical chronology.

"They are statements about my family," said Min, who lives in Greenpoint



Yong Soon Min based 'Back of the Bus,' 1985, on a family photograph

# Speaking for Myself

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and has exhibited at several solo and group shows in New York City and across the country. "But personal history can be viewed in the context of large history to give it greater meaning and significance."

Her 1984 intaglio "Such Thing" includes a photograph of her extended family in South Korea and another photograph, reversed like a negative, of her nuclear family standing in front of their suburban house in central California.

"Talking Herstory" includes family photographs that, along with slivers of the world map, seems to be floating up from Min's open mouth. One of the photographs was used as the basis of her graphite work, "Back of the Bus." Faintly, in the background, are images of European and American leaders meeting at Yalta at the close of World War II.

"'50 Chevy" includes five pictures of three women with increasing levels of assimilation to American society and values. For example, one shows three Japanese oyster-divers making dance-like movements at the water's edge while another shows three women gathered around a table strewn with Salem cigarettes and cans of Coca-Cola.

"Many Korean people resented the level of influence and presence of Americans during and after the war," she said. "It's always been an odd relationship between the U.S. and South Korea." / II