

## columbus dispatch

### paper works reflect culture of consumers

by christopher a. yates

\* works by susan li o'connor and **cheong-ah hwang** are on view through friday at the mahan gallery, 1042 n. high st. hours: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays and noon to 6 p.m. saturdays and sundays. call 614-294-3278.

although they employ dissimilar techniques, susan li o'connor and **cheong-ah hwang** both offer engaging looks at consumer culture and merchandising.

in the mahan gallery, their works -- wisely separated -- are presented on two long walls. both work in paper, with vastly different results.

o'connor's mixed-medium collages pit the personal against the impersonal and the individual against the crowd. each piece features images of women from fashion magazines and advertisements.

combined with other elements, the figures take on different personas. they are in essence toys to be manipulated, controlled and displayed.

by day, o'connor is a fashion retailer. in that role, she is a conduit and an accomplice in the manipulation of the masses. her art acknowledges that merchandising is a game and that notions of play guide her hand.

a series of 50 finger puppets is featured in her merchandising nightmares i.

in the wheels on the bus go round and round, cutouts of female figures wrap around the words of the familiar children's song. just as the song offers an endless stream of verses, so too does the effective merchandiser.

but while there is a marked uneasiness in many of her pieces, o'connor does not take a specific position about consumer culture. instead, she observes and translates.

**hwang's** sculptures and wall-mounted reliefs engage the viewer on many levels. each piece has two elements: a three-dimensional paper model of a common mass-produced product and an enlarged two-dimensional arrangement of the model's parts. each two-dimensional relief has the potential to become a three-dimensional object.

**hwang** uses several products common to a medicine cabinet. while removing all text, she keeps the colors and logos of each product close to the original. whether in two or three dimensions, each product is surprisingly easy to identify.

such ease of recognition points to how successfully advertisers imprint colors and shapes

onto the public's subconscious.

both artists force a consideration of the consumer's place and participation in a society driven by merchandising, branding and product placement.