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ELEPHANT

Another Time, Another Place: Inside the Mind of Haegue Yang

Location and heritage power the Korean artist's intricate work. She talks to Holly Black about inspiration, technique and the wild Cornish weather



Haegue Yang in her 2019 exhibition, When The Year 2000 Comes, at Kukje Gallery, Seoul, 2019 Photo: Chunho An

"It's so cold, right?" Haegue Yang recalls. "Horizontal rain, very windy. One should in fact wear rubber boots everywhere!" We are discussing the wintry Cornish climate over video link. The artist is at home in Berlin and I've just returned to London after seeing her solo exhibition *Strange Attractors* at Tate St Ives. The gallery sits on the edge of the tourist town, opposite the glorious sands of Porthmeor Beach, which are either beaten by roaring waves or flooded with holidaymakers, depending on the ever-changing weather forecast.

"I am such an urban person, so I am usually quite sealed off from nature," she adds. "You try and keep the cold and wet out, but there, you just have to let go! You become united with the landscape." This assault on the senses, and the rhythmic chaos that the elements can unleash, was what convinced Yang to take on the project, having been rather reluctant to begin with.

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https://cutt.ly/zCy0qoL

"Anne Barlow, director of Tate St Ives, convinced me to do a site visit," she explains. "It was crucial. You feel the harshness of the environment. Aesthetically there is beauty, but physically there is overwhelming power. It is a special mix, plus the mystic sentiment of all the ancient settlements, and their sense of time."



Fluidity on Nonagonal Crystal Matrix – Trustworthy #400, 2020

Yang is known for embracing hybridity. She fuses theoretical and scientific concerns with folkloric symbolism, and is just as interested in utilitarian objects and materials as she is in carefully handcrafted processes. These ideas often manifest as enormous multi-sensory installations, bringing together individual elements that function as standalone pieces, as well as forming a carefully choreographed whole. These include wall-spanning digital collages, assemblages formed of lightbulbs and electric cables on drying racks, kinetic structures built from Venetian blinds, and joyous anthropomorphic sculptures that can be 'activated' by being pushed or spun manually.

The new sculptural trio conceived for the St Ives show takes the form of strange, seemingly hairy creatures that are in fact made from powder-coated steel frames, and covered in a layer of plastic twine or metal-plated bells. Each piece of *Sonic Intermediates – Three Differential Equations* represents a different artist who has a connection to the area's modernist heritage and its relatives: Barbara Hepworth, the British doyenne who lived nearby; Naum Gabo, the Russian constructivist master who was a temporary war refugee in Cornwall; and Li Yuan-chia, the influential Chinese émigré artist and poet, who brought his unique, spiritual and social vision of art to the UK.

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Thanks to the sculptures' playful, humanoid appearance, one might not immediately make the connection to the artists who inspired them, particularly as the unusual, textural materials are the first element to pull focus. The longer you look, however, the more these relationships unfold.



Sonic Intermediate – Parameters and Unknowns After Hepworth, 2020

The three hollow spheres that form *Sonic Intermediate – Parameters and Unknowns after Hepworth* (2020) slowly reveal their connection to Hepworth's *Pelagos* (1946) with its carefully carved, smooth surfaces, while the meaning behind *Sonic Intermediate – Parameters and Unknowns after Li* (2020), in which a stout organism clutches a broom, unravels once you realise it mimics a photograph of Li covered in a rug and holding his own brush, which is displayed in the show's entrance.

"I hope that the exhibition functions without people having any information, but then they get engaged enough to go and find it for themselves"

"I hope that the exhibition functions without people having any information, but then they get engaged enough to go and find that information for themselves," Yang explains. She is not one for a singular, linear reading, and would rather present different threads and questions that people can engage with on their own terms. "These unknown factors are exactly the idea of *Strange Attractors*," she says, referring to the scientific theory that the future is inherently unpredictable due to imperceptible variables. "I am throwing all these things out, so people say, 'Wait a second… this and this and this… all these things go together?'"

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Haegue Yang, Strange Attractors, 2020, installation view at Tate St Ives

This notion is also connected to Yang's commitment to fully experiencing the places where she stages exhibitions.

"I am very conscious of that fact, of me being a stranger in most of these exhibiting places," she explains. "Maybe it comes from being Korean, being from a small country that has suffered so much by frequent foreign invasions, as well as ignorance. I wish to be respectful by making an effort to relate myself to the place and its people. Even in the 1990s it was rather a rare thing for international people to come to exhibit in Korea, so you really appreciated it, but at the same time there was often no dialogue. I always wondered: 'What is this act of airlifting? Of, boom, appearing and then disappearing?' That question became seriously relevant to me. I want to be influenced, instead of just superimposing my ideas and then going away."

"I am very conscious of my being a stranger in these exhibiting places. I wish to be respectful by relating myself to the place and its people"

This has certainly been the case in Cornwall, where not only the inhospitable weather, but the embedded histories of pagan rituals and more localised religious practices had a sizeable impact on Yang. "What we see from a distance is not necessarily the reality of the place," she notes, alluding to the touristic veneer of the area. During her trip in 2018, she explored not just the obvious cultural circuit but also the community-led St Ives archive, where objects, printed materials and ephemera are curated by senior-citizen volunteers, giving her real insight into the town's identity.

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The Intermediate – Airflow of Pyramid Winnow, 2015

She also visited the Holy Well of St Madron, guided by Giles Jackson, the exhibition assistant curator. Around 10 miles away, the water at this hallowed enclave is believed to have healing properties. "Usually there will be a standing stone or some kind of architectural evidence," she says "but here there is nothing. However, there is a strong sense of an intimate and profound place, which differs from institutionalised religion. No one ordained it, it came through a collective, unspoken agreement. It immediately reminded me of Korean animism or shamanism. People simply go to a certain waterfall or rock to release their wishes and lamentations, but no one can tell you exactly why."

Despite having no urge to experience more traditional religious buildings, she was intrigued by the idea of refuge, which led her to St Senara's Church in the village of Zennor. "Unlike usual religious institutions, the chapel felt more like a community shelter," she explains. "Whether it was something for the mind or the physical body, it felt different."

Rather than being enamoured by the Mermaid Chair, which relates to a famous local folk tale, Yang was intrigued by the idiosyncratic prayer cushions, which featured stitched religious motifs as well as more banal scenes, including a pet dog. She describes discovering "a strange middle ground between religious symbolism and the domestic, personal touch".

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This included a stunning vision of an eclipse. "Which is cosmic, right?" she observes. "It certainly goes beyond monotheism. Suddenly there was a whole crack in my reading." This stitched motif became the catalyst for another new work, *Mundus Cushion – Yielding X* (2020), which features a replica of the cushion, as well as Yang's own designs, all displayed on a modular structure inspired by church benches.



Non-Linear and Non-Periodic Dynamics, 2020

To my surprise, she explains that this piece was probably the "most-labour intensive of my entire career". Such a statement is rather shocking, considering Yang's exhibitions all over the world have filled some of the greatest museums and art spaces, including the Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, the former cargo train station at Documenta 13 in Kassel, and MoMA's sizeable atrium.

Issues arose because not only was she continually refining the idea for *Mundus Cushion* by considering conceptions of heaven and earth in parallel with building a portrait of a community, but she also completely underestimated the stitching process, specifically the ability to translate visuals into a form of textile binary code.

"I have to put aside all my know-how, and my mask. I have to start something new. But then it becomes part of my vocabulary and I grow out of it"

"You start to execute the design and realise that the colour doesn't fit and you have to undo it all," she says. "Despite the full acknowledgement of labour as an important aspect, I would not have jumped in if I knew how hard it was!"

Despite these protestations, Yang has always shown a deep reverence for craftsmanship, particularly traditional methods, even if she subtly subverts their legacy by utilising synthetic, mass-produced materials. This is seen clearly in her first macramé sculpture, *Floating Knowledge and Growing Craft – Silent Architecture Under Construction* (2013), or in the intricate synthetic-straw weaving of *The Intermediates* series (2015–ongoing).

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The Intermediate – Tilted Bushy Lumpy Bumpy, 2016

This strange blend of old and new can be joyously jarring, not least because these methods and materials often form part of unusual alien-like structures. The hunt to decode, to unpick textures, patterns and reference points, encourages the viewer to truly engage with what is right in front of them. It is very hard not to reach out and touch.

"It is all about honouring tradition," she affirms, "especially as craftsmanship such as stitching used to be practised largely by the woman. Whether there was any consciousness or outside recognition, these women were trained designers, who knew how to send out aesthetic signals through their work, which often led to unanticipated masterpieces."

Yang's approach toward skills and knowledge is uplifting. She describes feeling clumsy when learning about a new technique or location. "I have to put aside all my know-how, and my mask. I have to start something new," she explains. "But then it becomes part of my vocabulary and I grow out of it. There are so many stories. It is beautiful."

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The New York Times

Haegue Yang's Radical Art of Obscure Delights

A surprise stay in her native South Korea led the artist, whose work will appear in Berlin this month, to study the paper-cutting rituals of shamans.



The artist Haegue Yang in the courtyard of her atelier in the Kreuzberg district in Berlin. One of the most celebrated artists of her generation, she has made ancient Korean rituals a vital part of her art. Mustafah Abdulaziz for The New York Times

SEOUL — When the South Korean artist Haegue Yang went to see one of her sculptures while it was installed outdoors last year, she was required to strap on a bulletproof vest and a helmet, pass through military checkpoints and leave her phone behind. Finally, just a mile south of North Korea's border in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, she reached her piece, a roughly five-foot-tall block of gray soapstone with a translucent bird perched atop it.

Andrew Russeth
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The New York Times, April 21, 2022
https://cutt.ly/IGQt5Fi

It is a deceptive artwork. From some angles, the stone resembles a sphere, but it is actually a thinner, lenslike shape, and the bird — a pale thrush, 3D-printed in resin — has been separated from its center, though that, too, can be understood from only certain perspectives. "I knew from the beginning that almost nobody would see it in person, and I think it will be more surveilled than visited," Yang said, recalling her trip during a video interview here one April morning. "I wanted to make something that is hard to believe but became a fact," she said.

Alluding to Korea's 1945 partition, the desolate DMZ's unusual natural habitat and its 24-hour monitoring, it is a characteristically intricate Yang production. Now 50, she has become one of the most celebrated artists of her generation by linking disparate histories, biographies and cultures at oblique angles and through unusual materials. In her hands, quotidian items like strings of lights, racks for drying clothes, I.V. stands, and artificial straw have become components of dazzling, uncanny and occasionally obscure metaphor-generating machines.



Yang's sculpture on view in the Korean Demilitarized Zone in the group show, "2021 DMZ Art and Peace Platform." A roughly five-foot-tall block of gray soapstone with a translucent bird perched atop it, it resembles a sphere from some angles. Haegue Yang; Shinwook Kim

In Yang's important 2008 installation, "Yearning Melancholy Red," which just went on view in a group show at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, heaters and fans generate "a tropical wind," said Eungie Joo, the curator of contemporary art at SFMOMA. Meanwhile, spotlights move about scattered Venetian blinds, manipulating people's sightlines and sense of space.

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The piece emerged from Yang's fascination with the novelist Marguerite Duras and her "childhood naïveté towards the colonialism that she lived through" in French Indochina, said Joo, who met Yang in 2004. "I could already see that she was fully formed as an artist," she said, and since then, "it's just a matter of us watching it unfold."

She had carefully considered her participation in the government-sanctioned DMZ show. Putting art there "became a huge trend, but it's also a political project, where art is mobilized," she said. "I'm the kind of art person who doesn't like that hegemonial approach." The attraction of this effort was that South Korea's Ministry of Unification was in charge, and it would permit her to work where a guard post had stood, before being dismantled in a 2018 agreement between the Koreas. "I really wanted to penetrate physically all the way to that spot," she said, explaining that by marking it with a sculpture, "We recover that place for civil society from the military."



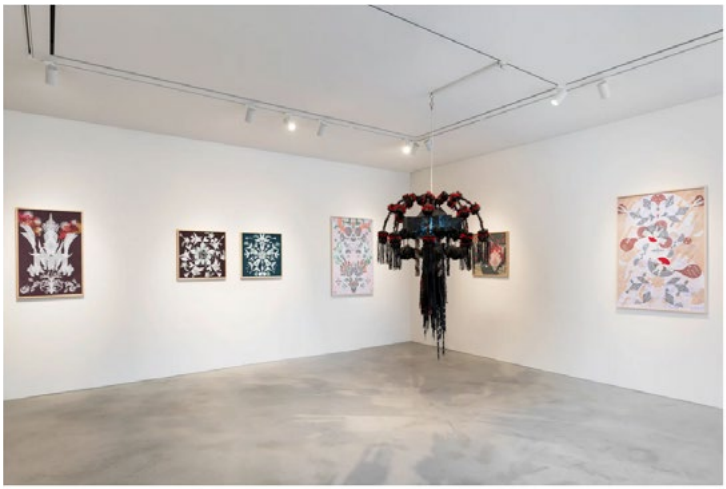
It is a lens-like shape, and the bird is a pale thrush, 3D-printed in resin. Haegue Yang; Shinwook Kim

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The presentation was part of a group show, "2021 DMZ Art & Peace Platform," organized by the art historian Yeon Shim Chung in various parts of the area, including a new venue called Unimaru. Yang could have shown there, she said, "but, you know, that is not an *action*. I don't need another exhibition."

Yang is never short of those. In March, she opened a major survey at the National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen; earlier this month she staged sculptures with a performance element in a three-woman show at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart in Germany, and on April 29, she will unveil, at Berlin's Barbara Wien gallery, beguiling new collages made by cutting hanji, traditional handmade paper. They may augur an intriguing shift in a career that has already seen many of them.

The pandemic helped bring them to fruition. In early 2020, when so much ground to a halt, Yang was in Seoul on the regular trip she makes during break at Frankfurt's Städelschule, where she teaches. For the first time since 1994 — when she left to attend graduate school there, speaking little German — she spent "all four seasons in Korea," she said.



Yang showed collages that she made by cutting hanji, traditional handmade paper, at Kukje Gallery in Seoul last year. New works from the series, which is called "Mesmerizing Mesh," go on view this month at the Barbara Wein gallery in Berlin. They may augur an intriguing shift in her career. Ahn Chunho/Kukje Gallery

Yang had long been interested in rituals in which some Korean shamans decorate ritual sites and interact with spirits. Now she had time to meet practitioners and study their process. Her resulting paper collages, which debuted at the Kukje Gallery in Seoul last year, suggest otherworldly Rorschach tests: angular, kaleidoscopic fields that can appear to harbor ghostly beings.

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They are jaw-droppingly elegant, but dealing with the sturdy paper, have to fold really well, you have to hold it well, and you have to press it," Yang said, enacting how she uses her body to hold it in place so that it can be cut with a knife. Early on, her hands, and those of her assistants, bled.

Shamanism has been marginalized and regarded as "anti-modern" in Korea, Yang said, and she had no relationship with it growing up in Seoul, but it has become a key source for her art. She links it with pagan practices in Europe as "something very vital, something fundamentally decentralized and kind of anti-authoritarian but that has still survived over a long time." Bells, figuring in both shaman rituals in Korea and pagan traditions in Germany's Black Forest, ornament many of her sculptures, which can take the form of soaring vines or wily abstracted bodies.

For her Denmark show, Yang made a bell-adorned sculpture dedicated to Pia Arke (1958—2007), an artist whose work examining her Danish and Kalaaleq (Greenlandic Inuit) identity sometimes involved maps. Nearly seven feet tall, "Sonic Intermediate — Six-Fingered Wayfarer after Arke" (2021) features a globe that incorporates a 17th-century Korean map that is being cradled by six-fingered hands, inspired by a twin-thumbed Inuit mitten Yang saw in the museum's collection.



Yang's "Sonic Intermediate – Six-Fingered Wayfarer after Arke," 2021. Six-fingered hands cradle a globe that incorporates a 17th-century Korean map, at SMK, the National Gallery of Denmark. Haegue Yang/VISDA; Anders Sune Berg

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"As I see it, she really strongly believes in hybridity," Marianne Torp, the show's curator, said, "and she really strongly believes that we have to communicate, that we have to exchange, that we have to consider objects and ideas from different cultures together to proceed and to have a dialogue." Torp sees Yang dealing with "issues of transculturalism and transnationality, of dealing with her own experiences of migrating from Asia to Europe — the diaspora experience."

With unrelenting élan, Yang forges artworks that are strange brews of ever-evolving references. "There is something very, very old — historic — and you feel that, and on the other hand, you feel that it is very contemporary," said Susanne Kaufmann-Valet, who is co-organizing the Stuttgart show, which toasts the centennial of "The Triadic Ballet," a storied Gesamtkunstwerk by the Bauhaus artist and choreographer Oskar Schlemmer. The six tall sculptures that Yang sent draw on the polymathic artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp and the mystic G.I. Gurdjieff. Goofy, charming and vaguely anthropomorphic, they are bedecked with bells and sit on wheels, at once sculptures and props. After alighting in New York at the Museum of Modern Art in 2019, they now respond to the ballet's third act in a black-walled gallery, with the museum's guards moving them in performances.

Yang has made work directly inspired by "The Triadic Ballet" in the past, and she said that one appealing aspect of Schlemmer's avant-garde classic was that many details about it are missing. "It is actually a lost piece, it is an enigma, but it is his most beloved piece. So I thought, OK, there are enough unknown parts that I can project myself."



These 2019 pieces by Yang are part of her installation "Handles," on display as part of "Moved by Schlemmer: 100 Years of Triadic Ballet," at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart in Germany. Bedecked with bells and sitting on wheels, these are at once sculptures and props. Genehmigt durch Haegue Yang and Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

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She also seems to relish mysteries in her own work — and herself. While producing new cut-paper works last month for her Berlin show, Yang realized that she was making "figurative motifs, faces, hand, sea animals," the stuff of "very old-fashioned fairy tale books." Her reaction was, "Oh, my God, these are too concrete! I was freaking out." But then she stopped herself, and thought, "No, you always try not to get trapped under any label." In any case, she said, "I should not know what I am doing."

With the Städelschule holding in-person classes again and border rules easing, Yang has resumed traveling. This year, she made her usual stop in Seoul in March, right on schedule. "I think there was kind of, unconsciously, a deep hope or speculation or hidden desire in my mind and heart about the big chapter of return to Korea," she said. But after her extended pandemic stay, "I think that fantasy kind of revealed, and also died," she said.

"The idea of the self is so very deceiving," Yang went on. "You normally think that you know what you want, but there are so many hidden desires."

One might say something similar of her many-layered art, which is as eye-grabbing as it is elusive, and which shifts in appearance, and meaning, as you look at it from different angles.

"I sometimes say that I *are*," Yang said. "I am not singular. Definitely not."

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The Korea Times

Artist Yang Hae-gue keeps searching for alternative lens to counter 'given' history



Above is an installation view of artist Yang Hae-gue's solo exhibition, "Double Soul," currently held at the SMK, the National Gallery of Denmark. "Sonic Intermediates — Double Soul," the two-part sculpture displayed in front, is inspired by two figures of art history: Sonja Ferlov Mancoba, left, and Pia Arke. / Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

Yang Hae-gue, also stylized as Haegue Yang, is a globetrotting artist whose years-long "nomadic" life spent alternately in Berlin and Seoul, as well as other major cities where she holds her shows, has led to her distinct preoccupation with exile, transnationality and decolonization.

Then, it is perhaps only natural that Yang's works often contemplate on the modern history of marginalization and formation of identities within different regions she visits across the world.

At her first-ever large-scale solo exhibition, titled "Haegue Yang: Double Soul," at the SMK, the National Gallery of Denmark, her latest two-part sculpture on display ("Sonic Intermediates — Double Soul") portrays the tangled relationship between Denmark and Greenland, fraught with history of colonization and forced relocation of the indigenous Inuit population.

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"Sonic Intermediates – Six-Fingered Wayfarer after Arke," which forms one part of the double sculpture, achieves this by focusing on the life and work of artist Pia Arke (1958-2007).



Artist Yang Hae-gue, also stylized as Haegue Yang / Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

Arke was a Greenlandic-Danish artist, who dedicated her works to exploring the asymmetrical power relations between the two countries in the wake of colonization and addressing the limited historical representation of the Arctic Indigenous population.

Born between a Greenlandic Inuit mother and Danish father, she never had a chance to speak her native language growing up and eventually moved to Denmark, where she was trained as an artist. Defining herself as the "mongrel," she focused on tracing and redefining the previously written colonial history of Greenland.

"Although she was faced with the fate of having to study the culture of her motherland with the language of the enemy, so to speak, she never avoided or denied it. She instead made it the critical starting point of her archaeological investigation," Yang said at a press conference held at the Kukje Gallery on Monday.

She came across Arke's notable work, "Legend I-V," made up of collages of family photos placed on scientific maps of Eastern Greenland published in the 1970s. Arke peppered rice, sugar and other goods on these maps as evidence of Danish colonization, thus visualizing how an allegedly "objective" representation of the Arctic island nation, in fact, carries distortion of the indigenous culture and history.

"I felt that Arke's works offer an alternative way to view and map our world," the 51-year-old said. "That was my personal re-interpretation – that her understanding of the world is otherworldly and different from 'the given,' almost like a shaman."

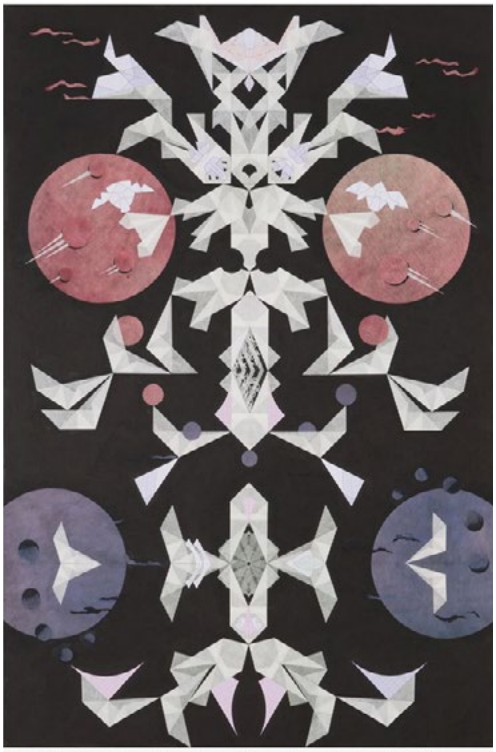
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As a nod to Arke's map of Greenland, Yang's "Sonic Intermediates — Six-Fingered Wayfarer after Arke" is made up of five gigantic hands carrying a globe with two alternative world maps. One depicts a hypothetical scenario of continental drift, where all continents are grouped together into one single landmass. Another is a circular world map created in Korea during the 17th century, called "Cheonhado," or the "complete atlas of all beneath the heavens."

"What I found to be the most interesting feature of Cheonhado was that it reflected both the scientific knowledge of mapping newly introduced from Europe and mythical places appearing in the ancient Chinese book, called Shan Hai Jing ("Classic of Mountains and Seas")," she said. "It calls attention to a worldview that refuses to distinguish clearly between objective reality and imagination."

The artist added that the Danish museum was initially hesitant to touch on the subject of Arke due to the obvious problematic history between the two countries and the possibility of its inclusion backfiring. But she persuaded the institution to refrain from unnecessary self-censorship and instead examine the figure under the proper context as a way to provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the modern history of Denmark.

"Arke's life can be defined as non-mainstream and marginalized. But what's most important is that she never made compromises when faced with those situations," Yang said, noting that the Greenlandic-Danish artist became "a harbor where my works could anchor."



"Planetary Chain Signal Formation — Mesmerizing Mesh #31" (2021) by Yang Hae-gue / Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

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Hanji collage series infused with Korean shamanism

In addition to the two-part sculpture, the artist's longstanding interest in the peripheral as an inevitable shadow behind mainstream cultural narratives has also been reflected in "Mesmerizing Mesh," a hanji (traditional Korean paper made from the bark of paper mulberry trees) collage series inspired by the particular practices found in Korean shamanism.

The series will be unveiled in Europe for the first time this year at the Barbara Wien Gallery in Berlin in April and at the Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris in October.

"As an artist who first launched her career in Europe, it was actually paganism, which remained on the fringes of Western history in opposition to the mainstream Christian tradition and ideology, that initially grabbed my attention," Yang said. "As I studied pagan practices, I came to realize that a similar idea existed in Korea in the form of shamanism."

Among a number of shamanistic practices, she turned her eyes to the Sacred Paper Cutting tradition, which forms a significant part of "gut" (shamanistic ritual) performed in Taean County of South Chungcheong Province and parts of Jeju Island.

For Sacred Paper Cutting, one must fold the paper multiple times and cut out particular patterns to create different shamanistic objects, which are then used to decorate the ritual site either in order to drive out evil spirits or commemorate the soul of the deceased.

"The reason I was so captivated by the usage of paper as a spiritual medium is because it is inherently a very 'humble' and frail material, an object to be burned off after the ritual," she noted. "I found it meaningful that a shaman would imbue such a trivial material with something deeply spiritual."

Yang's "Mesmerizing Mesh" series, which visually reinterprets this practice of infusing the spiritual and the otherworldly into handcrafted items, also introduced her to the power of hanji.

"It's so fragile but at the same, so firm. Hanji gives me plenty of room to experiment with it — whether it be by adding colors or folding it into different layers. [My series] can only get more profound from here."

Other works reflecting her ceaseless artistic exploration will be on view throughout the year at a handful of solo and group shows around the world, including "Shifting the Silence" at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and "Moved by Schlemmer — 100 Years of Triadic Ballet" at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart in Germany, both of which will kick off next month.

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INTERVIEW

Haegue Yang

Korean artist Haegue Yang discusses her installation *Sonic Planetarium – Dripping Lunar Sextet*, her apprehension of large-scale events, the role of mathematics in creativity and the importance of sonic materials in her work.

What was your response when Tarek Abou El Fetouh first approached you?
Haegue Yang: I've always been curious about the Middle East, so it was interesting to participate in Expo 2020's Public Art Programme in Dubai. However, it is definitely crucial to be guided by a curator like Tarek for this kind of project, which sits within the framework of a large-scale event, where artworks could be misplaced. Tarek encouraged me to overcome my fear and scepticism about engaging in public art and to develop *Sonic Planetarium – Dripping Lunar Sextet*.

How did the curatorial process start?
Receiving a sort of *carte blanche* is not always the easiest offer to deal with. Fortunately when Tarek approached me, he already knew what role I could potentially play within his project. He was aware of my engagement with 'sonic materials', the bells, as well as my interest in geometry. The Public Art Programme is based on the historical figure Ibn al-Haytham (c.965–c.1040 CE), a scientist who made significant contributions in mathematics, astronomy, optics and other physical sciences. From previous projects, I was also conscious that modern mathematics was introduced to the world through Arab scholars and thinkers. In his book *The Model of the Motions of Each of the Seven Planets* al-Haytham describes the theory of planetary motion using a geometry-based planetary model. Archaic mathematics endeavoured to calculate planetary orbits, and mathematics was a tool to understand the cosmos. The project took off from there, thinking about how we might articulate this idea in the context of a public art project.

Which particular challenges did you face?
Generally speaking, the huge responsibility of working in the public sphere rather

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Portrait of Hageue Yang, 2016.
Photography by Danh Vo

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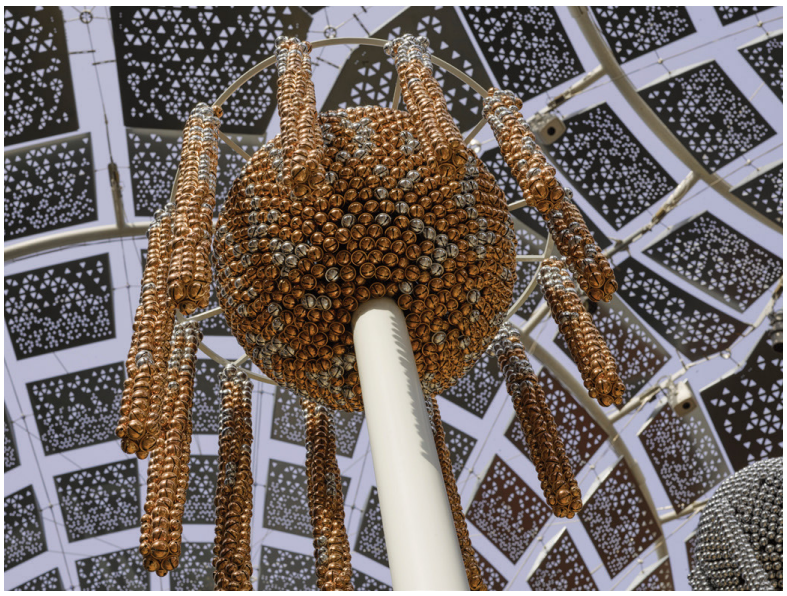
Haegue Yang. *Sonic Planetarium – Dripping Lunar Sextet.* © Haegue Yang 2021. Commissioned by and Collection of Expo 2020 Dubai. Photography by Roman Mensing

scares me, and I had to face this alongside my own difficulty with working on a much larger scale than I normally operate within. However, I found meaning in this art project, which goes beyond national representation within the traditional context of an Expo. I realised that I could be a part of an international project offering an alternative mapping of the world. We might demonstrate how different models of the world coexist simultaneously, right next to the still-existing nation-state representation. I wanted to be part of this inclusive matrix of artistic mapping through my contribution.

Can you tell us more about the bells and materials used in the work?

Bells have featured in my work from early on, but as a partial element of the piece or as substitutes for concrete

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Haegue Yang.
Sonic Planetarium – Dripping Lunar Sextet. Detail.
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Photography by Roman Mensing

messages such as language, information and narrative. However, from around 2013 they became a principal component for my Sonic Sculptures. We are often confronted by artworks that narrate a message, didactics or other information. In the Sonic Sculptures, the acoustics of the bells stand for the process of unlearning what is concrete, and that process is replaced with resonating rattling sounds.

Across civilisations in history, the bell frequently appears as a material symbol for a connection to the immaterial. In the case of Korean shamanism, the metallic bell is a primary tool for shamans' dances and rituals. Lots of different cultures wear items made of bells, either as an anklet or as an instrument to hold in the hand, so that when the body moves the rattling sound of the bells amplifies their physical movement. The alignment between body and sound reminds me of the relationship between the particle and the wave. As the sound of bells does not build harmony or melody, the alignment between movement and sound takes centre stage.

Where does mathematics come in?

I was interested in the notion of movement, whether social, emotional or physical. The evidence of movement in the usage of bells through my Sonic Sculptures was a magical discovery in itself, but the question about the form and shape remained. This inquiry on form was answered by the geometry of a circle in combination with rotational movement, which I conceived as a wall-mounted sculpture of an oval disk with numerous bells attached. When you set it in motion manually, it creates a temporary illusion of a circle, before becoming an oval again as the rotation ceases. The circle is often regarded as a symbol of perfect geometry or of infinity, as well as that of seasonal change and the movement of the moon.

The mesmerising patterns of the Islamic arts depart from a division or are developed through its division by a certain number. Sonic Planetarium – Dripping Lunar Sextet was made by a division of six, so it has six arms and each point of division, including the central axis, is occupied by seven spherical bodies. The conversation between Tarek and I extended into the realm of orbit calculation, and I started to look into various ancient experimental planetary models. This was revealing, as they are often created using simple forms of mechanics that allow you to adapt the abstract models and demonstrate imaginary scenarios.

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ARTASIAPACIFIC

TYPHOONS KNOW NO BORDERS: INTERVIEW WITH HAEGUE YANG, PART 2

BY HG MASTERS



Portrait of **HAEGUE YANG** at "When The Year 2000 Comes," Kukje Gallery, Seoul, 2019. Copyright the artist. Photo by Chunho An. Courtesy Kukje Gallery, Seoul.

Before the pandemic, Haegue Yang had a full roster of international exhibitions planned for 2020, with research and many new works underway. Most of these exhibitions still took place, though she herself was not able to install or visit them. Deputy editor HG Masters caught up with Yang to talk about the process of assembling these exhibitions. The first part of this conversation focused on Yang's 2020 exhibition "O2 and H2O" at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, and "Cone of Concern," at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila. In the second part, Yang reflects on her exhibition for Tate St. Ives, on the southwestern coast of England, as well as her Toronto survey, "Emergence," at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO).

Your exhibition "Strange Attractors" at Tate St. Ives has a strong relationship to your MCAD show, particularly in its connection to weather and the sea, which are prominent features of life in both locations.

What the phrase "strange attractors" describes is this particular dynamic in the air. But "strange attractors" is not only used in meteorological physics but also many other fields because it's part of chaos theory. The other layer is to interpret the idea of "strange attractors" with artistic figures. At Tate St. Ives, the trio of sculptures *Sonic Intermediates – Three Differential Equations* (2020), the centerpiece, is based on the lives of three artists: Barbara Hepworth [1903–1975], Naum Gabo [1890–1977], and Li Yuan-chia [1929–1994].

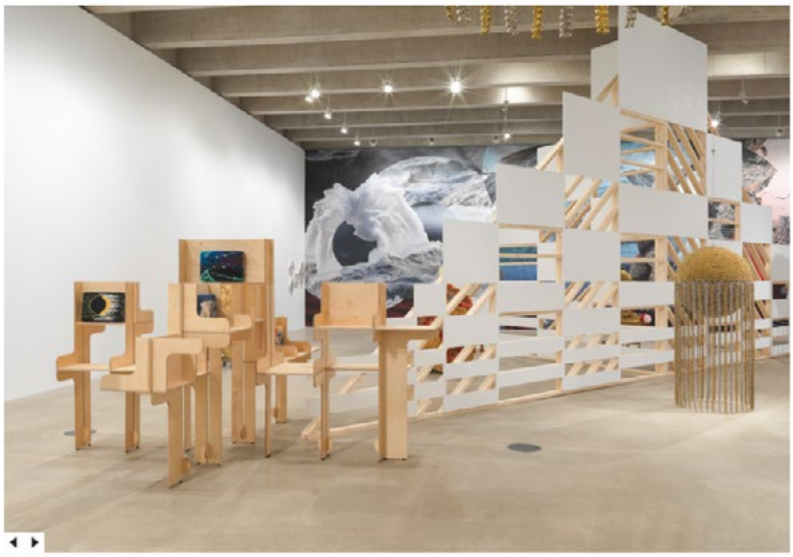


Installation view of **HAEGUE YANG**'s *Sonic Intermediate – Parameters and Unknowns after Hepworth*, 2020, powder-coated steel frame, powder-coated mesh, powder-coated handles, casters, copper plated bells, metal rings, plastic twine, 216 × 125 × 125 cm, at "Strange Attractors," Tate St Ives, 2020–21. Photo by Matt Greenwood. Courtesy Tate and Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin.

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The shapes of the two dividing diagonal walls in the gallery are like the patterns I used in Manila, but here it related to Tate St. Ives's modernist history. During the lifetime of Barbara Hepworth, St. Ives became the center of the modern art world, so whatever you do in St. Ives, it is viewed through the filter of modernism.

Before you enter the show, you see a mini presentation of works by the three artists. We included quite a lot of Li's works: self-portraits, calligraphy, paintings, carpets, and the most famous is the interaction Magnetic Points. I wanted viewers to already be showered with the history when they enter the main gallery. Here the main motif of the wallpaper is water—waves, storms, the dangerous version of water. In old times in St. Ives, there was such a struggle with the water. Alongside the beautiful but rough coast are many chapels. I was very touched by the pew cushions in St. Senara's Church in Zennor [near St. Ives]. Though a majority of them were simple—with a cross or religious motif—on some of them, like this one called Eclipse, on the back of the cushion there is the owner's name and motif, and this is a one-to-one replica of what I found. I called the series *Mundus Cushion – Yielding X* (2020), because it was very cosmic. Some of the others were so lovely and sweet, like the cushions [the parishioners] made with their dog on it after it had died. My first thought about the cushions, in this grand, powerful church, is their modesty and the groundedness that must come from living so close to the rough sea. The sea makes human beings very humble. You have such awe for the beauty of the sky and how the ocean and sky meet in St. Ives. You can walk hours and hours in the fog. Even when you're on land, it feels like you're in the water.



Installation view of **HAEGUE YANG**'s "Strange Attractors," at Tate St Ives, 2020–21. Photo by Matt Greenwood. Courtesy Tate.

Tate St. Ives looks out onto the water. How did you use that in the exhibition?

Gallery 8 is a circular space facing the beach, so you see the ocean, the prehistoric, elements of the rocks, the cliff. For me this was the perfect constellation. I hung two fabrics in front of the windows, and each had different vertical and horizontal lines of weaving. So depending on the angle, you see different colors. Altogether they are greenish-bluish but there is orange and red in them that stands between the gallery and ocean outside. It gives the feeling of being in a boat.

Why were you drawn to these three artists?

During the war Gabo was a refugee artist. The Tate St. Ives has quite a collection of Gabo's work. He and Hepworth were very close but they were rivals too. There were disputes about who did what first, that kind of thing. Li and the other two had never actually met each other but Li, for me, was a kind of immigrant artist. There were real and fictional conversations between the three. It was a filter I wanted to look through to understand and access the British modern and contemporary art scene.

Li is very unique. He is Asian but also special for the way he engaged in local communities, not in Cornwell, but in Cumbria, in the north. Li was such a well-traveled person, from mainland China, to Taiwan, Italy, and was also involved in the Signal group in London and eventually went to the north of England where he worked and died. Anne [Barlow, the director of Tate St. Ives] and I went to the north and met all the people who knew Li from his lifetime. We could really verify his engagement in very rural and poor communities far from the contemporary art scene. He was maybe the most remote figure but he was very engaged in the local community. His LYC Museum took care of kids in the neighborhood through its printing workshops.

Li portrayed himself many times with cloth over his head and with a broom in his hand. There are almost 100 of the hand-colored, black-and-white photographs of himself styled like that. This sculpture with the broom [*Sonic Intermediate – Parameters and Unknowns after Li*, 2020] was made after his self-portraits. And [*Sonic Intermediate – Parameters and Unknowns after Hepworth*] is based on Hepworth's work *Pelagos* (1946)—it's a triple stack of Pelagos. I see these three as building "strange attractors" around art history.

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Installation view of **HAEGUE YANG**'s *Non-Indépliables, nues*, 2010–20, drying racks, light bulbs, cable, zip ties, terminal strips, dimensions variable, at "Strange Attractors," Tate St Ives, 2020–21. Photo by Matt Greenwood. Courtesy the artist and Tate.

There are a lot of common interests between "O2 and H2O" and "Cone of Concern," one of them being elemental materials and forces. How does "Strange Attractors" fit with the other shows?

I'm interested in "déjà vu" elements between the exhibitions. I imagined that some people might see more than one of the exhibitions and ask, "Why is this here?" That's how I built "Strange Attractors" in St. Ives. If you look at Google images for "strange attractors" you will see all that in these fractal movements, there is no regularity, no tangible predictability. But there are patterns in these tendencies that look chaotic—or that we cannot predict reasonably or logically calculate, which is what scientists call "chaos." But even with the chaos one can see patterns revolving around those figures or three points. Yet you need multiple parameters to cause this chaotic pattern, what we call the "strange attractor." It looks completely random now, but in one minute, when you see a lot of data, a kind of pattern emerges. That's the "strange attractors." And I just found the wording so interesting—"attractors."

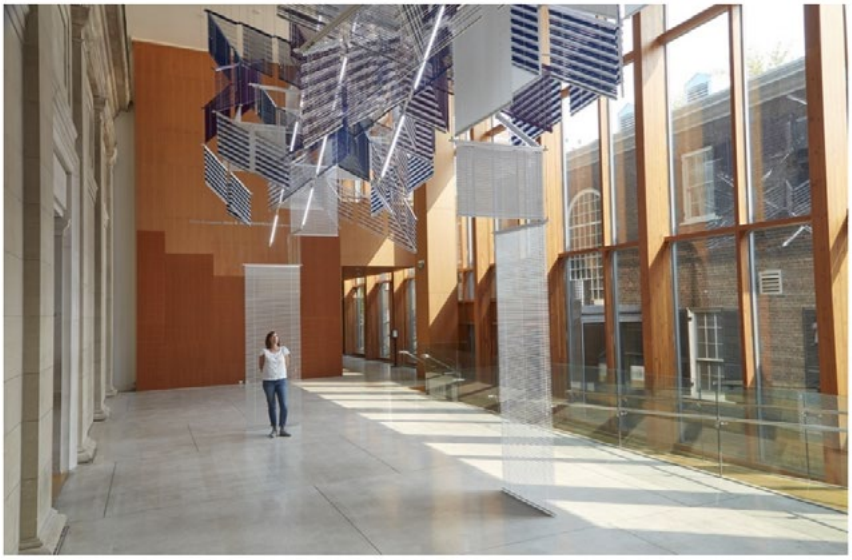


Installation view of **HAEGUE YANG**'s "Strange Attractors," at Tate St Ives, 2020–21. Photo by Matt Greenwood. Courtesy Tate.

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At Tate St. Ives your process of creating an exhibition grew out of your engagement with the collection; you did a similar thing at the AGO. What led you to be interested in the collection?

Yes, while it was interesting to look into their painting collection at the modernist history of Tate St. Ives, I deleted all the painters and picked only certain figures, like Hepworth. So it's a very subjective reading. I did the similar thing with the Art Gallery of Ontario collection and the Canadian modern painters. My reading was primarily of historical artifacts from Inuit and First Nations, in contrast to the landscapes by painters of European descent. These two categories are the backbone of the AGO collection. I studied the Group of Seven, who portrayed the landscape of Canada with the sense that it was *their* landscape. At the same time [their style] was very far from the way First Nations saw nature. For the Inuits even stones are so sacred that museums can't put them under glass because the stone would not be able to breathe! There are so many different approaches to the material and the notion of art, the environment, people and the land. I'm an outsider. It might read as superficial but it was fun messing up the historical or colonial reading.



Installation view of **HAEGUE YANG**'s *Woven Currents – Confluence of Parallels*, 2020, aluminum venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminum hanging structure, steel wire rope, LED tubes, cable. Dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

How did you manifest this "messing up of history" in terms of what you presented at the AGO?

"Emergence" was more or less a survey show. There were over 90 pieces altogether. Of the two new works, one is a wallpaper [*Tectonic Undulations – A Fugue for the Great Wilderness*, 2020] in the south entrance and other is the venetian blind piece [*Woven Currents – Confluence of Parallels*], which came out of my reading of the collection, and relates to the patterns [of the beads] of the Two Row Wampum Treaty [from 1613]. The site that I chose for the blind is where the different buildings that make up the museum actually meet, quoting the different histories and activities of the museum.

Another way to access the exhibition is through the title: "Emergence." It's similar to "Strange Attractors." You can see the word as scientific vocabulary, as a word from neuroscience. It also gives a different interpretation of how the survey can be seen. It's just one particular reading but one particular characteristic that can emerge that was not observed in the self-unit. For instance, if you look at the cells, the blood, or the muscles you don't really see the property of "Haegue Yang." When does the character "Haegue Yang" emerge? You go into each element: the blood, the cells, the tissue. Physically, scientifically, there is no doubt the self consists of these cells. But in the survey we want to see the moment of emergence. I wanted to get rid of all these mechanisms of recognition, and just focus on what emergence can be described by the show. It's an exciting concept.

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FRIEZE

Living in the World of Haegue Yang's Precious Objects

At the Art Gallery of Ontario, a retrospective celebrates the artist's eloquent obsession with material

Rather unceremoniously, Haegue Yang's retrospective, 'Emergence', at the Art Gallery of Ontario greets the visitor with a selection of sculptures made in the last decade: goofy monsters crafted from all manner of everyday things, including bells, straw, food-truck ventilation fans, ski jackets and a towel printed with the outsized image of a US$500 bill. But installed here on an elevated platform, rather than on the floor as they usually are, these anthropomorphic and zoomorphic alien forms – *The Intermediate – Dragon Conglomerate* (2016), a fringy white spheroid à la Nick Cave's 'Soundsuits' (1992–ongoing), is particularly otherworldly – seem too precious. After this static parade of creatures, the exhibition abruptly turns a corner into a gallery dedicated to Yang's art-school days in Frankfurt, jammed with arte povera-esque explorations in materials like pasta and wire.



Haegue Yang, *The Intermediate – Dragon Conglomerate*, 2016, artificial straw, powder-coated steel frame and mesh, casters, and plastic raffia string, 180 × 115 × 115 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; photography: Craig Boyko

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Living in the World of Haegue Yang's Precious Objects
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As with any retrospective, Yang's practice of the past quarter century expands and contracts in the exhibition. At times, the works are compromised by the museum's rigid layout: a series of origami objects, framed on the wall and scattered on the floor (*Origami Dust - Side Effects and By Products* [2004/2012] and *Origami Dust* [2004/2018]) stand alongside two *Sol LeWitt Vehicles* (both 2018) – towering white sculptures comprised of venetian blinds hanging from powder-coated aluminium frames. Other areas have been so compressed that the exhibition verges, at points, on claustrophobic. These curatorial cramming techniques work occasionally, as is the case with *Non-Indépliables* (2006–10), a whimsical field of collapsible drying racks covered in colourful textiles, yarns and hanging lights – objects that look alive albeit freeze-framed in their callisthenics-like poses.



Haegue Yang in collaboration with OK-RM (Oliver Knight and Rory McGrath), *Eclectic Totemic*, 2013, installation view, digital colour print. Courtesy: the artists and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; photography: Craig Boyko

Some awkward layouts and placements unfortunately detract from Yang's grand designs. 'Boxing Ballet' (2013–15), a series of tall figures on casters crafted from brass bells, electric fans and other metal and steel components that reference Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadisches Ballett* (Triadic Ballet, 1922), squeeze into a smaller gallery leaving very little room for viewers when human handlers listlessly activated the works. An artwork of this scale requires the luxury of space; without this, it shrinks from its potential or original intent. On my first visit, I was bumped by *Sonic Figure – Mesmerizing Pirouette* (2013) – a swinging humanoid pendulum made from clusters of brass bells (its head and stylized collar) and an array of white metal rings (its hair) – unaware that my body took up so much space. The crowding of bodies, sentient and otherwise, was amplified by COVID-19 anxiety. By my second visit, the room capacity was limited to six people.

A series of 'Lacquer Paintings' (1999–ongoing) – chipboard *tableaux* made with mesh bags, seeds, hair, insects, dust and other detritus varnished onto their surfaces – ran along walls throughout the exhibition, sometimes feeling out of place. Yet, looking at the work altogether in this way allowed viewers to see Yang weave in and out of ideas – domestic, industrial, thematic – returning to them at various points in her career.

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Haegue Yang, 'Boxing Ballet', 2013–2015, installation view, powder-coated steel frames, mesh, and handles; steel wire rope, casters, brass-plated bells, metal rings, and vinyl tape. Courtesy: the artist and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; photography: Craig Boyko



Haegue Yang, 'Haegue Yang: Emergence', 2020–2021, exhibition view, Art Galley of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy: the artist and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; photography: Craig Boyko

Yang's global appeal is noteworthy, with concurrent shows taking place at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design in Manila, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul and Tate St Ives in Cornwall. In the autumn of 2019, I took a visiting curator from Asia to see the choreographed activations of Yang's sculptures in her exhibition 'Handles' at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The curator dismissed it as 'too Western', missing the point of the artist's idiosyncratic and expansive practice. Yang's *oeuvre* functions like a history of the self through extended material exploration, unconstrained by limiting stereotypes on national, cultural or racial identity. As an encyclopaedic appreciation of humble stuff, an obsession with materiality and endless exploration of ideas cobbled from everywhere and anywhere, 'Emergence' surprises and rewards the viewer with its volume and deep inquiry into the life of things and being in the world.

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Twin

7

Text Francesca Gavin

Haegue Yang in her exhibition When The Year 2000 Comes at Kukje Gallery, Seoul, 2019 © Haegue Yang, courtesy Kukje Gallery, Seoul, photo: Chunho An

The undefinable Haegue Yang explores where sound, weather and subjectivity collide



strange attraction

TWIN MAGAZINE ART

Francesca Gavin
The undefinable Haegue Yang explores where sound, weather and subjectivity collide
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Fluidity on Nonagonal Crystal Matrix – Trustworthy #400
2020
Various security envelopes, graph paper, sandpaper, laser prints, self-adhesive holographic vinyl film on alu-dibond, framed
2 parts, 86.2 x 86.2 cm; 43.2 x 43.2 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Nick Ash

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The Intermediate – Airflow of Pyramid Winnow
2015
Artificial straw, powder-coated steel frame, casters, plastic raffia string, artificial plants
180 x 95 x 95 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin
Photo: Sang Tae Kim

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Mundus Cushion – Yielding X
2020
Clear-coated plywood, adjustable feet, screws, pegs, chip foam, canvas, wool yarn, cotton yarn, jute yarn
182 x 311 x 309 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Installation view of Haegue Yang: Strange Attractors at Tate St Ives, 2020.
Photo: Tate (Matt Greenwood)



Francesca Gavin
The undefinable Haegue Yang explores where sound, weather and subjectivity collide
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Haegue Yang is a very rare artist. She is not defined by aesthetic, medium, genre or even approach. Over the past 20 years she has created installations, sculptures, sound pieces, fabric works, choreographed performances and collages that explore everything from colonial diaspora to climate change, domestic objects to coincidence. Her inventive and experiential approach to art making is filled with ideas and inspiration, philosophy and politics, poetry and history. It is not surprise that she has had major presentations at *MoMA*, *South London Gallery* and the *Centre Pompidou*, been included in *Documenta*, and the *Liverpool*, *Sharjah* and *Gwangju Biennials* (in this case three times). Originally from South Korea, Yang has been based between Seoul and Germany since the 1990s. Speaking about her process and most recent projects, which has included a major solo show at *Tate St Ives*, she comes across as a woman unafraid to take on anything – be that art history, philosophy and even the macrocosm of global weather.

ART ISSUE 24

Francesca Gavin
The undefinable Haegue Yang explores where sound, weather and subjectivity collide
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Where do the ideas for your exhibitions come from? What is the impetus?

Haegue Yang: In working across different locations, I rely on the institution as my first lens or native informant; to obtain initial knowledge about the place and its local and surrounding communities where I am exhibiting. Inquiries about the core of life in the locality and about the bonds and relationships often challenge my previous assumptions or learned knowledge of a place and the people who live there.

When I posed these initial questions to the curators at the Bass Museum in Miami Beach, Florida, USA, I had a speculative idea in my mind about ethnic commonality in migrant societies, as might apply to the Spanish-speaking Latino community there. My institutional partners were not convinced about my assumptions of pan-ethnic readings since they know too well about how each group holds distinct cultures and characteristics. They also murmured about annual hurricanes as a shared and common experience among the population. That really stuck in my head, and I started to research the histories of weather and cyclones. Almost simultaneously, I also received an invitation to make an exhibition at MCAD in Manila in the Philippines. I was aware the region is also impacted by typhoons, because those in South Korea almost always arrive from there. Whole communities bond against the disastrous damage and devastation caused by the weather every year: which is not a social issue, nor a cultural or civilizational legacy.

Answers and responses are as varied as the communities and institutions I work with. The issues, challenges and communal experiences are different in the rural and coastal communities of Cornwall, UK, for example, than in places with different climates, histories and cultures. But, there are also commonalities, and these can span and connect across geography and time. The mythologies, hopes and anxieties that are found in communities today can echo across the globe, and throughout histories and eras.

What interests you about the aesthetic nature of what you're researching here? Looking at the St Ives show, the visuals of chaos, weather and craft all feel very important.

HY: Broadly, as my thoughts grow and develop and references become deeper, the material, visual ideas and methods follow.

Imagine an infographic which predicts the behaviour and movements of a cyclone, for tomorrow and across a week. The whole trajectory appears like a cone — a very common graphic form — and refers to an increasing unpredictability from the point of 'now'. That's what we know, today, through Edward Lorenz's scientific study of Chaos Theory, or the butterfly effect.

At Tate St Ives, my vast wallpaper work *Non-Linear and Non-Periodic Dynamics* responds to the culture, climate and weather that I encountered during my visits to Cornwall. Where land meets ocean, unpredictable and polarised weather often accompanies violent coastline phenomena. In this work, photographic elements of weather and water are interspersed with mirrored motifs which resemble the butterfly effect. Although fixed as an image, the work suggests moments of phenomena that hold multiple potentialities and futures. And you cannot divide communities from the landscapes in which they live. People are shaped by, and shape, the land itself. *Mundus Cushion – Yielding X* references the time and skills of the hand-crafted kneeler cushions found at the church in Zennor, near St Ives, and the hopes and anxieties found in their motifs. Many of these tell the stories of a community bound with the land and sea.

The title of my exhibition at The Bass is In the Cone of Uncertainty, and the show in Manila is *The Cone of Concern*. Both terminologies arise from methodologiesy, such as weather forecasting ors as well as chaos theory, which reflects the human being's desire to predict the future — a very basic human curiosity. An instinctive reaction, like fear, is a feeling in front of the uncertainty — curiosity is another.

What interests you about working with such a breath of methods and unconventional media?

HY: Broadly, as my thoughts grow and develop and references become deeper, the material, visual ideas and methods follow. I do not want to tie or assign myself to one working method, process or practice. I continue to work with venetian blinds and other materials and agonize about them over a long period of time, but I don't want these materials to prescribe my artistic identity. The journey itself is more important, and the feeling of genuine engagement. So in terms of the selection of motifs or the decisions on processes and materiality, I would say half is a cumulative evolution and the remainder develops through research, encounters and experiences. It is both planned and accidental.

Many of your sculptures and installations have a sound element. Even sculptures that are quiet but have the possibility of movement and the activation of sound.

HY: I used to work with sound rather indirectly. Sonic effects occur from motorized venetian blinds, which rise and fall as the slats click open andthen closed, or when a electric fans, or robotic moving lights moves a sound of the motor, or a ventilator.

Other sound effects might appear conscious and intentional but the boundaries of my control over this vary. *Sonic Half Moons*, for example, are hanging sculptures which periodically demonstrate the sweeping and rattling sound-patterns that they are capable of making. Their sounds depend on factors such as the strength and motion of the facilitator activating them, or the atmospheric conditions in which they are shown. In the Liverpool Biennial 2018, I used recordings of rain, storms and wind from the British Sound Library. I was also granted permission to use the recordings of ambient bird sound and camera noises that documented a 2018 meeting between the North and South Korean leaders, held on a public footbridge in the Korean Demilitarized Zone. Their public conversation could not be heard but the background sounds were recorded, and this audio-document was implanted into several recent exhibitions, including at *Handles,* MoMA, New York, USA. The recorded noises operate as a disembodied vessel, carrying notions of political action, event documentation, unheard conversations, and unknowable outcomes.

Have you ever used human voices?

HY: A sound piece with human voice, *Genuine Cloning*, connects three current solo exhibitions: at Tate St Ives, UK; at MCAD in Manila, Philippines; and at MMCA in Seoul, South Korea. The work features a TTS (text-to-speech) clone of my voice, which speaks about oneself as being without a boundary such as the body, while the DMZ birdsong recording was inserted as chapters, dividing sounds between my ASMR voiceover. The voice is fleeting, floating and drifting in the air, yet still able to communicate. The disembodied, artificial voice states itself as an outsider, yet it is close to a human being. It mischievously observes us, and mocks what humans do with the non-human. The voice contemplates the act of naming typhoons and cyclones and describes the Typhoon Committee, consisting of 14 countries who contribute to a pool of names as if it is the most fair thing to do with natural phenomena. Annually, some names are re-circulated, but the names of notorious, damaging or deadly cyclones are retired from the pool. Another name from the same language will replace it, to maintain the same 'fair' proportions. So, the typhoons get strange national flavors to them as well. They used to only call them by female names.

Looking at ideas of nation and identity are intertwined here.

HY: There are many commodified voices on the market, developed for navigating in your car, or even animating your domestic rice cooker or refrigerator. The devices speak in a designated language, in which a gender and age is suggested. For the show at the South London Gallery, I orchestrated over twenty differently accented English voices, from open sources, such as 'English female voice with French accent', 'British female voice with Indian accent', or 'male voice in American English with Japanese accent.' They repeat a sentence, "The source of art is in the life of the people." This motto is inscribed in the wooden marquetry by Walter Crane inlaid into the historical floor of the South London Gallery, which is now hidden and invisible underneath a new floor for its protection. Installed right above the original spot of the motto, I placed speakers with motion sensors and your own body can trigger the chorus of twenty-two synthetic TTS voices chanting the sentence. The voices appear real and compelling, perhaps due to their vocal imperfections. By tracing the motto over and over again with one's own bodily presence, I wanted to honour the artistic engagement in the notion of the people and especially bring institutional legacy and spirit into the present by extending the notion of 'people' to migrant communities and the non-human, as well as the technological. *Forum for Drone Speech – Singapore Simulations* was commissioned by the National Gallery Singapore, which is located in a historical building. This work includes a recording of a social robot 'Nadine' reading out a script I wrote from its non-human perspective, and was supported by the lab at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Maybe you've heard of social robots?

No, I haven't.

HY: Social robots are made to socialize with human beings, and have convincing facial expressions and conversation skills. The NTU's social robot Nadine is a source of national pride and can converse in six international languages, including two of the official languages of the country (Mandarin, English, German, French, Hindi and Japanese). She speaks without an accent and looks European. In fact, her appearance is based on the chief of the lab, who is a female scientist from Switzerland. Adopting Nadine's perspective, the script (speech) contemplates her non-human identity as well as questions of ethnicity and belonging. One can encounter Nadine's approximately 12 minute speech near the historical balcony of the former city hall building, facing Padang Square, where the self-governance of Singapore was announced.

You've been based in Berlin since 2005, and now teach in Frankfurt at the Städelschule. The diasporic experience, that idea of belonging or migration seems to come up in your work, without directly being about identity politics.

HY: I think that I am very direct and frank about my interests in identity politics, but I am elusive, vague or ambiguous to some people, because the identity I keep paying attention to is the identity of absence.

You bring historic and diasporic artists and crafts into your exhibitions, placing yourself in dialogue with art and alternative histories. What do you find interesting about those combinations?

HY: Human experiences are built on what came before. As there are universal phenomena – such as weather and climate, or absence – there are repeated questions, ideas and practices that are reimagined and enacted across multiple times and cultures. We can have an individual or personal response to a universal experience, without realising how connected we are.

The Sonic Intermediates – Three Differential Equations, shown in *Strange Attractors* at Tate St Ives, is a tri-part sculpture representing a speculative encounter between three figures of British Modern Art: Li Yuan-chia, Barbara Hepworth and Naum Gabo. The three artists all journeyed and worked internationally, and their paths are both closely and distantly interconnected through events, geographical locations and art histories. Their legacies still impact and resonate today, and this work brings the three figures into conversation beyond the conventions of era or place.

The 'strange attractors' motif goes back to theories of unpredictability. The movement of a particle — the shift from here to there — we call it the butterfly effect and we cannot predict its path or expect a linear result. But, we are also certain of interrelations. Sometimes, the consequences of the butterfly swing could bring a rainstorm. That's the reality, and for me, peacefully somehow, it's a perfect kind of formula. Imagine the artists' relationships and the effects upon each other, and now ourselves?

Francesca Gavin
The undefinable Haegue Yang explores where sound, weather and subjectivity collide
Twin Magazine, Issue 24, 2021, p.7-16

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Non-Indépliables, nues
2010/2020
Drying racks, light bulbs, cable, zip ties, terminal strips
Left to right:
Non-Indépliable, nue – Crowny Figure in Crossed Leg
183 x 105 x 78 cm
Non-Indépliable, nue – Lifting Up
191 x 140 x 75 cm
Non-Indépliable, nue – Three Hearts Lifts a Sprout
198 x 144 x 62 cm
Non-Indépliable, nue – Three Times on Shoulder
264 x 188 x 62 cm
Non-Indépliable, nue – Sandwich Swing Squeezed Between Buildings
129 x 156 x 108 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Nick Ash

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Sonic Half Moon Type III – Large Light #22
2015
Powder-coated steel frame, powder-coated mesh, steel wire rope, brass and nickel plated bells, metal rings
187 x 84 x 84 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Florian Kleinefenn

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The Intermediate – Tilted Bushy Lumpy Bumpy
2016
Artificial straw, powder-coated steel frame, powder-coated mesh, casters
203 x 120 x 120 cm
Marc and Annette Kemmler Collection
Photo: Studio Haegue Yang

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ARTFORUM



View of "Haegue Yang," 2020–21.

Haegue Yang

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND DESIGN (MCAD), MANILA

Concern is an auspicious word in this climate of global pandemic. "The Cone of Concern," the title of Haegue Yang's recent exhibition, refers to the path a storm might take as it gathers moisture and wind speed. The idea became even more apropos when in the first weeks of the exhibition a storm was predicted to make landfall in Manila. The artist's first solo presentation in the Philippines, the show runs parallel with shows by Yang elsewhere: in Leipzig; New York; Seoul; Singapore; St Ives, UK; and Toronto. The exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design presents newly commissioned site-specific works alongside existing pieces, including collages and prints made of food and household items such as pepper, coffee, tea, and cacao.

Tropical Depression and covering an expanse of the space's nearly ninety-foot-long wall, the 2020 work remixes digital renderings of meteorological instruments, windmills, turbines, cyclones, and debris. Perpendicular to the print are floor-standing wooden panels with cutouts that form the pattern of *binakol* textiles, indigenous Filipino fabrics worn to drive away malevolent spirits. Interspersed throughout the space is *The Randing Intermediates—Inception Quartet*, 2020, a quartet of rattan totems with wings, limbs, and wheels, some with capiz-shell ornaments. Yang created these sculptures in collaboration with local artisans, who used the technique of randing, in which a single reed is woven onto a sculptural frame. Two additional wheeled rattan sculptures, titled *The Randing Intermediates—Underbelly Alienage Duo*, 2020, are more colorful and more squat, with polyps and tendrils growing out of them, and also sport handlebars.

Carlos Quijon Jr.
Haegue Yang - Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), Manila
Artforum, January 2021
https://cutt.ly/Ujl2Ty6

Flimsy flags hover above, and a slight breeze from electric wall fans causes them to flutter, simulating a windy day. The works elicit movement, or at least cue the viewer to move. One hears a barely discernible voice, catching it only intermittently as one comes within the vicinity of two overhead speakers. Walking along the length of the lenticular print, one experiences an illusion that things are moving and that the pattern in the panels extend the wall-bound print. The turbines in the print start rotating; the debris begins to unsettle. The *binakol* panels come to life as a dizzying optical illusion. Although one cannot touch the sculptures, their wheels and handles evoke mobility. Finally, the installations *18.87m²*, 2002/2020, and *21.33m³*, 2000/2020, marking a corner of the space with colored string and chalk, also benefit from movement, since they can easily be missed if seen straight on.

Risk and precarity have lately become idioms of abstraction or aesthetic experimentation in contemporary art. In Yang's exhibition in the Philippines, a place frequently ravaged by storms and super typhoons, the image of the cyclone becomes a conceptual anchor. On the day of my visit to the exhibition, I was almost turned away because of an unexpected maintenance issue: A leak had formed in the museum's wall, threatening to damage the lenticular print—and by a remarkable coincidence that leak had appeared near an abstracted image of a cyclone. This disruption was a good reminder of the vitality and ferocity of the world that the exhibition attempts to discipline into interesting form.

Ultimately, Yang's use of abstractions to create material or topical resonances does not succeed. She fails to place her art in a compelling conversation with the contemporary climate crisis, with all its urgency. In light of the exhibition's emergency maintenance, I couldn't help but wonder how a global exhibition might be more sensitive to the contexts to which it supposedly responds.

Carlos Quijon Jr.
Haegue Yang - Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), Manila
Artforum, January 2021
https://cutt.ly/Ujl2Ty6

Art in America

A CERTAIN UNCERTAINTY: HAEGUE YANG'S SCULPTURE TAKES UNPREDICTABLE PATHS



Swirling ocean waters, a tropical storm veering toward the Florida coast, a tempest's catastrophic impact. Halfway through "In the Cone of Uncertainty," **Haegue Yang**'s current exhibition at the **Bass Museum of Art** in Miami Beach, visitors confront a large mural whose ominous imagery brings new meaning to Yang's long-standing themes of precariousness and unpredictable change.

Since 2011, the Korean-born, Berlin- and Seoul-based artist has utilized an unusual method of conceiving the compact survey exhibitions of her work that have appeared in museums and galleries around the world. Containing pieces from throughout her twenty-five-year career, these exhibitions unfold within a conceptual wrapper furnished by wall-size graphic imagery that Yang creates, frequently (as at the Bass) in collaboration with designer Heesun Seo. The murals are sometimes keyed to Yang's own artworks and visual sources; in other cases, they reflect her research into the history and culture of the locale where the exhibition will take place. The unifying power of these wall graphics permits Yang to juxtapose wildly heterogeneous examples of her work from past and present. These can include her coolly conceptual text pieces; geometrically shaped collage Trustworthies; sculptures fashioned from modest domestic objects; monumental Constructivist-style arrangements of venetian blinds; the quasi-anthropomorphic Intermediates sculptures, created largely from woven artificial straw; and bell-covered, almost figurative sculptures that can be rolled around on casters. When it succeeds, as it does at the Bass, this approach supplies a visual context for her newest artworks and creates a fresh perspective on her older or lesser-known pieces.[1]

Christopher Philips
A Certain Uncertainty: Haegue Yang's Sculpture Takes Unpredictable Paths
Art in America, April 21, 2020
https://cutt.ly/UXIQu1y

In her early meetings with Bass director Silvia Karman Cubiñá and curator Leilani Lynch, Yang sought a theme for her commissioned wall graphic that could speak to all of Miami's inhabitants. She found herself wondering, in particular, how South Florida's residents have coped with the region's increasingly extreme weather conditions. She was struck by the phrase "cone of uncertainty," a meteorological term that has become part of the everyday vocabulary of the region, which refers to the predictably unpredictable path of a fast-moving tropical storm. The site-specific wall graphic that Yang and Seo devised ingeniously mixes the visual idiom of weather infographics—thermal mapping, orange wind-speed bars—with aerial views of Miami neighborhoods seen through queasily rippling layers of atmospheric distortion.

One day after the opening of the exhibition last November, Yang took part in a lively and well-attended public conversation at the Bass with John Morales, a low-key and extremely well-informed TV weatherman. With the serene chirps of recorded birdsong—an element of Yang's exhibition—audible from a nearby gallery, Morales explained the new (to me) practice of "climate gentrification." This involves the abandonment of once sought-after waterfront dwellings by the well-to-do, and their search for safety in lower-income, higher-elevation districts. For her part, Yang speculated that unanticipated new forms of local community might arise from the shared experience of climate disaster. Morales recounted the steady increase in the intensity of tropical storms in the South Florida region, and urged everyone in the audience to be prepared for the inevitable. "There is no stopping the water," he said. When he asked how many in the audience had already stocked supplies of canned food at home for weather emergencies, the hands of about half of those present shot up.

The mention of canned foods was probably not accidental. Only a few steps away, at the top of a wide staircase, alongside which runs Yang and Seo's storm-themed wall graphic, is a gallery filled with examples of Yang's "Can Cosies" (2010–) and "Roll Cosies" (2011–). These long-running series consist of commercial canned foods and paper rolls (in this case jumbo toilet tissue rolls) lovingly covered by the artist's hand-crocheted protective sleeves. Arranged in groups on minimalistic pedestals, the Cosies shared the gallery space with two other quirkily domestic works: low-hung, multipart wall sculptures made from rectangular segments of venetian blinds that are backlit by light bulbs. Their modest dimensions match those of heating units in two Berlin flats where Yang has lived. Conjuring up associations with domestic comfort, these works contrast sharply with menacing images in the wallpaper that covers the room's largest wall: swirling abstractions suggesting violent tropical storm activity and blurry photographic images showing deserted city streets slammed by raging winds and torrential rain.

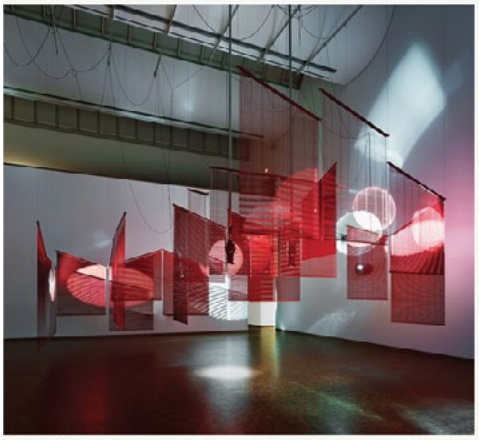


View of Haegue Yang's exhibition "In the Cone of Uncertainty," 2019–20, showing the installation Boxing Ballet, 2013–15.
COURTESY THE BASS, MIAMI BEACH/PHOTO ZACHARY BALBER.

Christopher Philips
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This gallery effectively sets the tone for "In the Cone of Uncertainty," which comprises around twenty of Yang's sculptural groups and installations made between 2008 and 2019. The exhibition includes examples of some of the artist's best-known works—not only her remarkable venetian blind installations, but also her eerily creaturelike light pieces and woven-straw sculptures, as well as *Boxing Ballet* (2013–15), a room installation of semi-figurative objects covered with bells and mounted on rollers or suspended from cables. Less frequently seen works are also on view, such as *Rotating Notes—Dispersed Episodes* (2013), in which Yang's notes on her readings of figures like Jean Genet, Edward Said, and Primo Levi are attached to irregularly shaped, magnetized canvases that viewers or attendants can set to spinning; and examples of the "Carsick Drawings" (2016) that she made on a bumpy road trip near the China-Vietnam border. A recent work, *A Chronology of Conflated Dispersion—Duras and Yun* (2018), is presented as an enormous text panel. In it Yang merges, to surprisingly evocative effect, the biographical timelines of two twentieth-century figures whose creative lives played out against a backdrop of war and political upheaval: French writer and filmmaker Marguerite Duras and Korean modernist composer Isang Yun.

YANG IS AN ARTIST of seemingly boundless productivity—over 1,400 works are detailed in the catalogue of her 2018 exhibition "ETA" at Cologne's Museum Ludwig.[2] So it's surprising today to recall how long it took her to define her trajectory as an artist. Born in 1971 in Seoul, she is the daughter of committed activists in the political movement that sought to end South Korea's repressive military government. After attending the Seoul High School of Art, Music, and Dance, she studied sculpture at Seoul National University and in 1994 moved to Frankfurt, Germany, to enter the graduate program at the highly regarded Städelschule art academy. In Frankfurt she began to familiarize herself with Western art currents previously unknown to her, such as post-conceptualism, institutional critique, and context art. The works she made during her student years and immediately after show her trying her hand at almost everything: Arte Povera-esque plaster sculptures, enigmatic objects, wall arrays of small ink drawings, color photographs of movie-theater curtains, groupings of found furniture parts, minimalist installations of stretched white thread, collages made from imagery in hardware-store catalogues, and abstract lacquer paintings, along with performances and occasional text pieces. I remember seeing her work for the first time at the Manifesta biennial in Frankfurt in 2002 and having no idea what to make of it: a group of unassuming fluorescent tubes illuminating a woefully neglected corner in one of the exhibition's peripheral spaces. Only much later did it become possible to see Yang's early efforts as quietly preparing a distinctive artistic ground that she would cultivate.



Haegue Yang: *Mountains of Encounter*, 2008, aluminum venetian blinds, rope, spotlights, floodlights, and cables, dimensions variable. COURTESY MUSEUM LUDWIG, COLOGNE/PHOTO ŠAŠA FUIS.

Yang moved to Berlin in 2005, after meeting the gallerist and art-book dealer Barbara Wien and exhibiting at her Berlin gallery. Yang's *Storage Piece* brought her serious critical attention that year. Created for Lawrence O'Hana Gallery in London, the installation featured a large grouping of the still-wrapped early works that she could no longer afford to keep in a storage facility. *Storage Piece* brought into public view a seldom-seen part of the art-world's infrastructure at the same time that it highlighted the kind of financial obstacle regularly encountered by many artists.

A year later, in 2006, Yang's work began to attain a distinctive and increasingly challenging character. She began what became an extended series of sometimes humorous, sometimes unsettling light sculptures whose diverse components were mounted on medical

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IV stands. For an exhibition at the Dutch art center BAK in Utrecht, she created the installation *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Version Utrecht* (2006). It was one of her first works to employ a range of sensory devices—fans, infrared heaters, scent emitters—as well as videos. It also marked her first use of venetian blinds, a common household fixture that, she discovered, had almost inexhaustible formal possibilities and could be scaled up to create monumental installations. That same year also saw Yang devise a highly unusual work, *Sadong 30*, in Incheon, a port city about an hour from Seoul. Meant as a way to break out of the confining routine of exhibition-making, *Sadong 30* was a personal initiative in a decidedly noninstitutional setting: the work's title refers to the address of the dilapidated, long-abandoned house where the artist's grandmother had once lived. Informally announced online, the installation attracted a small audience of peripatetic art world professionals and curiosity-filled members of the Korean public at large. What they discovered was a casual arrangement of Yang's light sculptures, origami sculptures, and other works spread throughout an otherwise empty, crumbling, backstreet dwelling. To judge from the written accounts of those who saw it, the installation proved an intense and moving experience.[3]

In the 2010s, Yang commenced various new series and groups of work. The Trustworthies began in 2010 with collages made from the geometric patterns found on the inside of security envelopes. Eventually incorporating Yang's own distorted graph-paper designs, these works grew into dynamic, multipart, wall-filling displays. The Sonic Sculptures appeared in 2013 as quasi-figurative pieces incorporating small bells. The related Sonic Rotating Lines, Ovals, and Geometries use similar bells in wall-mounted pieces that can be rotated by hand. If the works are spun fast enough, their bell-covered surfaces become a blur, making the sound of the bells the predominant impression. The Intermediates appeared around 2015. This sculptural series arose after Yang, during a wintertime trip to Japan, visited a park whose trees were wrapped in a protective sheath of woven straw, a practice she had already seen in Korea. Her new interest the Japanese and Korean "strawcraft" tradition led to the sculptures based on quasi-figurative and sometimes architectural motifs. To insure a degree of separation from actual folk art traditions, Yang consistently employs artificial rather than natural straw in making the Intermediates.

In addition to producing a steady stream of artworks, Yang also makes time for tangential interests. She has strong, unconventional ideas about book design, for example. Aside from her own Grid Bloc artist's books, she regularly collaborates with experimentally inclined book designers on her distinctive exhibition catalogues, often bookworks in their own right. These publications consciously push the boundaries of book size and form, cover materials, paper texture, typography, and page design. In 2010, Yang's long fascination with Duras's writings led her to adapt one of the author's most enigmatic works, *The Malady of Death* (1982), for the stage. The Duras novella centers on a self-absorbed, emotionally withdrawn man and the diffident young woman whom he hires as his nightly sexual companion. He hopes that she can introduce him to the experience of love, but the experiment fails disastrously. Yang, supplying her own twist by staging the Duras text as a monodrama, with a single female performer/reader delivering all the lines, has presented this work in different countries several times during the past decade.



Haegue Yang: *Towel Light Sculpture—Budget Discipline Towards 900 Euro*, 2012, clothing rack, light bulbs, cable, zip ties, nylon cord, and mixed mediums, 755/8 by 345/8 by 331/2 inches.
COURTESY GOETZ COLLECTION, MUNICH.

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AT THE BASS, the visual power and complexity of Yang's work can be gauged in the three imposing installations that dominate the exhibition's second floor. Both the venetian blind works on view, *Yearning Melancholy Red* and *Red Broken Mountainous Labyrinth*, were made in 2008 and incorporate references to the biographies of real historical individuals, an element she has since progressively abandoned.

The Bass presents these pieces in an enormous gallery with twenty-five-foot ceilings. Viewers who experience them from multiple perspectives are likely to fall under the spell of Yang's stagecraft. Between the two installations are set aluminum bleachers that allow visitors to sit and contemplate the slow movement of the works' programmed spotlights. By means of short wall texts, both works evoke individuals caught up in dramatic circumstances, although ultimately Yang does not rely on an explicit narrative, instead setting in motion a highly abstracted visual language.[4]

Yearning Melancholy Red conjures up the languorous heat and humidity of colonial-era French Indochina, where Duras spent her childhood. (Duras evoked this milieu in her 1984 novel *The Lover*.) In the darkened gallery, intense beams of red light shoot out from slowly rotating spotlights, illuminating sets of hanging white blinds arranged in pinwheel fashion. Nearby, a standing floor fan faces a similarly scaled, stand-mounted bank of infrared lamps that emit waves of warm air. Overhead, playing off the geometric patterning of the blinds, a thick tangle of dark electrical wires suggests a jungle canopy. In one corner of the gallery is a drum set that visitors are allowed (though not expressly encouraged) to play. My feeble efforts at some drum rolls, when detected by an audio sensor, interrupted the programmed movement of the spotlights, although the effect proved impossible to control.

Red Broken Mountainous Labyrinth refers to an almost forgotten historical episode: the late 1930s encounter of Kim San (1905–1938), a Korean independence fighter who had joined Mao Zedong's Communist forces in the mountains of northern China, and Helen Foster Snow (1907–1997), a left-wing American journalist. She carried out a series of interviews with Kim in China in 1937, a year before he fell victim to political intrigue and was turned over by his supposed Chinese allies to the Japanese for execution. Under the nom de plume Nym Wales, Snow subsequently published *The Song of Ariran* (1941), a biography that eventually turned Kim into a political icon in South Korea. In Yang's work, the sharply angled hanging of the red venetian blinds suggests an abstracted, jagged mountainscape, and the programmed movement of multiple lights introduce a film-noir mood of furtive searching and discovery. Slowly revolving spotlights send their bright beams through the blinds and across the gallery walls in creeping geometric patterns. Powerful overhead searchlights throw ever-changing circles of illumination on the floor, hinting at a menacing surveillance apparatus.



Haegue Yang: *The Malady of Death—Monodrama with Jeanne Balibar*, 2012, performance, approx. 70 minutes; at the Staatstheater Kassel, Germany.
COURTESY DOCUMENTA (13)/PHOTO KRZYSZTOF ZIELIŃSKI.

In *Boxing Ballet*, Yang—reinterpreting the marionettelike figures designed by Bauhaus artist Oskar Schlemmer for his *Triadic Ballet* of 1922—critically engages the legacy of the twentieth-century European avant-garde. The unabashed theatricality of her installation comes across as an intentional riposte to the modernist "white cube" aesthetic. On the floor at the Bass, a long, spiraling black line suggests a planetary orbit. Although Yang's life-size figures—four standing on casters, two hanging from the ceiling—resemble Schlemmer's in outline, their metal-mesh surfaces are covered with small, gold-colored bells. Pushing or pulling the figures produces the sound of tinkling bells. "The bells are intended to trigger associations with ancient times in the history of civilization, where they were often used for shamanic rituals, calling out the spirits through their sound," Yang explains. "In my recent sculptural development, the bells seem to be endowing a life-giving and communicative quality to robotlike and rigid figures."[5]

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Although some of the *Boxing Ballet* figures sport armlike handles that seem to invite visitors to roll them around, Yang clearly has unresolved feelings about hands-on audience interaction with her work. Having seen the rough treatment given her wall-mounted, bell-covered Sonic Geometries in museums that permitted visitors to spin them, I can understand her hesitation. The Bass stipulated that the *Boxing Ballet* figures could be touched and moved only by museum personnel at regularly scheduled times. (MoMA follows similar guidelines in displaying the six *Sonic Sculptures* that are part of Yang's current "Handles" installation in its second-floor atrium.) When an audience member at the public conversation at the Bass, wondering if the museum was subverting Yang's artistic vision, asked her why visitors could not handle the pieces, the artist said simply, "These works are not my own any longer." She explained that almost all the pieces in the exhibition belong to institutions and private collectors. Elsewhere, Yang has acknowledged that many of her sculptural works extend an implied "offer" to touch or "dance" with them. But she has confessed that she is not unhappy if visitors decide to decline that offer and take a more contemplative stance.[6]

WHEN IT COMES to assessing the larger significance of Yang's work, the artist is not inclined to provide much direction. Although in the course of numerous interviews she has described the twists and turns of her creative process—a mix of concentrated reading, constant self-questioning, and spontaneous associative leaps—she does not think it is her job to speculate about her output's ultimate meaning. An artistic practice, she says, should be "something to experience, not necessarily to understand; and it should rather resist the conventional idea of possessing a common thread or summary in the sense of an understandable message."[7]

As demonstrated by the essays in the recently published *Haegue Yang Anthology 2006–2018*, the artist has had no shortage of provocative critical commentators.[8] One of the most consistently surprising has been **Nicolas Bourriaud**, the French writer and curator who popularized relational aesthetics. Bourriaud insists on Yang's status as one of the most important figures in contemporary sculpture. Her work, he argues, successfully updates the central concern of sculpture, which he identifies as the "profound reflection on the human body in space."[9] Yang, he suggests, has moved beyond the question that preoccupied recent generations of sculptors: the relation between nature and the accumulated cultural debris that now fills the industrialized world. Instead, she intuitively responds to an emerging world that is increasingly occupied by autonomous technological objects: machines that can move independently and communicate with each other, existing almost entirely outside of human consciousness. For Bourriaud, Yang epitomizes a new generation "for whom art represents a point of passage between human and non-human." By placing things and human beings on an equal footing, he maintains, Yang "establishes connections between the entire set of components existing in the world—everything is able to gesture or speak to us if we listen carefully enough."



View of the exhibition "Haegue Yang: Handles," 2019, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.
PHOTO DENIS DOORLY.

It's possible to shrug off such ideas as evidence of the triumph of mysticism or science fiction over criticism. Yang's own statements, though, often convey quite similar thoughts in more subdued language. She acknowledges, for example, her "tendency to personalize not only historical figures and events but also machines and objects that are largely domestic." And she has expressed an odd longing to emulate what she regards as the admirable qualities of household appliances: their "silent presence, supportivness, loyalty, understatement, and substance."[10] With her rich, idiosyncratic visual language still developing rapidly, it will be fascinating to see what direction Yang's art takes next.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

An Artist Whose Muse Is Loneliness

Haegue Yang seeks isolation and then mines the accompanying confusion to reflect on the nature of belonging.



Haegue Yang, photographed in Miami on Dec. 4, 2019. The artist's work looks at themes including memory, loss and cultural identity. Shane Lavalette

WHEN THE ARTIST Haegue Yang shows old artworks in new places, she likes to create a fresh piece that links the exhibition to the local context. For her current presentation at the Bass, a museum in Miami Beach, Yang asked the curators what the region's famously multicultural residents have in common. A particular holiday? A certain food? Not really, they told her. "But isn't there any commonality you can think of?" she asked. The curators looked at one another. "Hurricanes," they said, half joking.

The notion of violent storms as a binding force fascinated the 48-year-old South Korean artist, whose sculptures, room-size environments and videos often address themes of individual and national identity, displacement, isolation and community. After months of meteorological research, Yang produced a new work for the Bass show: "Coordinates of Speculative Solidarity," a chaotic floor-to-ceiling digital collage swirling with storm-tracking symbols, satellite photos of Floridian McMansions, distorted palm trees and sinister gyres that covers vast swathes of the museum like dystopian wallpaper. The show is called "In the Cone of Uncertainty," which in forecasting terms refers to hurricane projection but might as well be a description of Yang's overall philosophy.

Zoë Lescaze
An Artist Whose Muse Is Loneliness
The New York Times Style Magazine, February 26, 2020
https://cutt.ly/vXOqtN2

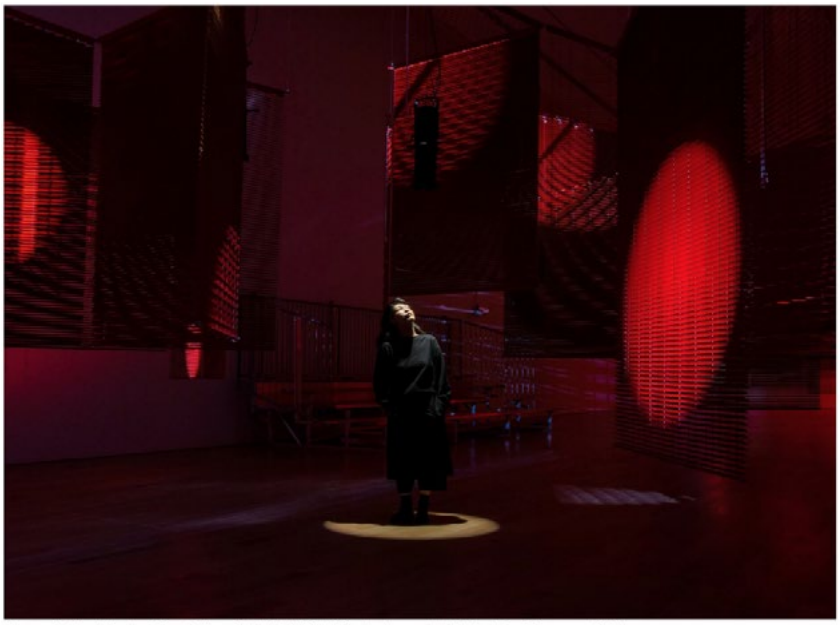
Over the past decade, Yang's work has appeared at some of the most esteemed contemporary art forums in the world including Documenta in Kassel, Germany, and the Venice Biennale — and she recently filled the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art in New York with an ambitious installation blending sculpture and performance. With sensual, melancholy works made from venetian blinds and other domestic objects, Yang has managed to escape the conspicuous identity politics that define much of the contemporary art world. "Every institution now wants to be global and to have a more international and cosmopolitan point of view, but what does that really mean?" asked Stuart Comer, MoMA's chief curator of media and performance, who organized Yang's exhibition. At its worst, it can mean that non-Western artists are tacitly required to represent (or perform) the cultures they came from. Just as the institutions of the 1980s and '90s seized on artists creating work around their socially marginalized identities (female, gay, nonwhite), it sometimes feels as though the current art world showcases people born outside the United States or Europe only on the grounds that their art refers to their heritage. Yang, however — an artist who is not known to spend more than a few days or weeks at a time in any given place — takes a stubbornly elliptical approach, refusing to embody any single nationality or perspective in her work. By embracing ambiguity, Yang has found a way to make art about identity without tying herself to one based on gender, race or geography. "You cannot reduce it to a political one-liner," said Comer.



Yang's 2019 installation in the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which includes mobile sculptures and subtle references to geopolitical events. Haegue Yang, "Handles," 2019, installation view of 6 Sonic Sculptures, sound, wall and floor element, commissioned for The Marron Atrium by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, photo by Dawn Blackman, image courtesy of the artist, Greene Naftali, New York and MoMA

Lately, Yang's success has kept her shuttling between her studios in Seoul and Berlin, a professorship in Frankfurt and her many exhibitions. In November, she made a brief appearance in Graz, Austria, to install work in a group show at the city's contemporary art museum, Kunsthaus Graz. We spoke in an old-fashioned cafe with scuffed parquet floors and a resplendent strudel that Yang discovered a few years ago when she had a solo exhibition at the same institution. She wore a roomy black sweatshirt over a white collared shirt, Yohji Yamamoto skirt-pants and an air of pensive self-reflection. She mentioned her solitude early, and I asked her if she ever gets lonely. Yang, who often communicates in diagrams, reached for a pen and drew two circles on a page. "Here is loneliness," she said, pointing to one of them, "and here is humbleness. If I didn't travel, I imagine I'd feel much more confident, but not so humbled." Yang is single by design, and has no children and few close friends. A writer whose work resonates with Yang, the French novelist Marguerite Duras, once said, "One does not find solitude, one creates it." In fact, now that she's found success, her biggest struggle is maintaining a sense of alienation akin to what she experienced during her student years in Germany. The currents of personal doubt and instability that give her art its enigmatic allure stem from this nomadic condition: "Loneliness," she said, "is the price I pay." To continue producing meditations on belonging, Yang cannot afford to feel at home.

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Yang with "Red Broken Mountainous Labyrinth" (2008), photographed at The Bass Museum of Art on Dec. 4, 2019. Shane Lavalette

YANG'S INTEREST IN contentious borders — of nations, between neighbors and within one's self — stems partly from the series of separations that marked her childhood. She was born in Seoul in 1971, 26 years after the Korean Peninsula had been divided, amid political upheaval that would cleave her family apart. Yang's father, along with 160 colleagues, was fired from his job as a newspaper journalist for protesting government censorship when she was 3. After years of unemployment, he — and hundreds of thousands of other South Koreans — left the family behind in the '80s to find construction work in the Middle East. Decades later, Yang would address his absence in an installation at the 2015 Sharjah Biennial 12, in which she constructed a labyrinth of cinder blocks, turbine vents, steel grates and several rooms, including one where a Korean TV channel played on mute. Her mother, a teacher who became an author and then an activist, raised Yang and her twin brothers alone. Not long after Yang's father's return in 1988, her parents divorced; her mother moved away to join the workers' and trade-union movement soon after. Yang was not politically engaged at the time, but these experiences became intrinsic parts of her work, as did the rapid industrialization of South Korea, which underscores her interest in labor and the effects of mass-produced goods on traditional crafts and the natural world. A single sculpture of hers might include hand-knit textiles, light bulbs, bamboo roots and hamster tunnels, all dangling from a metal garment rack on wheels. Tellingly, Yang, who is never in one place for very long, often makes use of the kinds of household items people only acquire when they have settled somewhere: cans of artichoke hearts, umbrella stands, fridge magnets, towels, tomato paste.

Yang knew she wanted to be an artist early on, and earned her B.F.A. from Seoul National University. She would have stayed, but the school rejected her graduate application, and so, in 1994, she moved to Frankfurt to attend the Städelschule. The experience was harrowing but deeply formative: the genesis of her identity as an outsider. She arrived barely able to speak German, and even the simplest interactions would expose how little she knew about European languages, customs and institutions. The difficulties she experienced, not just linguistically but as an Asian woman in a homogeneous white milieu, made Yang realize that selves are fragile things — they can break in transit. "I have the feeling as if my person, like my use of the German language, were characterized by incompleteness, as if it had a crack," she wrote in an early text piece from 2000 called "Science of Communication — A Study on How to Make Myself Understood." The fractured, confessional document, which she presented on a plain typewritten page taped to a gallery wall, was an exercise in self-exposure. As uncomfortable as this period was, it arguably forms the core of her practice. The embarrassments of not being able to communicate effectively or to pass as a local remain creatively beneficial for Yang: "I believe that out of the alienation one can mobilize the unusual strength to sympathize with the others," she once said. Vulnerability, she often emphasizes, is a state to embrace, not move beyond.

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Yang's 2004 "Storage Piece," a sculptural installation of some of her older artworks that have been wrapped and stacked. Haegue Yang, "Storage Piece," 2004, installation view, wrapped and stacked art works, Euro pallets, dimensions variable, Haubrok Collection, Berlin, photo by Lawrence O'Hana Gallery, image courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

For her thesis show in 1998, Yang presented a large case on metal legs, the kind that might display artifacts or specimens. Inside was a selection of her work to date, including a plaster cast of her hand and an Ikea mug with her name written on it. The piece, "Anthology of Haegue Archives," might be read as ironic: a humorously self-important gesture from an obscure young artist whose career was a long way off from institutional support. But, as Yang has noted, it also might have been "an act of self-empowerment by an immigrant artist" at a moment when gaining international art-world recognition as an Asian woman was practically unheard-of. "It just didn't exist," she said. Role models were scarce. The Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, who is known for performances in which he cooks and serves meals for large audiences, "was the only one who wasn't painted by Orientalism," she said, meaning that he was seen as an artist first, an Asian artist second.

By the time Yang graduated from the Städelschule in 1999, however, the art world's borders and barricades were becoming more porous, and she began to make a modest name for herself. She benefited from the post-Cold War moment itself, which was increasingly interconnected. "We talk about a 'globalized world' as if it was such a shallow, trendy thing, but that merging of cultures had such a big impact on my biography," she said. "Europe became a very different society." Still, Yang remained ambivalent about its effects on a personal level, and her art became a running commentary on her perpetual feelings of displacement. Often these themes manifested in an affection for objects that have lost their usefulness but linger on, out of step with their surroundings. One early work, "Furnitury Objects — Students' Union Satie" (2000) involves a small table she salvaged from the streets of Frankfurt alongside a neglected chair borrowed from a friend and a bench from a theater. Fliers atop the table offered musings about our capacity to overlook banal elements of our surroundings, about belongings as expressions of their owners, approaches to furnishing institutional spaces and ambient compositions by Erik Satie. The dealer Barbara Wien gave Yang her first solo show in Berlin in 2000 and began taking her work to fairs, but the pieces often failed to sell. By 2004, neither Yang nor the gallery could afford to store her previous work or fund the production of new pieces — a dilemma that inadvertently gave rise to her first major installation: "Storage Piece," a pile of crates full of her work, stacked atop shipping pallets. Demoralized and in debt, Yang decided that she had "struggled enough." She scaled back her practice and got a full-time job organizing talks for the Frankfurt Book Fair.

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One of Yang's first big comeback pieces, and the one that launched her career, was 2006's "Sadong 30," which took place in Incheon, a port city in South Korea, inside her late grandmother's old house, abandoned for nearly a decade. It was a ruin, with missing windows, peeling wallpaper and holes in the ceiling. Yang placed broken and intact mirrors, a folding laundry rack, lights, an oscillating fan and clusters of delicate origami stars within the derelict rooms. Visitors could unlock the house with a code and stay there alone for as long as they wanted. It was a work so personal that being there might have felt like an intrusion, but Yang's subtle gestures tapped a universal pain — of loss, of change, of our shared inability to keep things from ending.



Yang's 2006 installation "Sadong 30," in an abandoned home in Incheon, South Korea. Haegue Yang, "Sadong 30," 2006, installation view, light bulbs, strobes, light chains, mirror, origami objects, drying rack, fabric, fan, viewing terrace, cooler, mineral-water bottles, chrysanthemums, garden Balsams, wooden bench, wall clock, fluorescent paint, woodpiles, spray paint, IV stand in an abandoned home in Incheon, South Korea, photo by Daenam Kim, image courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

The piece also began the seemingly endless exhibition tour she's been on ever since. That same year, at the São Paulo Biennial, Yang considered her perpetual displacement in "Series of Vulnerable Arrangements — Blind Room." Black venetian blinds hung from the ceiling surrounding a video trilogy in which Yang muses on being both geographically and existentially lost. A humidifier, an infrared heater, scent emitters and an air-conditioner suffused the space with shifting notes of sensuality, discomfort and nostalgia. The blinds, permeable barriers between the public and private realms, remain one of Yang's signature materials. In her work, they are metaphors for obscurity and exposure, symbols of contact between people and of willful isolation.

AT THE SAME time her stature was rising, Yang was becoming suspicious of the commercial art world and questioning whether participating in it might blunt her intellectual edge. Until a year and a half ago, when she finally moved, her Berlin apartment had nothing in it except a futon on the floor and a lighting system she rigged to switch on and off while she was away. The Mexican artist Damián Ortega, who met Yang at the São Paulo Biennial and became one of her few confidants, recalls going to dinner with Yang and his dealers, the owners of Kurimanzutto gallery, in Mexico City. They went to a "beautiful" ceviche restaurant, but Yang ordered just a single bowl of rice. "It was a very provocative gesture," said Ortega. After the meal, he asked her why she did it.

"Nobody will hold me from the tongue," she told him, meaning that she could not be bought with fancy dinners. "She did these kind of radical things," he said, to engage with the art world on her own terms. "She always creates conditions for her own security or her own confidence."

Today, Yang has made peace with the market. She is represented by galleries on three continents and her works are a ubiquitous presence at art fairs, where her larger pieces sell for six figures. "I keep losing my faith, but then I regain it," she said. The art world might be "vain" and "parasitic," but "at the same time, this is also often a shelter for so many minor voices" with "so much more tolerance that you cannot find anywhere else." This isn't to say she doesn't still come home "depressed" and "disgusted" from some of the obligatory social functions that come with the job, but she has also come to embrace her position within the industry, if somewhat ambivalently. "I want to be critical but at the same [time] I don't want to be someone who keeps complaining," she said.

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Even so, Yang remains a grudging, and sometimes awkward, participant in art world rituals. At the opening of the group exhibition at Kunsthaus Graz, a futuristic space that has more in common architecturally with the Death Star than with the typical art museum, she spent the party perched on a small leather sofa at the end of a long, glassy black bubble of a room overlooking the otherwise quaint Austrian city. Crouched there, as far away as possible from the throng around the bar, she told me that she has always felt irrelevant at openings, ever since her first show: "like my job is done and I should disappear." She gestured at the crowd of people sipping glasses of Gelber Muskateller.



An installation view of "Haegue Yang: In the Cone of Uncertainty," on view at The Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, that includes the artist's "Coordinates of Speculative Solidarity" (2019) and "Can Cosies Triple Jumbo" (2013). Image courtesy of The Bass, photo by Zachery Balber

ON A RECENT afternoon at MoMA, more than 100 people were looking at Yang's installation in the atrium: a menagerie of large abstract sculptures covered in thousands of gleaming, spherical bells. Five performers danced the wheeled pieces around the space in lilting arcs. Trails of black and iridescent vinyl polygons fanned across the floor and up the walls, as though an elaborate origami creature was in the process of unfolding itself. Audio of chirping birds played through speakers overhead.

The hypnotic spectacle was enough to stop tourists, and even regulars ("This is the strangest thing I've ever seen at MoMA," one man said to his companion as the sculptures jingled by). But the installation was also laced with cryptic references to historical figures — the Swiss polymath Sophie Taeuber-Arp, the Eastern-European mystic G.I. Gurdjieff, the exiled Korean composer Isang Yun — and to political events. The chirps were inadvertently captured by reporters while attempting to record a recent private conversation between the leaders of North and South Korea. These elements were illuminated in the nearby wall text, but the bells went unexplained. They allude to Korean shamanism, Yang told me. Shamans in training will go door to door begging for unwanted metal — old spoons and other jetsam — which they melt and recast into rattles. These instruments, said Yang, "train their ears to listen to ghosts." Rattles in hand, the shamans act as messengers between the human and spirit worlds. In a way, Yang is also a kind of translator — her works contain unlikely conversations, between craft, technology, abstraction and narrative, in which one can hear echoes of the past and whispers of the cataclysmic present.

For all her momentum and ambition, Yang sometimes questions whether she is capable of sustaining her current levels of travel and production. "Can I really digest all this and give something back?" she wondered aloud at the cafe in Graz. "I don't know if I can continue doing only this. So far I can maintain it but … what then? I don't know. I don't know." She stared off at the city she would leave in less than a day. Yang is usually moving too fast to think about slowing down.

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Wallpaper*

Haegue Yang's fantastic beasts descend on Tate St Ives

The South Korean artist dazzles Tate St Ives visitors with otherworldly robotic creatures and tributes to 20th century art greats in a show of perfect chaos



Haegue Yang, *Sonic Intermediates - Three Differential Equations*, 2020. Left to right: *Sonic Intermediate - Parameters and Unknowns after Hepworth*; *Sonic Intermediate - Parameters and Unknowns after Gabo*; *Sonic Intermediate - Parameters and Unknowns after Li*. Courtesy of Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin; photography: Nick Ash



Installation view of 'Haegue Yang: Strange Attractors' at Tate St Ives, 2020. *Photography: Tate (Matt Greenwood)*

St Ives, the charming Cornish port town and artist's mecca has just experienced an invasion. This year, it's not the herds of art-hunting, sea-seeking tourists, but creatures of an altogether more otherworldly variety, conceived by Berlin-based South Korean artist Haegue Yang.

In her largest exhibition in the UK to date, 'Strange Attractors', Yang transforms both the new top-lit gallery in the Tate's new building and the sea-facing gallery in the original building into her new world. Through new and recent work in a broad range of media, Yang explores 'geometry, abstraction and the aftermath of modernism' with a heady dose of playfulness and puzzlement.

For Yang, the starting point was mathematics: complex patterns of behaviour in chaotic natural systems. 'The exhibition considers humankind's universal venture to live within chaos and unpredictability,' Yang explains. Here, seemingly disparate ingredients make for a sapid repast – from pagan cultures and their seasonal rituals to historic (and imaginary) encounters with artists such as Li Yuan-chia, and former St Ives star residents Naum Gabo and Barbara Hepworth.

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Haegue Yang's fantastic beasts descend on Tate St Ives
Wallpaper, November 3, 2020
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If Yang's theatrical *Reflected Metallic Cubist Dancing Mask* doesn't leave your jaw a little closer to the floor, *Sonic Intermediates – Three Differential Equations* certainly might. A trio of artificial straw-clad robotic creatures wheel around on casters in what looks like a collision of Star Wars, a pagan ritual and a Haas Brothers' creation. Whether they're dancing, preparing for combat, or engaging in some form of elaborate courtship ritual is anyone's guess.

In this piece, Yang doesn't just allude to her artistic influences, she acknowledges them tête-à-tête, which allows for something of a game of who's who within each work. One takes Hepworth's 'pierced forms' to a new dimension. Another, pivoting on its central axis, seemingly in giddy excitement, is surely a reference to the kinetic tendencies of Naum Gabo (whose Tate St Ives exhibition preceded Yang's). A third creature, slightly stumpier than its comrades, holds a broom, echoing the self-portraits of Li Yuan-chia (the Chinese artist Yang devotes the entire opening of her exhibition to), themes of domesticity or perhaps a timely nod to looming Halloween festivities. 'The artists are finally brought together in this sculptural trio where visitors are invited to view these great artistic minds as an open-ended collective, of which we become part,' says Yang.





Above: Installation view of *Haegue Yang Sonic Intermediate - Parameters and Unknowns after Hepworth* 2020 at Tate St Ives, 2020. *Photography: Tate (Matt Greenwood).* Below: *Non-Indépliables, nues* 2010/2020. *Courtesy of the artist; photography: Nick Ash*

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Non-Indépliables, nues, comprises a series of laundry drying racks (a recurring motif of Yang's) enveloped in winding electrical wiring, adorned with light bulbs and again, on wheels. This is a prime example of Yang's ability to liberate domesticity from its conventional constraints and elevate everyday household objects to new heights.

Yang also takes Cornwall's landscape ancient architectural heritage as muses, namely the church of St Senara. In *Mundus Cushions – Yielding X*, Yang puts her own spin on traditional church kneelers, in a series of eight hand-crafted cushions on a raised plywood pew. Here, Yang extracts traditional religious symbolism and abstracts it into her new blend of sacred and secular. 'During my site-visits to St Ives, I felt so exposed to nature and the local cultural and sacred landscapes of the region. Sentimental, melancholic, even romantic feelings overwhelmed me, which I channelled into the new works within the show,' Yang reflects. *Non-Linear and Non-Periodic Dynamics,* a new wallpaper piece, channels Cornwall's temperamental natural elements. 'The images in the exhibition reference the windy, foggy and wet weather of Cornwall and also the community traditions, beliefs and labour around water.'

The show demonstrates Yang's knack for combining industrially-produced objects and labour-intensive craft with spirit and mystique. This is an exploration of postmodernism, and Tate St Ives' long and deep-rooted relationship with it. It's open-ended: the deeper you probe, the less clear things become, but intrigue is Yang's stock-in-trade. 'Strange Attractors' induces responses as eclectic as its creator's influences: endearment, discomfort and as the title promises, a very strange attraction. ✱

YOUTUBE



Harriet Lloyd-Smith
Haegue Yang's fantastic beasts descend on Tate St Ives
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Installation view of Haegue Yang, *Sonic Half Moon Type III - Large Light #21*, 2014 at Tate St Ives, 2020. *Photography: Tate (Matt Greenwood)*



Installation view of 'Haegue Yang: Strange Attractors' at Tate St Ives, 2020. *Photography: Tate (Matt Greenwood)*



Haegue Yang, *Non-Linear and Non-Periodic Dynamics*, 2020. *Courtesy of the artist*



Installation view of Haegue Yang, *Mundus Cushion - Yielding X*, 2020 at Tate St Ives, 2020. *Photography: Tate (Matt Greenwood)*



Haegue Yang, *The Intermediate - Tilted Bushy Lumpy Bumpy*
2016. *Marc and Annette Kemmler Collection; photography: Studio Haegue Yang*

Harriet Lloyd-Smith
Haegue Yang's fantastic beasts descend on Tate St Ives
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GALERIE
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9

REVUE

CONVERSATIONS & ESTHÉTIQUES

REVUE

PRINTEMPS ÉTÉ 2020

Hamid Amini
Haegue Yang
Revue Magazine, N°9, Spring-Summer 2020



Haegue Yang (1971), *The Intermediate – Rolling Baaby Nosy*, 2016.
Paille artificielle, support en aluminium, grille métallique, plantes et légumes artificiels, roulettes. 184 × 105 × 123 cm
Avec l'aimable autorisation de l'artiste et de kurimanzutto, Mexico.
Photo : Studio Haegue Yang.

Hamid Amini
Haegue Yang
Revue Magazine, N°9, Spring-Summer 2020

HAEGUE YANG

Les pensées irrationnelles doivent être poursuivies de manière absolue et logique

HAEGUE YANG

Hamid Amini

LES PENSÉES IRRATIONNELLES DOIVENT ÊTRE POURSUIVIES DE MANIÈRE ABSOLUE ET LOGIQUE

Compositions géométriques de stores vénitiens en aluminium. Sphères couvertes par des franges de cloches et de poignées. Totems de forme organique en paille et plantes artificielles. Ces sculptures font partie de l'univers développé par Haegue Yang. L'artiste sud-coréenne est installée à Berlin mais vit actuellement dans divers endroits, au gré de ses nombreuses expositions dans le monde entier. Ses travaux abordent les thèmes de la migration, de la mobilité sociale ou de la dichotomie entre espace privé et espace public. Yang bouleverse souvent son vocabulaire d'abstraction visuelle en y introduisant des expériences sensorielles qui font intervenir le mouvement, l'odeur ou la lumière. Avec des références sous-jacentes à l'histoire, l'art, la littérature et la philosophie, sa recherche est dense. Dans cet entretien, Hamid Amini interroge l'artiste sur les procédés et les secrets qui sous-tendent ses créations.

Hamid Amini
Haegue Yang
Revue Magazine, N°9, Spring-Summer 2020

HAMID AMINI
Vous avez écrit :

« LA PLUPART DES GENS NE PEUVENT PAS IMAGINER CE QUE CELA IMPLIQUE D'ÊTRE UN NON OCCIDENTAL DANS LE MONDE DE L'ART CONTEMPORAIN. »

Quels aspects de cette expérience ont représenté le plus grand défi ? Ou bien « défi » n'est-il pas le terme adéquat ?

HAEGUE YANG
Oui, cela a figuré dans une interview réalisée en 2017 dans le cadre de ma recherche artistique autour de plusieurs personnalités, en particulier Isang Yun. Pour préciser ma pensée, je vais me citer : « En Corée, l'art n'a jamais été séparé de la philosophie, de l'érudition ou du pouvoir politique ; l'art contemporain est une obsession moderne. » Je ne suis vraiment pas très attachée à la tradition, cependant, au cours de mon travail dans ce domaine, j'ai pris conscience que j'accorde beaucoup plus de valeur à la pensée holistique qu'à une démarche professionnelle axée sur le genre. Nous avons tendance à considérer l'artiste comme un professionnel, mais cette assimilation ne prend pas en considération le sens profond de la création artistique dans la société, ni même dans la civilisation au sens large.

HAMID AMINI
J'ai beaucoup aimé l'installation Handles *exposée dans l'atrium du nouveau MoMA. C'était formidable de voir des* performers *interagir avec vos sculptures (littéralement les manipuler). Pour moi, cela reflète l'accent mis par le musée sur les récits historiques alternatifs, comme l'art cinétique et l'art tactile des années 60 et 70, quand les artistes cherchaient différents moyens de faire interagir le public avec leurs œuvres. Quelle est pour vous l'importance de l'interaction entre les spectateurs et vos œuvres ?*

HAEGUE YANG
J'ignore ce que le musée avait l'intention d'explorer sur le plan historique. Souvent, je considère d'un regard critique l'interaction en elle-même, car cette interaction directe nous empêche de maintenir la distance nécessaire à la réflexion et à la contemplation.

Cependant, *Handles* a été un projet particulier, impliquant un processus de création très riche aussi bien pour les sculptures que pour les peintures murales comportant des ennéagones. Il m'a permis d'enrichir mon expérience avec des mouvements plus adaptés aux sculptures, ce que je n'aurais pas fait autrement. D'ordinaire, je ne m'intéresse pas à la conception de chorégraphies spécifiques pour les sculptures, même si j'ai déjà créé plusieurs sculptures performatives, par exemple *Dress Vehicles* et *Sol LeWitt Vehicles*. Bien que j'éprouve une certaine réticence à composer des mouvements prédéterminés, observer cette dynamique et comprendre comment animer une sculpture fut une belle expérience.

HAMID AMINI
Quels éléments sensoriels voulez-vous intégrer en particulier ?

HAEGUE YANG
La plupart de mes sculptures mobiles sont sur roulettes. En fait, elles sont devenues un instrument permettant d'« adhérer » au sol, c'est-à-dire qu'elles suivent la régularité et les irrégularités du sol ainsi que nos propres mouvements quand nous les manipulons.

LE CLIQUETIS DES CLOCHES RÉSULTE DE L'ACTION SIMULTANÉE DE CES ÉLÉMENTS, CELLE DU SOL (ENVIRONNEMENT) COMME CELLE DU MOUVEMENT (PERFORMER). AINSI, L'EXPÉRIENCE SENSORIELLE EST UNE AMPLIFICATION COMPLEXE DE L'INTERACTION ENTRE ENVIRONNEMENT ET PERFORMANCE.

HAMID AMINI
Beaucoup de vos pièces, y compris Sallim, *vos monotypes de plantes pressées et votre série* Trustworthy *mettent en scène des objets et des produits domestiques, qui introduisent des enclaves d'intimité dans l'espace d'exposition public. Quelle place occupe la vie domestique dans vos créations ?*

HAEGUE YANG
Cette notion m'a aidée à comprendre l'antithèse des représentations. Souvent, elle correspond à des pensées intériorisées et à des perceptions subjectives, qui ne sont pas visibles en surface. Beaucoup de mes interprétations d'objets, de personnages, d'événements historiques, de phénomènes, tant culturels que naturels, visent à les digérer pour être à même

HAEGUE YANG

Les pensées irrationnelles doivent être poursuivies de manière absolue et logique

de les utiliser dans la conception de mes pièces. Les cosys tricotés sont une autre étape du parcours qui m'a finalement conduite à rendre hommage à la banale boîte de conserve devenue capsule temporelle (un mode de préservation pour des « temps difficiles » inconnus), symbole de la peur et de l'anxiété humaines, qui sont, selon moi, une vulnérabilité. *Sallim* défend cette posture d'une manière psycho-architecturale complexe, en exposant la cuisine comme un lieu où l'on fait bouillir, nettoie et cuit, comme un espace habité par la chaleur, la fumée et les odeurs. Contrairement à d'autres espaces de représentation où le respect de l'autorité et des traditions est primordial, celui-ci est perméable.

HAMID AMINI
Pourriez-vous décrire la manière dont vous travaillez dans votre studio ? Collectez-vous des matériaux ?

HAEGUE YANG
Je collectais beaucoup de matériaux toute seule. Au cours de tous mes déplacements, je me rendais dans des quincailleries, des discounts, des magasins de loisirs créatifs, des merceries, etc. et je les rapportais dans mon studio.

CETTE PÉRIODE COÏNCIDE AVEC LA PRODUCTION PROLIFIQUE DE SCULPTURES LUMINEUSES OÙ LES OBJETS DOMINAIENT EN TANT QUE VOIX NARRATIVES ET EN TANT QUE MATÉRIALISATION DE NOTIONS, TELLES QUE L'ÉTRANGETÉ, LA PAUVRETÉ, LA DÉVALUATION, LA BANALITÉ, TOUT CE QUE JE SOUHAITAIS METTRE EN LUMIÈRE.

Seoul Guts, par exemple, se fait l'écho de toutes les « pauvres voix » exprimant des désirs désespérés : être beaux, sains, propres, etc. C'est une sorte de portrait de gens et de lieux. C'est intense et vital. Il m'est difficile de résumer ou de condamner facilement tous ces désirs qui ne sont pas nécessairement sérieux, mais plutôt triviaux et ordinaires. J'ai également ressenti beaucoup d'empathie à l'égard des gens qui accumulent les accessoires de téléphone, les appareils de massage ridicules et bon marché ou les articles de beauté.

C'ÉTAIT UN PROCESSUS D'INTÉRIORISATION DE LEURS DÉSIRS ET DE LEURS ENVIES SANS AVOIR DE CONTACT DIRECT AVEC EUX.

L'acte d'achat a progressivement disparu, au fur et à mesure que la production de sculptures lumineuses a diminué. Et pour sa dernière phase, j'ai beaucoup cherché des matériaux via Internet, un autre processus d'exploration intéressant, mais très différent d'un déplacement ou de la fréquentation de magasins. Actuellement, j'ai tendance à ne plus accumuler autant de matériaux dans l'atelier.

HAMID AMINI
Réalisez-vous des croquis ?

HAEGUE YANG
Non. J'essaie de ne pas faire de dessins artistiques, car je ne fais pas confiance à mes mains pour dessiner. Je ne fais que des dessins techniques, uniquement destinés à la préparation de mes expositions. La plupart sont préparées à l'aide de dessins en 3D pour compenser ma mauvaise appréhension de l'espace et de l'échelle. De plus, la conception de l'espace est si complexe que la simulation en 3D est une aide précieuse. Cependant, j'essaie de faire en sorte que ces simulations restent simples. La perfection de la simulation est intentionnellement limitée, c'est-à-dire que j'évite un rendu ou de nombreux effets disponibles en 3D. Je cherche principalement à vérifier la forme et l'échelle, la tonalité des couleurs élémentaires, certains points de vue essentiels et la trajectoire des visiteurs.

HAMID AMINI
Ce numéro de Revue *est consacré au minimalisme. Est-ce une notion que vous prenez en compte dans votre travail ? Pouvez-vous expliquer votre relation avec Sol LeWitt, un artiste que vous citez dans la série* Sol LeWitt Upside Down *?*

HAEGUE YANG
Je souhaite citer ici quelques éléments de la pensée de Sol LeWitt :

> PROPOS SUR L'ART CONCEPTUEL
> Publié pour la première fois dans *0-9* (New York), 1969, et *Art-Language* (Angleterre), en mai 1969.

GALERIE
CHANTAL CROUSEL



Haegue Yang (1971), *Sonic Sphere – Diagonally-ornamented Copper and Nickel*, 2015.
Support en acier, grille métallique, roulettes, clochettes chromées, clochettes en nickel, bagues métalliques. 99 × 82 × 83 cm
Photo : Studio Haegue Yang.
Avec l'aimable autorisation de l'artiste et de kurimanzutto, Mexico / New York.

Hamid Amini
Haegue Yang
Revue Magazine, N°9, Spring-Summer 2020

ARTnews

Be There With Bells On! As MoMA Reopens in New York, Haegue Yang Plots Potent Performance-Installation for Spacious Atrium



Installation view of *Haegue Yang: Handles* commissioned by MoMA for the Marron Atrium.

When visitors enter the Museum of Modern Art's atrium, which remains one of the grandest spaces in the newly renovated institution, the more imaginative among them might be struck by the sensation of hanging high above, white-knuckled somewhere in the midst of the 60 feet separating the ceiling and a mysterious arrangement of artworks below. Climbing is not encouraged (or even really possible), but the idea of doing so is integral to *Handles*, a new installation of sculptures and sound made on commission by South Korea–born, Berlin-based artist Haegue Yang.

"Often I don't know how to make the story shorter—it might be a kind of semi-long story," Yang said when asked what connects all the installation's elements, which include handles of a kind used in industrial design, shimmery vinyl patterns on the walls, the sounds of birds and experimental music, and large wheeled sculptures covered with bells. The 48-year-old artist was at MoMA installing a couple weeks ago, with construction sounds all around her but a sense of serenity and focus in the central atrium area that greets museumgoers at the start of their journey.

Organized by Stuart Comer, MoMA's chief curator of media and performance, the installation draws interconnecting lines between aspects of Yang's work as an exploratory sculptor and histories forged and fortified by MoMA itself. Its centerpieces are six large sculptures that can swerve and spin—as they will when activated by performers every afternoon, starting when the museum reopens to the public on October 21—while paying tribute to one of the work's many allusions: the polymathic artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp.

Andy Battaglia
Be There with Bells On! As MoMa Reopens in New York, Haegue Yang Plots otent Performance-Installation for Spacious Atrium
ARTnews, October 10, 2019
https://cutt.ly/kXOd7Qp

"She started her career as a dancer at the first Dada exhibitions in Zurich," Yang said, "and then she was a painter, sculpture, educator, architect, interior designer. Did I forget anything? Weaver—she was also a weaver."

The shapes of the sculptures evoke Taeuber-Arp works like *Coupe Dada* (1916), a wooden totem that suggests various sorts of usefulness while keeping its true purpose a secret. "They're very mysterious and spiritual," Yang said. "They appear a bit religious and feministic somehow, because of the forms and what she embodied." ("They look utilitarian," Comer added, "but they're not.")

Mystery and multivalence are also qualities of another inspiration: George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, an Armenian mystic whose many interests in the early 20th century included elusive states of consciousness and forms of movement meant to conjure them. "He was a figure who had a kind of shapelessness," Yang said. "People would often ask him, 'Who on Earth are you?' And he often answered, 'I'm a teacher of dance.'" (Yang named a 2011 survey of her work at Modern Art Oxford in England "Teacher of Dance.")



Haegue Yang's *Sonic Coupe Copper – Enclosed Unity* from "Handles."
©HAEGUE YANG/COURTESY STUDIO HAEGUE YANG

Gurdjieff will be channeled when the sculptures at MoMA move each day for one hour starting at 4 p.m., as performers take to the space and push two of the works around in a sort of improvised dance. ("They need a lot of space to move," Yang said. "Two is a good amount: they can chase each other, they can cross each other. Three makes for too much limitation of movement.") The paths they follow will have spiritual matters in mind. "Gurdjieff dances are very introverted, but they build community," the artist said. "They're attuned within an environment, abstract but very concrete."

As the sculptures are mobilized, hundreds of bells covering them will sound—but in a subtle manner meant to evoke shamanistic rites. "The first thing people do with bells is shake them, but we use bells in the sculptures as a tracer of what we know from ritualistic ceremonies," Yang said. Shamanism has been deeply embedded in Korea dating back to prehistoric times, and Comer said the connection is crucial. "In almost every reference in this work there's dialogue between a very machine-oriented West and a shamanistic East." Of the soft sound the sculptures make, he added, "It's almost like a shadow of the bells—they're there, but as a quiet echo of very old shamanistic traditions."

Andy Battaglia
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Installation view of *Haegue Yang: Handles* commissioned by MoMA for the Marron Atrium.

Allusions to East and West figure into another reference point: Isang Yun, a Korean composer whose 1968 ensemble work *Images* (for flute, oboe, violin, and cello) will be broadcast in MoMA's atrium every afternoon for 20 minutes near the end of the sculptures' activation. "As a South Korean, you know his name," Yang said of the musician, "but why he is known is because of his biography, having been accused of being a North Korean spy. He's very debated as a figure. I was one of these hundreds of thousands of people in Korea who knew his name, but I was struck by the fact that I didn't know his music."

After being imprisoned and tortured for espionage, Yun lived in Germany later in life and—like another Korea-born artist, Nam June Paik—made his most notable work in the West. "This segregation or separation—or amputation—between his musical life and political life divided into different continents," Yang said. "His musical legacy is bound to the old European continent, but his political reputation is still very much strangled around the Korean peninsula. This segregation I was interested in."

A desire to reconcile such tensions—or at least acknowledge them—is key to *Handles*, which Yang said aspires to be "a kind of mapping of time and places that are normally not neighbors." Such mapping is embodied in sound that will play in the atrium all day long: recordings of birds chirping during a summit between North and South Korea in 2018. (The birdsongs were captured by journalists who tried to record private conversation between leaders but wound up instead with only ambient sounds.)

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But mapping also applies more figuratively—to the act of making connections between disparate interests. "If you look through into the galleries," Comer said of other artwork hanging in the museum nearby, "there's a giant painting by Jack Whitten that's an homage to Édouard Glissant. [Yang's art] is very much a kind of Glissant model of thought: the idea of archipelagos of difference where all these singularities are brought together into a whole that also respects individual difference."



Installation view of *Haegue Yang: Handles* commissioned by MoMA for the Marron Atrium.
DENIS DOORLY

The setting serves up significance too. "One thing I don't think she was conscious of but that I can't help but read," Comer said, "are connections to early shows at MoMA, especially the 'Machine Art' show"—a prescient exhibition that focused on utilitarian industrial objects in 1934. "There are lots of weird echoes with early chapters of modernism and, again, a binary between man and machine that was so present in MoMA's early program. Here we are in a post-industrial moment 90 years later and it feels like there are aspects of [Yang's] work that are incredibly futuristic and forward-looking and then others that are about recuperating previous forms and rethinking them."

One new embodiment of Yang's thinking are the "handles" that figure in the show's title and feature on the sculptures as well as on the walls rising up from the floor. Interspersed among silver vinyl shapes that refract prismatic light depending on a viewer's perspective (another reference to Gurdjieff), red handles on the walls look like climbing aids but cannot quite be reached. Elusiveness is part of the point, Yang said, but more important is what handles have come to represent for her. "Handles can be an enabler, translator, operator. A handle enables something but deletes itself. A handle is never the focus."

Comer called them "a conduit to something else," and that *something else* is what intrigues Yang most. "By deleting itself," she said, "a handle opens up the possibility of connections between things."

Andy Battaglia
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Forbes

Haegue Yang Waxes Poetic About Her Exhibition with Fondazione Furla



Haegue Yang. FONDAZIONE FURLA

Last Friday, Fondazione Furla unveiled "Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow," a new exhibition by Korean artist Haegue Yang at the La Triennale di Milano, one of the biggest design museums in Milan.

Created in 2008 by Furla, the Milan-based accessories manufacturer, Fondazione Furla is meant to showcase the company's relation with the art community (read: a ploy typical of fashion brands, especially Italian ones). In 2017, it presented "Time after Time, Space after Space," which was a showcase of the works of five artists and was part of a new program called Furla Series.

This year, the foundation decided to focus on solely Yang's oeuvre for the second iteration, which is officially called Furla Series #02. Born and raised in Seoul, Korea, she is a highly respected figure in the industry. She splits her time between her home city and Germany, where she's a professor at Städelschule in Frankfurt, her alma mater.

Barry Samaha
Haegue Yang Waxes Poetic About Her Exhibition with Fondazione Furla
Forbes, September 10, 2018
https://cutt.ly/wXDinEG



Haegue Yang's "Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow" at La Triennale di Milano. FONDAZIONE FURLA

According to the *New York Times*, Yang's installations are marked by the way they "ply the border between sculptures fashioned from sundry materials and those made of ready-made objects." Supposedly, she brings the same sensibility to "Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow." The exhibit, which was curated by Bruna Roccasalva, is comprised of three rooms with a number of displays in each. It will be open to the public until November 4th.

Here, Yang waxes poetic about her work and collaboration with Fondazione Furla.

How would you describe your aesthetic? What are you most know for?

Well, I do have many aesthetical faces. I guess that I am known as someone who is difficult to be understood, and I can live with that. Many things in life are difficult to pin down. And I accept and acknowledge that ambiguity, as well as the slipperiness of things. I am someone who is courageous enough to say that something is elusive. I guess that art brings this clarity about elusiveness.

How would you describe the symbiosis between art and commerce?

I don't or can't describe it. I can only react to it. The best solutions are either an active one or a passive one. And I decided to be a bit passive, meaning that I chose to be naive. Yet, I work with great galleries who know how to protect and support me so I can focus on my work. It may sound like a fairytale, but one can achieve it when everyone plays together.

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Haegue Yang's "Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow" at La Triennale di Milano. FONDAZIONE FURLA

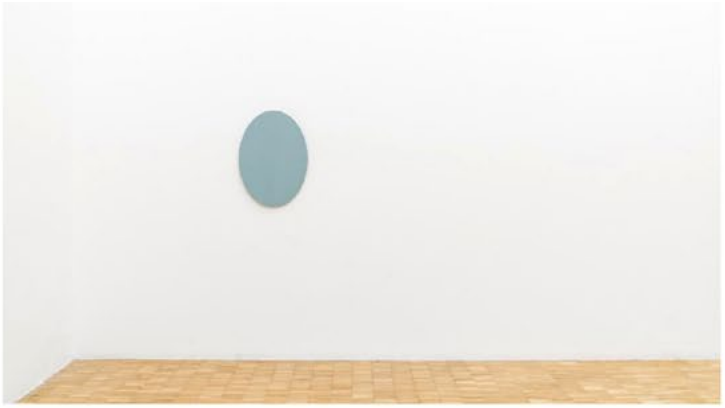
How did this partnership with Fondazione Furla come about?

As usual, I was contacted, meaning someone knocked on my door. And it was Bruna Roccasalva. It is always miraculous to me how people, like Bruna, are able to select someone to work with. For me, selection is not just picking a person. In fact, you must have a vision about art and artists. It is not only about one show. You wish to create significance together through an adventure together. It is a journey, an epic journey. I liked the fact that Bruna and the Furla Foundation were serious enough to contact me early on. Time means a lot today, as we all know. They brought precious and sufficient time to let something develop. It is rare today, but very important.

How do you feel about being a Korean artist showing in Italy?

I always feel much more Korean outside of Korea. In Korea, I always feel more foreign. We all know this situation. Meaning, we are always more native when we are outside of our own border. For this kind of aspect of how our identity gets reversed. I brought on a Korean figure, a late Korean composer, whose name is Isang Yun. There will be two musicians who will play his music at the opening, and his music will be a trigger to perform the sculptures during the exhibition. He has been such a complex figure, both musically and politically. And we will contemplate together his duality in his most demanding, yet compelling music.

Barry Samaha
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Haegue Yang's "Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow" at La Triennale di Milano. FONDAZIONE FURLA

How would you describe you exhibit "Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow" at La Triennale?

It is, first of all, my first institutional solo exhibition in Italy. There are various types of works: old and new, simple and complicated, small and big, etc. This show should show the type of movement I have done so far. And it also shows where I am now. Also, we selected works that are experiential. People might know my work from social media, but this show offers an experience. The exhibition is built with sensorial elements, visually challenging materials through its subtlety or performativity. Maybe I am over interpreting, or maybe I should consider further what it means to be international. My professional life is full of tension, being a foreign figure in each place. Artists always have been an alien in society and I am both female and foreign—double "F". Even if I often don't explicitly express the issues around us, reality is my ground. I hope that this show provides this joyful, contemplative, yet critical dimension of reading our times.

What other projects to you have coming up?

I am working on many projects for the future. But right now I'm focusing on finalizing another ambitious project, which is a bilingual anthology. This volume will include 15 essays and conversations from 2006 to 2018. It will be very important resource about my work. I know that it is not the most popular gesture to provide over 400 pages to read, but we wanted to demonstrate the seriousness of this exhibition at La Triennale. The show is backed by this intellectual material, which can be born only within the serious engagement by the Furla Foundation. There are also some projects coming up in Montpellier, France, Singapore, New York, San Francisco, Seoul, Miami, Toronto, and Manila, just to name a few. I am not trying to impress you. It is such an overwhelming privilege to be active in various places, but I need to be well balanced on my tightrope, as you can imagine.

Barry Samaha
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ARTASIAPACIFIC

COLOGNE

Museum Ludwig

HAEGUE YANG

ETA: 1994–2018



The year 2006 marked a major transition in Haegue Yang's career. For her solo exhibition at Basis voor Actuele Kunst (BAK) in Utrecht, Netherlands, she created her first installation with venetian blinds and indoor appliances such as standing fans, artificial scent emitters, strobe lights, electric heaters and humidifiers. The dynamic, autonomous system of that work, *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements – Version Utrecht* (2006), and others that followed, can be read as a metaphor for a human or a social body whose elements are not always in harmony. Installed with the power cables plainly visible, the work is also extremely literal, as it wryly deconstructs the environmental conditions of indoor spaces (like museums or malls) that are designed to be "neutral" or to disappear. The anthropomorphic mise-en-scène became a hallmark of Yang's practice, as her works disrupt the fixity of the boundaries between objects (in this case, artworks) and humans, natural creatures and cultural creations.

Displacement, itinerancy, familiarity and strangeness (of meaning, of context) are Yang's enduring themes. Inside the self-enclosed nucleus made from the black venetian blinds of this first "vulnerable arrangement" was a trilogy of video essays: *Unfolding Places* (2004), *Restrained Courage* (2004) and *Squandering Negative Spaces* (2006), which are essayistic meditations on travel, solitude and wandering, with impressionistic scenes of cities, some featuring cameo-like appearances of origami figures placed in the street by Yang, with narrative voiceovers. "How many 'places' have I walked the street only 'to familiarize' them? . . . To tame myself in the world of others, or perhaps to assimilate myself. This is a very lonely process of self-colonization," a female voice states in *Squandering Negative Spaces*.

Series of Vulnerable Arrangements – Version Utrecht was the first artwork viewers encountered in Yang's midcareer retrospective, "ETA: 1994–2018," at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, curated by Yilmaz Dziewior with Leonie Radine, on the occasion of her being awarded the 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize. The exhibition featured more than 120 works that spanned—but didn't entirely encapsulate—Yang's diverse and increasingly prodigious output of the past quarter century. "ETA" examines the career of an artist in perpetual itinerancy, from the time of her first move to Germany from Korea in the early 1990s through today, when her exhibition lineup continues to span five continents.

Much of what was suggested about Yang's first decade of artistic output in this roughly chronological survey could be found in a statement affixed to the wall in the main gallery: the text-based work *Science of Communication – a Study on How to Make Myself Understood* (2000), in which she declares, "Translatability and communication are two different issues that I'm somehow interested in concurrently." Framed by Yang's rumination on language in that text was a small, dedicated gallery that looked at her works from the mid-1990s, beginning from when she was studying in Frankfurt. A glass vitrine housed works on paper including her first collages made from hardware-store catalogs and small enigmatic plaster sculptures, some created with dry pasta or metal hardware that resembles pasta, showcasing Yang's early mixture of visual, material and cultural puns. While the show resisted the historicization of Yang's works, it did allude to the contemporaneous zeitgeist of 1990s Frankfurt and to "Kontext Kunst" ("Context Art"), a term coined by curator Peter Wiebel for artists who used the strategies of institutional critique to look at the relationship between art and society.

The culmination and most iconic work of Yang's first decade remains *Storage Piece* (2004), which she initially conceived for an exhibition in London to solve the practical problem about what to do with her early works. She packaged her early pieces in bubble-wrap, or packed them into beer crates and boxes, and displays them on shipping pallets. These early works, like the artist herself, are then free to circulate around the world (the piece has been shown more than ten times, including at Museum Ludwig) while remaining within the packaging—or format—of art itself.

Though it was not represented in "ETA," another project created in 2006 represents Yang's ongoing desire to work outside of large

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Opposite page

HAEGUE YANG
Series of Vulnerable Arrangements - Version Utrecht
2006
Various sensory devices, aluminum venetian blinds, cable, dimensions variable.
Installation view of "Haegue Yang: ETA 1994–2018, 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize" at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2018.
Copyright the artist.
Photo by Saša Fuis.
Courtesy Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

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HAEGUE YANG
"Medicine Man" series: *Hairy Noble, Indiscreet Other World; A Good Hunk of Safety; Out of Cave (from left to right).*
2010
Mixed-media assemblage, dimensions variable.
Installation view of "Haegue Yang: ETA 1994–2018, 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize" at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2018.
Copyright the artist.
Photo by Saša Fuis.
Courtesy Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

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HAEGUE YANG
Mountains of Encounter
2008
Aluminum venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminum hanging structure, steel wire rope, moving spotlights, floodlights and cable, dimensions variable.
Installation view of "Haegue Yang: ETA 1994–2018, 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize" at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2018.
Copyright the artist.
Photo by Saša Fuis.
Courtesy Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

institutions and traditional exhibition spaces. Staged in an abandoned house (formerly her grandparents') in Incheon, South Korea, the "Sadong 30" installation—which marked the beginning of a series called "Non-Indépliables," (2006/2009–10), represented in "ETA" through a series of photographs—featured origami figures and a drying rack covered in fabric and placed in a dilapidated room. Similarly, since 2008, she has staged performances of *The Malady of Death*, featuring women reading passages from Marguerite Duras's novella of the same title, in Minneapolis, Seoul, Kassel, Hong Kong and most recently in a cave in Yucatán, Mexico.

The importance of historical female figures to Yang's practice was alluded to in the installation *5, Rue Saint-Benoît* (2008), a structure of aluminum frames—corresponding in size to various items of furniture, such as the boiler, shower, stove and washing machine in Yang's apartment—on wheels, with colorful blinds, strands of lights and fabric inside. The largest gallery featured *Mountains of Encounter* (2008), an installation of red blinds and a wandering spotlight that refers to the story of Kim San, a Korean communist whose life was recorded by American journalist Nym Wales (Helen Foster Snow). However, other female figures were absent, such as German activist and Green Party co-founder Petra Kelly (the subject of the installation *Lethal Love*, 2008, which was not shown) and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, whose name was not mentioned in relation to the bell-covered *Sonicwear – Scarf with Mitten Ends, Nickel Plated #1* (2013), though the "Sonicwear" series had been developed for a project at Aubette 1928, a cultural hall that Taeuber-Arp had co-designed in Strasbourg.

The catalogue raisonné published for "ETA" gives a sense of how formidable Yang's output has been since 2006. More than 1,270 of the 1,444 listed works date since then—spanning years like 2012, when Yang showed in more than 40 international exhibitions. One also gets a fuller sense of how Yang works in typologies, like the free-standing figures on wheeled armatures dressed in colorful electric cables, light bulbs, weavings, tinsel strands,



wigs and eclectic fabric pieces that began with *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements – Seven Basel Lights* (2007) and then evolved into the more anthropomorphic (sometimes transvestite- or shamanic-looking) "Medicine Man" (2010) and "Warrior Believer Lover" (2011) series, through to the bell-clad "Sonic Dances" (2013–) and the "The Intermediates" (2017), made with artificial straw. (In the exhibition, selections from these interrelated series were shown in a large gallery divided by triangular-shaped half walls.) The show also surveyed the entire history of the "Trustworthies" series (now in the 400s), from the first two iterations, created in 2010, comprising horizontal rows of envelope security paper, to the increasingly more varied patterns of "waves," "refractions," "turbans," and, more recently, hugely elaborate arrangements with gold vinyl shapes adhered to the wall. The earlier "Trustworthies" works were paired in one gallery with "Can Cosies" (2010–), another wildly iterative series of colorful weavings that encase canned food items—objects that move through the world, in Yang's descriptive comparison, like homeless people.

Like most of her post-2006 bodies of work, Yang is constantly reinventing her own series in formal terms. She often begins with a simple structure that evolves over time, in a typological progression of variations that further enhances her works' species-like or creature-like qualities. This sense of her works resembling "beings" (viral, animal or human) remains underdeveloped in the contemporary context of an emergent era of "smart devices" like automated vacuum cleaners, autonomous vehicles and robotic nurses—as machines supplant not only human labor but inspire human emotions of comfort, empathy, curiosity and delight, suggesting a return to the ritualistic properties of objects, and a shift in the anthropocentric hierarchy of human-culture-nature.

HG MASTERS

**Visit our Digital Library at library.artasiapacific.com for more articles on Haegue Yang.*



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ArtAsiaPacific, N°109, July-August 2018, p.98-99

ARTFORUM

PARIS

Haegue Yang

GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL

The themes that Haegue Yang investigates in her recent work—the sixth sense, grafts between the natural and technological realms—are always seen as in process. In the end she leaves her own thoughts regarding them unresolved, as signaled by her recurrent use of the adverb *quasi* in titles of works and shows over the past decade or so: *Quasi-MB*, 2006–2007, and "Quasi-Pagan Minimal" and "Quasi-Pagan Modern" (both 2016). This prefix indicates the incomplete attainment of a condition, a property, or an identity, suggesting that the status of the work is suspended and calling attention to a lack, a structural imperfection. Distributed through the gallery space in "Quasi-ESP," her recent show, works from three series entered into a dialogue, opening up to unexpected associations, for example in variations of the color yellow: faded in the case of straw, amber in the varnish for the wood of the paintings, gilded in the Chromolux paper of the collages.



Haegue Yang, ***The Intermediate—Antenna Basket on Rings***, 2017, artificial straw, powder-coated stainless steel, steel wire, artificial plants, TV antennae, 70 ⅛ × 31 ½ × 31 ½". From the series "The Intermediates," 2015–.

In "The Intermediates," 2015–, a series of sculptures produced in Korea out of artificial straw, Yang explores that material's richness. Fake straw appears identical to real straw, yet it has no odor and does not rot or decay. Used for clothing as well as furnishings, this ersatz substance is at once solid and light, and unites a morphological pliability with a sense of precariousness and the unfinished.

While one might associate straw with rustic craftsmanship, basketry, and furnishings in a country house, it does not carry any specific cultural identity. Here, Yang let her artificial straw assume a range of heterogeneous forms. On the one hand, she used it to compose open and serpentine hanging sculptures that nearly touch the ground, as if performing a dance step. Their sinuosity gives the inorganic material a vital breath, at times vaguely threatening, as in the black *The Intermediate—Tinted Serpent Creature* (all works 2017), which, with its tentacles, seems as if it might at any moment free itself from the hooks anchoring it to the ceiling. In *The Intermediate—Psychic Turbine Vents Ball*, on the other hand, one saw the closed form of the sphere, deprived of any possibility of rotation by the excrescences, such as aluminum ventilators, that cover it. Other pieces with turbine vents had previously been exhibited outdoors; now, vainly awaiting a puff of wind, they hung inertly. Sometimes the extraneous elements were more discreet, such as the television antennae that rise up among artificial plant stalks in *The Intermediate—Antenna Basket on Rings*, placed atop a straw vase in the shape of elephant ears.

The elephant ear is a familiar motif in Yang's work, also seen in stylized form in *Elephant Dancing on Toes* at the entrance to the show. That work is part of the series "Lacquer Paintings," 1994–, based on scientific charts reproduced in botanical manuals and in herbariums. To create these pieces, Yang collected various plants in Berlin and Mexico City, as well as earth, dust, tobacco leaves, even a fly. She then covered these objets trouvés with thin layers of lacquer and allowed them to air-dry, creating a slight but distinct relief. The effect is similar to amber resin and distances these works from the objectivity of botanical illustrations, with their depictions of specimens isolated against a neutral background and arranged in a way that underscores the plants' structures. The stratigraphy in Yang's work restores a temporality absent from scientific information.

In the series "Hardware Store Collages," 1994–, Yang displays arrangements of cutout images of technological prostheses, such as earphones, drones, cameras, ultra-flat screens, surveillance cameras, Segway scooters, and remote controls, executing this meticulously precise decoupage against a gold or silver background and arranging the elements into molecule-like structures. Taken from catalogues for stores selling digital electronics, the cutouts form colorful and playful do-it-yourself projects that reflect Yang's long-standing passion for the Bauhaus. The reference is not to the homonymous art movement, but to the chain of hardware stores of that name, which the artist discovered when she moved from Seoul to Berlin: "The thick store catalogue became my bible, and where I learned German words." Leafing through these pages, Yang chanced upon an organized visual and conceptual universe, accumulations kept under control, a *Warenwelt*, or world of merchandise, not yet threatened by the indeterminacy of the "quasi."

—*Riccardo Venturi*

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

Riccardo Venturi
Haegue Yang - Galerie Chantal Crousel
Artforum, VOL.56, N°109, February 2018, p.199

frieze

MY INFLUENCES

Haegue Yang



Elephants, identity and abstraction:
The winner of the 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize reveals the objects and ideas that have shaped her thinking

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Vast Venetian blinds, exhaust fans on loop and clinking bells recur in Haegue Yang's sculptures, prints and installations: half-living talismans that solder industrial precision with the involvement of craft. Yang admires weaving as much for its tousled inefficiency as for its enjambment of the natural and the human-made. Artificial straw seems folkloric and totemic, but Yang uses it to probe questions of formatting and encoding: the ascription and sharing of values in communities, art historical and cultural traditions, for example; or the fraught fictions of abstraction and identification, east and west, social engagement and hermetic objection.

Always moving between these oppositions, Yang's abstractions are fricative. Yet, they dissemble a third layer, too, which is all the more inscrutable: difficult lives from art history, literature and politics in which the artist is steeped but which are rarely identifiable in the final work. They phrase questions that are all the more relevant today: can we separate the work from the figure? Can they ever be united? Yang's influences are doubly defiant: nearly restrained from legibility, these figures resurface still, like silent ghosts haunting stories untold.

I OFTEN RETURN to the agonizing, yet compelling, lives of artists whose biographies reveal an oscillation between their engagement in art and politics. As I see it, artists relate to their moment as though they are surfing a wave, up and down. Often, their engagement isolates them, though they might only realize this at the crest of the wave. Attention to their political achievements can lead to the simplification and reduction of their art; when their art is understood, their social or political work is obscured or diluted. While my own art does not contain traceable facets of such histories, an unlearning or blurring of these figures and their narratives has emerged over time, crafted and resolved into a dimension of abstraction.

Born in Sancheong, Korea, in 1917, the composer Isang Yun came to West Germany in 1957. Before his relocation, he lived through considerable political and ideological turmoil during the Japanese colonial period (1910–45), which saw the occupation of Korea, and the Korean War (1950–53). During this time, Yun was active in the Korean independence movement of armed resistance. He composed songs in Korean, which was forbidden at the time, leading to his arrest. He also founded and ran an institution for war orphans, contracting tuberculosis in the process.

In Europe, Yun quickly received recognition for his musical accomplishments. Yet here, too, he experienced another period of political turbulence. During the East Berlin Incident of 1967, he was kidnapped by the South Korean secret police and accused of spying for North Korea. His wife was arrested, together with hundreds of other Korean artists and intellectuals. As one of the most prominent among the accused, he was tortured, forced to confess and, following a suicide attempt, ultimately charged with the death penalty. After an international petition called for his release, Yun was freed and obtained German citizenship for his own security. He never returned to his homeland. In fact, Yun was only politically rehabilitated in Korea after his death. Now, public perception of Yun has changed: he is seen as a figure of political suppression and exile, and as a member of the resistance abroad against the country's military dictatorship.

OPPOSITE PAGE
Haegue Yang, *The Intermediate – Running Firecracker*, 2016, artificial straw, steel stand, powder coating, casters, plastic twine, brass-plated bells, copper-plated bells, 1.6 × 1.2 × 1.2 m. Courtesy: Galerie Barbara Wein, Berlin; photograph: Studio Haegue Yang

What remained overlooked was Yun's music. The end of the 1950s was a revolutionary period in contemporary music, with composers such as Béla Bartók, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Igor Stravinsky creating what we now refer to as *neue Musik* (new music). Arnold Schönberg's 12-tone technique gave music a completely new mathematical template for organizing Western musical tonality. Composers working after Schönberg had either to accept, question or reject the 12-tone technique. Having studied this approach, Yun returned to traditional Asian tonalities. Many of his instrumental methods were unusual and extremely difficult to play, such as his use of glissando, vibrato, portamento and pizzicato. Unlike in 12-tone composition, there are melodies in Yun's pieces; the way tones are performed is much more elastic – never a 'pure' G or F, but a sound that swells then recedes over a main note.

Most people cannot imagine what it means to be a non-Westerner working in contemporary art. In Korea, art was traditionally never separated from philosophy, scholarship or governance; 'contemporary art' is a modern affixation. Yun's musical trajectory did not recognize the ideologically drawn borders between North and South or East and West. He was geographically liberated via a detour that progressed toward *neue Musik* then returned to his lost tradition. Drawing on his experience as a Korean partially trained in Japan who migrated West, Yun integrated art and philosophy in a way that enabled him to return to the place from which he had been exiled. I find Yun's unfulfilled return incredibly significant, not just for the political implication of his resistance and the yearning for democracy in South Korea, but also for the possible connection with silences and isolations in the lives of other historical figures.

As a result of the postwar partitioning of both Germany and Korea, interesting political parallels can be drawn between these two seemingly different cultures. It was after travelling to North Korea in 1963, to realize his long-standing desire to see the Gangseo royal tomb murals of the Goguryeo Dynasty (37 BCE–668 CE), that Yun was accused of espionage. Composed during his imprisonment, 'Images for flute, oboe, violin and violoncello' (1968) was based on the paintings of four animals on the tomb walls: the white tiger, blue dragon, black tortoise and





THIS PAGE
East and west wall murals from the main chamber of the Goguryeo Tombs, depicting a blue dragon and white tiger, 5th century CE. Courtesy: Sakyejul Publishing Ltd.

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red phoenix. Each animal represents a cardinal direction, but the funny thing is that they closely resemble one another. I admire Yun's vision and spirit to 'feel' these mystical animals, simultaneously distinctive yet similar, not unlike his divided homelands.

Historical narratives overlap with personal ones in the most unlikely of ways. When the oil crisis hit Korea in 1973, many Koreans who had operated as mercenaries alongside US forces in Vietnam looked to the Middle East and North Africa for construction jobs. The Korean government was eager to accumulate foreign reserves to help rebuild the country after the severe destruction caused by Japanese imperialism and the Korean War, as well as to secure energy supplies. Consequently, many of my generation grew up deprived of any contact with our fathers and uncles, who were working abroad.

This process isolated people from their families and caused entire generations to fall into silence. These social forces were dissimulated: played off as 'personal' decisions. In the regions to which they emigrated, these many husbands, brothers, uncles and fathers left few officially documented traces. But the massive infrastructure resulting from their labours endures: vast ports, factories, highways, hospitals and schools built from concrete. In this way, regions are unexpectedly connected yet remain disconnected, since this history is rarely discussed or disputed.

I remember my own father's absence. He worked as a journalist for the *Dong-a Ilbo* newspaper. When reporters occupied the company in 1974 to publish a newspaper free of censorship, it developed into a movement for freedom of speech, with those involved consequently fired and imprisoned. If you were arrested or imprisoned during the military dictatorship in Korea, you received a 'red line' on your ID, which disadvantaged you and your entire family; you couldn't get a job and no one was allowed to help you. To support our family, my father left for the Middle East and Africa and stayed for a long time. It was only after the June Struggle of 1987 that South Korea turned to democracy, finally electing a president in 1992. When the men came back to Seoul after the Middle Eastern boom, their experiences remained unspoken, as they had after the Vietnam War. Subsequent social developments created a lasting silence: even without systematic suppression, some narratives remain untold or unacknowledged.

When I went to Sharjah in 2015, I met other such fathers and uncles – no longer Korean but Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Filipino and Indian. Most of the workers I spoke to hadn't seen their families for years. Labour migration is a known fact but infrequently discussed. Instead of asking my father why he stayed so long, even after Korea's democratization, I studied the period to gain my own understanding of it. This was my personal effort to honour not only my father's silence but that of all the men who migrated for work. I wanted their silence to reach a dimension of opacity: a right to remain unknown. My project for the Sharjah Biennial, *An Opaque Wind* (2015), was an attempt to render this silence as dignified. This silence and isolation is an act of obscuring and resisting liberal ideas of transparency and mere equivalence.

THIS PAGE
Haegue Yang, *Dry Spell at Villeperdue*, 2016, straw basket, wooden tripod, iron stove, artificial plants, mahogany seedpods, lotus seedpods, suicide tree seeds, pine cones, 225 × 103 × 91 cm. Courtesy: Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin

OPPOSITE PAGE
Haegue Yang, *Lingering Nous*, 2016, installation view at Centre Pompidou, Paris. Courtesy: Centre Pompidou, Paris; photograph: Florian Kleinefenn

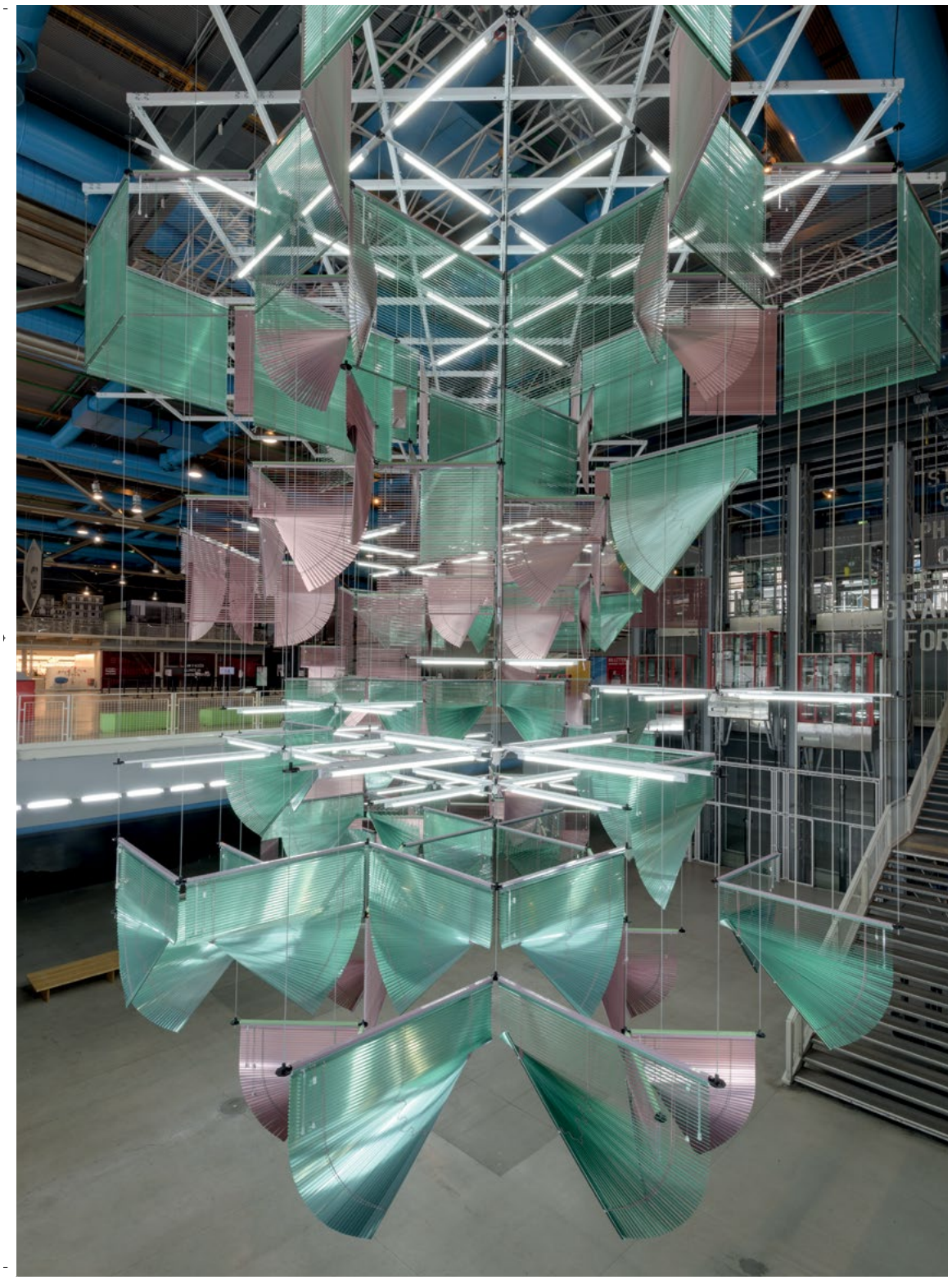


"Most people cannot imagine what it means to be a non-Westerner working in contemporary art."

Abstraction enables me to work through individual and collective narratives across history in a non-linear or elastic manner. Coming across elephants in various sources over time helped me to establish the animal as a metaphor for that abstraction. For instance, according to one theory, the Chinese character for 'elephant' (象) derives from the shape of the animal's bones. Yet, it is probable that few people had ever even seen an elephant, particularly given that their existence in China has been contested. In modern Chinese, when you combine the symbol for 'person' (亻) with that for 'elephant' (像), the resulting character signifies 'image' or 'motif' (像). The symbol seems to describe, then, a human imagining an animal they've never seen. It's come to represent, for me, this discrepancy between seen and unseen.

In his essay 'Shooting an Elephant' (1936), George Orwell describes his days in Burma as a British policeman. It includes a moment of identification in which the narrator, Orwell, feels within him the pain of an elephant he is forced to kill to prove his status in front of a gathered crowd. The hostile power struggle between humans is articulated by the act of killing an animal that has no relationship to the humans concerned. The creature's irrelevance, or independence, represents artistic or individual consciousness. The elephant stands between the colonizer and the colonized: a figure of isolation that must be killed to define the distance between both parties. Yet the Westerner, affected

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ABOVE
Romain Gary, 1953.
Courtesy:
Magnum Photos;
photograph:
Philippe Halsman

by colonial history, reaches the point where they have to kill their own elephant: the defiant autonomy of abstraction.

Though of Lithuanian descent, Romain Gary, who lived roughly contemporaneously to Yun, is the only French writer to have won the Prix Goncourt twice: once under his own name and once under the pseudonym Émile Ajar, which he adopted in 1975. His dual identity was only discovered through the note he left when he committed suicide in 1980. The letter also stated that his death was unrelated to that of his wife, the American actress Jean Seberg, who had been found dead – most likely having also committed suicide – a year before. Toward the end of his life, the whole world was seeking to discover Ajar's true identity while Gary himself was regarded as little more than a has-been.

Gary had served as an aviator in the French Air Force, as secretary of the French Delegation to the UN, and as a diplomat in Los Angeles in 1956, representing France as a consul general. He was an extremely glamorous figure but also an intensely mysterious and lonely man, who seemingly never found his true home. In his semi-autobiographical book, *La Promesse de l'aube* (Promise at Dawn, 1960), Gary describes his upbringing and how his identity as a French writer was the realization of his mother's great ambitions, although her immense love for him was almost suffocating. In addition to appropriating the pseudonym Ajar, he revealed that his childhood surname had not, in fact, been Gary but Kacew, which was his stepfather's name. (He had never known his biological father.) His continual rebellion against the identity given to him confirms, for me, that we view names as a way to evaluate and classify someone in society. Even literature is limited in its grasp of the existential struggle of identity.

Returning to the topic of the elephant: in Gary's *Les Racines du ciel* (The Roots of Heaven, 1956), the book's protagonist, Morel, appears out of the blue in French Equatorial Africa during the civil war: a period of violence in which the indigenous people fought for their independence from the colonizers, yet also fought among themselves. Elephants were killed to raise money for arms. As in Orwell's story, the elephant was a sacrifice for human hostility.

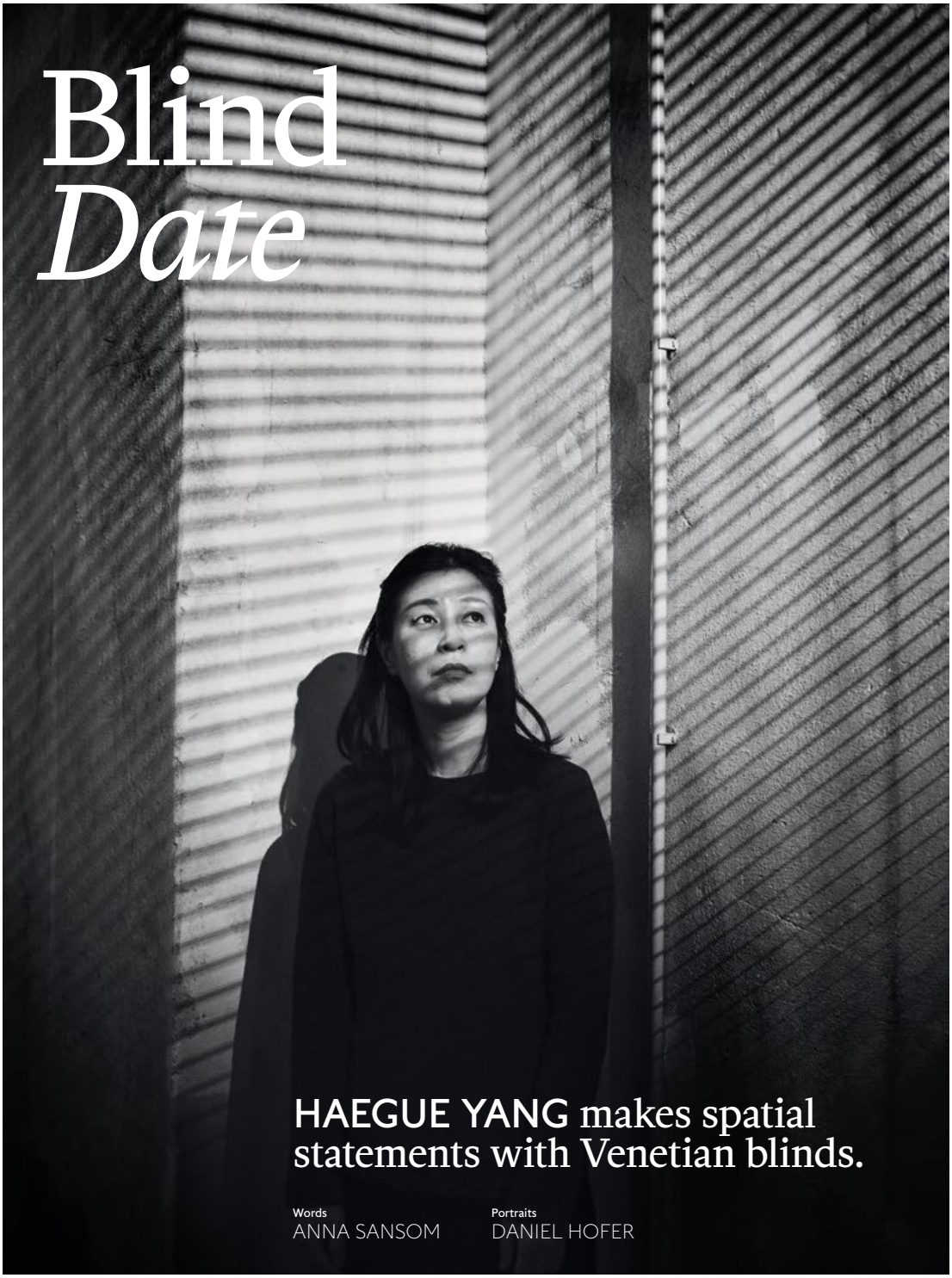
The most poignant episode in the book describes Morel's experience in a concentration camp prior to his arrival in Africa. Exposed to inhumane conditions, a fellow internee proposes that they play a game – imagining a woman is incarcerated with them – in order to stay sane. The fictional presence of the woman encourages them to maintain their dignity and, consequently, to survive. A German officer discovers their ruse, however, and orders the prisoners to imagine killing the woman, thereby ending the game. Morel then devises a new survival strategy, imagining not a woman but a herd of stampeding elephants sweeping away the inhumanity. He vows that, if he survives, he will devote his life to these animals. This reference feeds into the first: elephants may save humans, but humans do not save elephants. In this moment of existential crisis, the action of the imagination becomes amplified. For me, this power of amplification is abstraction. Abstraction is not a reductionist or simplified way of thinking: it's a leap – a leap into a dimension that cannot otherwise be understood ●

"Abstraction is not a reductionist or simplified way of thinking: it's a leap."

HAEGUE YANG *is an artist based in Berlin, Germany, and Seoul, South Korea. She is professor of fine arts at the Städelschule, Frankfurt, Germany, and recipient of the 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize. Her solo exhibitions include: Kunsthaus Graz, Austria (until 2 April); KINDL Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin (until 13 May); kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Mexico; and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, France (both 2017). 'ETA', a comprehensive survey of her work, opens at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany, on 18 April. Yang will participate in the Biennale of Sydney, Australia, in March and the Liverpool Biennial, UK, in July.*

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FRAME



Blind *Date*

HAEGUE YANG makes spatial statements with Venetian blinds.

Words
ANNA SANSOM

Portraits
DANIEL HOFER

Anna Sansom
Blind Date. Haegue Yang makes spatial statements with Venetian blinds
Frame, N°115, March-April 2017, p.77-82



Sol LeWitt Upside Down — Structure with Three Towers, Expanded 23 Times (2015) exemplifies Haegue Yang's fascination with the work of Sol LeWitt, whose *Structure with Three Towers* (1986) she expanded and reverted using layers of blinds.

'I felt liberated by Sol LeWitt's approach to his work'

DIVIDING HER TIME BETWEEN Seoul and Berlin, Haegue Yang makes conceptual work using everyday materials, which she employs in abstract and subtly narrative ways. The results range from compositions featuring envelope security patterns to sculptures built around products like clothing racks. The 45-year-old artist has made sculptures and installations out of Venetian blinds since 2006.

You first used Venetian blinds in *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements — Version Utrecht*, your multisensory installation from 2006. How did your interest in blinds develop? HAEGUE YANG: That installation was a mute sensorial field, composed of devices such as lights and scent emitters that were juxtaposed with a 'voice' from video essays in the same space, which was demarcated by Venetian blinds. The obliqueness of the blinds achieved an ambivalence of being comfortingly separated yet sufficiently connected. This discovery informed my next piece, *Series of Vulnerable Arrangements — Blind Room*, also from 2006. Guided by the blinds, one wandered into a field of light/shadow, wind, heat, humidity and smells, the mind strolling in associative memories. Although the contemplation of senses occurred individually, visitors were bound to one another through a shared experience of fragmentation and separation.

How has using Venetian blinds helped you to think about space and architectural volume? My 2008 installation, *Mountains of Encounter*, marked the first shift from narration to abstraction. The spiral layout of vibrant red Venetian blinds sloping at different angles portrayed the mountainous landscape of Yan'an, China, where Korean underground revolutionary Kim San had an unlikely encounter with American journalist Helen Foster Snow in the 1930s, leading to her biography about him. The hypnotizing choreography of four moving lights sharply cut the blinds' surface, while white circles and two strong floodlights in the spiral's centre dimmed and brightened. As lights and blinds intensely confronted each other, heroic and universal qualities of this encounter penetrated across history. »

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Fred Dott, courtesy of Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin

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'*Mountains of Encounter* (2008) marked the first shift from narration to abstraction,' says Haegue Yang of her installation – a spiral of vibrant red Venetian blinds – for international group exhibition Wessen Geschichte [Whose (His)Story], held at the Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany.

'The obliqueness of blinds can achieve an ambivalence of being comfortingly separated yet sufficiently connected'

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South Korean artist Haegue Yang is known for using mundane objects in her installations, such as the Venetian blinds that have been a recurring motif in her work since 2006.

'Viewers remain blind to the concrete narrative, which is my goal in achieving abstraction'

Your installations seem to be inspired by figures from literature, their politics and passions. How do Venetian blinds enable you to develop an abstract narrative? One example is *Lethal Love* from 2008, which lingered on the intense companionship and tragic end in the story of Petra Kelly, founding member of the German Green Party, and Gert Bastian, former German general and peace-movement hero. [In 1992, Bastian apparently shot Kelly dead in her sleep before killing himself.] The installation activated an experimental template to explore their narrative, using materials suggestive of what happened, such as gunmetal-coloured Venetian blinds, smells of wildflowers and gunpowder, and an extreme reflection of blinding light. The viewer, however, remained more or less blind to the concrete narrative, which is my goal in achieving abstraction. For me, abstraction gives value to narratives that appear within and around us without constituting its own limits.

How important is it that visitors understand the meaning behind the piece? It's not very important – more of an option than an obligation for the viewer. Although I don't want to give up learning about historical figures, the work and the audience should be free from my eagerness to dive into those stories. I'd rather invite the audience to enter a visual and spatial field that has a somewhat abstruse articulation than one that produces an obvious meaning.

Other pieces reference 20th-century art, such as Sol LeWitt's geometric white structures. What triggered this aspect of your work? I felt liberated by Sol LeWitt's approach to works such as his modular structures and by his statement: 'Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.' The primary translation mechanism of my piece from 2015, *Sol LeWitt Upside Down – Structure with Three Towers, Expanded 23 Times*, is an expansion and inversion of LeWitt's 1986 *Structure with Three Towers*. The work becomes progressively opaque as the layers of blinds accumulate, while the shallow areas maintain their transparency.

How does playing with transparency and opacity relate to Korea's modern history? Experiencing modern Korean history, with its long and brutal military dictatorship – a dominance of state-led economic development and the sacrifice of freedom of speech and democratic values – made me conscious of the authoritarian abuse of power. I wish not only to remember but to render official history in a subjective way, so that it doesn't become knowledge to be learned.

You often choose what have been called 'indescribable, uncategorizable colours', such as the iridescent green and pink in *Lingering Nous*, exhibited at the Centre Pompidou in 2016. What are your criteria for choosing colours? Each colour in *Lingering Nous* (*Frame* 113, p. 148) relates to a specific angle defined by my own octagonal connector system and echoes the primary colour scheme of the Centre Pompidou's building services, such as ventilation and electricity.

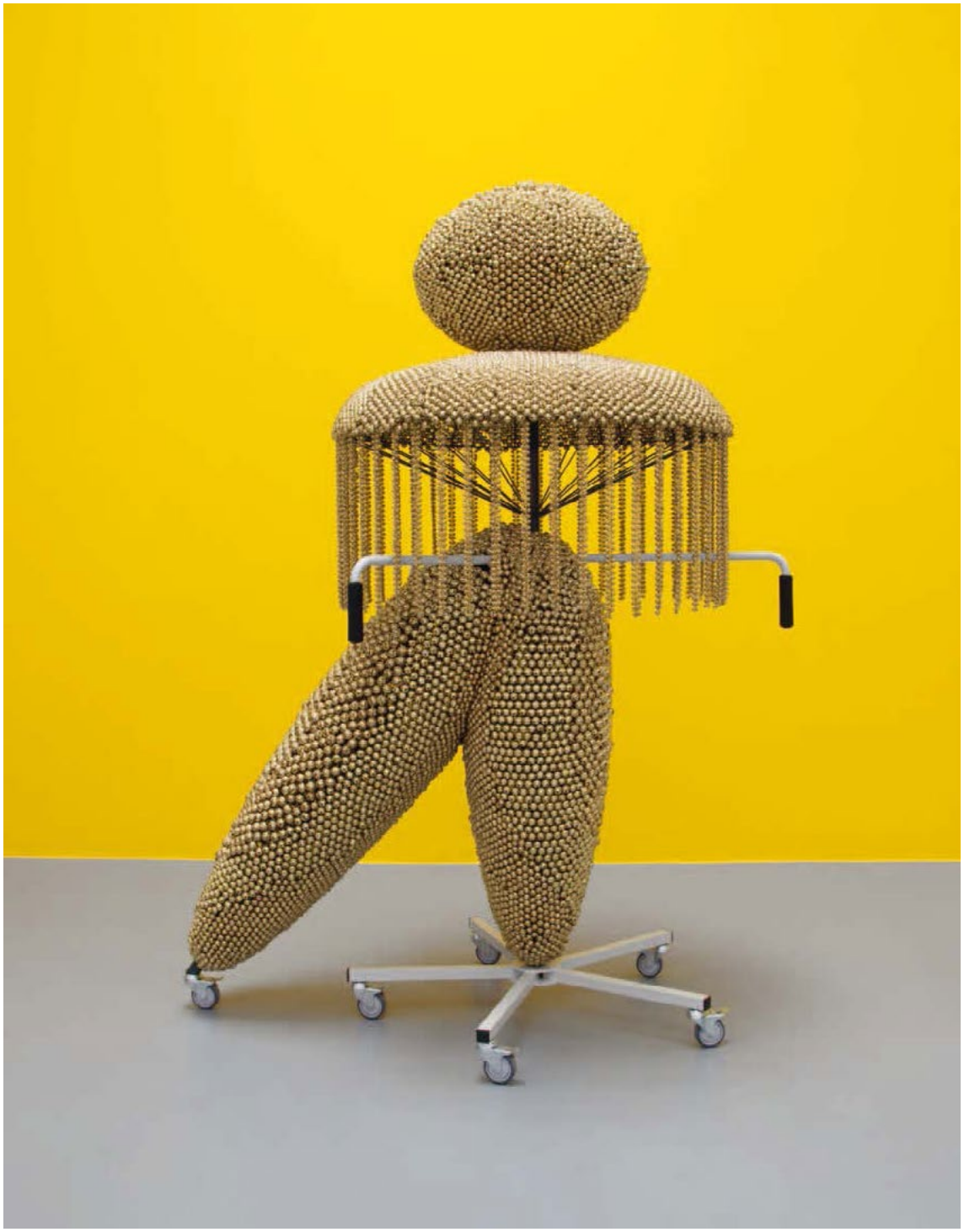
What are you working on now? A solo exhibition at the Geffen Contemporary in Los Angeles, part of the city's Museum of Contemporary Art. Scheduled to open in June 2019, the show will encompass works from 1994 to the present, including major installations featuring Venetian blinds. ●

heikejung.de

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GALERIE
CHANTAL CROUSEL

frieze



Kito Nedo
The multiple registers and references in the work of Haegue Yang
Frieze, N°19, May 2015, p.78-87

Woran genau liegt es eigentlich, dass der Elefant ein derart stark mit Symbolen beladenes Tier ist? Warum stapft er seit Urzeiten durch Mythen und Weisheiten? Ist es seine Größe? Sein Sozialverhalten? Sein sagenhaftes Gedächtnis? Auch Haegue Yang ruft das Tier für ihre aktuelle Ausstellung im Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul auf, und zwar gleich im Titel. Aber trotz des scharnierartigen Titels *Shooting the Elephant & Thinking the Elephant* (das chinesische Zeichen bedeutet Elefant) bezieht sich die Künstlerin genau genommen nur indirekt auf den Dickhäuter. Als eigentliche Hauptreferenzen dienen ihr zwei literarische Texte, die um den Elefanten kreisen und dabei Geschichten erzählen, die von Politik, Gesellschaft, Kolonialismus und dem Verhältnis zwischen Mensch und Natur handeln.

Zum einen ist da *Shooting an Elephant* (dt. *Einen Elefanten erschießen*). So der Titel einer ursprünglich 1936 veröffentlichten, kurzen autobiografischen und antikolonialistischen Skizze, in welcher George Orwell seine Erlebnisse als britischer Kolonialpolizist in Burma Mitte der 1920er Jahre verarbeitete. Der Ich-Erzähler, ein junger Polizeioffizier, wird gerufen, um einen wild gewordenen Arbeitselefanten zu erschießen. Entgegen seines ursprünglichen Entschlusses, es nicht zu tun, feuert er die tödlichen Schüsse dann doch ab. Der Todeskampf des Tieres wird qualvoll langsam beschrieben. Über die Schilderung der Zerrissenheit des Polizisten wird auch die Politisierung des Autors erkennbar, der den Imperialismus als eine „schmutzige Sache" beschreibt und trotz seiner Aufgabe mit den Unterdrückten sympathisiert: „Meinen Dienst hasste ich mehr, als ich zu sagen vermag."

Die zweite Referenz bezieht sich auf den 1956 erschienenen, seinerzeit mit dem Prix Goncourt ausgezeichneten, heute jedoch weitgehend vergessenen Roman *Les racines du ciel* (dt. *Die Wurzeln des Himmels*) des französisch-jüdischen Autors Romain Gary, der 1958 unter dem Titel *The Roots of Heaven* in Hollywood verfilmt wurde: Morel, ein kompromissloser Tierschützer, sorgt in der Kolonie Französisch-Äquatorialafrika für Aufruhr, weil er sich inmitten der Wirren des Unabhängigkeitskonflikts zwischen der französischen Verwaltung und der antikolonialen Befreiungsbewegung mit allen Mitteln für den Elefantenschutz und gegen Großwildjagden einsetzt. Für die Zeitgenossen scheint seine Vehemenz nicht nachvollziehbar. Doch sie ist biografisch begründet: Morel ist ein ehemaliger französischer Widerstandskämpfer und Überlebender eines deutschen Konzentrationslagers. Es war der Gedanke an Elefanten, diese freien und wilden Tiere, der ihm während der Haft die Kraft zum Überleben gab.

Wer freilich versucht, solche literarischen Verweise konkret an bestimmte Werke in Yangs Ausstellungen rückzubinden, wird mitunter auf Schwierigkeiten stoßen: Das Verhältnis zwischen Ausgesprochenem und Gezeigtem scheint zumeist nicht einer Linearität zu folgen. Vielmehr öffnet sich zwischen den Skulpturen und den Referenzen



2
Jang Woo Chul
Staged photograph included in the exhibition catalogue for Haegue Yang's *Shooting The Elephant & Thinking the Elephant*, 2015

3
Blind Curtain – Flesh behind Tricolore, 2013
Aluminium Venetian blinds, aluminium hanging structure, powder coating and steel wire
4.6 × 7 × 1.5 m
Installation view
Aubette 1928 and Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Strasbourg

Why do elephants exert such a strong symbolic charge? Why are they the stuff of legend and lore? Is it their size? Their social behaviour? Their fabled memory? The animal is invoked by Haegue Yang in her current show at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul. Despite the hinge-like title *Shooting the Elephant & Thinking the Elephant* (the Chinese character also means elephant) she refers to the pachyderms only indirectly. Her main reference is to two literary texts that feature elephants as their subject to comment on politics, society, colonialism and the relationship between man and nature.

Shooting an Elephant is the title of a short autobiographical, anti-colonial sketch by George Orwell published in 1936, in which the author recounts an episode from his experience as a British colonial policeman in Burma in the mid-1920s. Orwell, a young police officer, is called upon to shoot a rampaging elephant. Despite his initial reluctance, to save face in front of the locals he ends up firing the deadly shot. The animal's death throes are described in excruciating detail. The policeman's inner turmoil points to the politics of the author, who describes imperialism as 'dirty work' and who sympathizes with the oppressed Burmese, despite his position: 'the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear'.

The second half of the title refers to Romain Gary's novel *Les racines du ciel*, which won the Prix Goncourt in 1956 but is now largely forgotten and which was made into the Hollywood film *The Roots of Heaven* (1958). In the midst of the battle for independence between the French administration and the anti-colonial liberation movement, the uncompromising animal activist Morel causes a stir in the colony of French Equatorial Africa by campaigning for the protection of elephants against big-game hunting. Morel's contemporaries find his vehemence hard to understand, but it is rooted in his experience as a former member of the French Resistance who survived a German concentration camp. Thinking about elephants, those free, wild animals, was what gave him the strength to live through his incarceration.

Linking such literary references back to specific works in Yang's exhibitions is not always easy, however. In most cases, the relationship between what is shown and what is said is not linear; instead, a space opens up

2 courtesy the artist and Jang Woo Chul photograph: © Jang Woo Chul, Seoul

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3 Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; photograph: ©Mathieu Bertola, Strasbourg

Yang's approach is based on an element of surprise, on accepting a certain openness and creating a space where connections, ideas and objects are set in motion.

between sculpture and reference, upsetting a one-to-one correspondence. Similarly, the two stories cited in the Leeum show themselves are about dislocation and rupture, shifting and displacement: transplanting the horrors of Nazi Germany and World War II to colonial Africa and Asia; the border between man and beast broken down by empathy. Political themes then, are articulated via a detour.

There are no elephants in the actual exhibition at Leeum, as the artist emphasizes during a conversation at her Berlin studio. But in the installation views of the otherwise deserted museum provided by her studio, an elegant, dandyish Elephant Man sashays through the exhibition spaces. His face is hidden by a scarf wound round his head, one end hanging down like a trunk. He looks like some hybrid being from another world, half visitor, half exhibit. The status of this figure, who appears only in the exhibition documentation in the catalogue remains a mystery. Perhaps this ghostly figure is a transcendental wanderer capable of linking the various points of reference within Yang's universe?

Buried clues of this kind occur throughout her work, as Yang's approach is based on the element of surprise, on contradictions and abrupt twists, on accepting a certain openness and creating a space where connections, ideas and objects (and the relationships between them) are set in motion. When dealing with Yang's work, even such a usually uncontroversial term as Conceptual art raises more questions than answers. 'I find it hard to use the term concept,' she says during our conversation: 'If someone thought my work was conceptual I would agree, but I'm at a loss when asked to actually explain *how* it is conceptual. Perhaps we live in a time when the notion of Conceptual art is at a turning point. We know what Conceptual art was in the 1960s, but I think what the term means now is something that needs redefining.'

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Bewegung wird über die Referenz zum Tanz dahingehend verstanden, dass das Verhältnis von Betrachter, Objekt und Raum flexibel wird.

ein Zwischenraum, in dem die Dinge anders miteinander in Relation gesetzt werden. So wie die beiden Erzählungen selbst schon von Entortung und Bruch, von Verschiebung und Übersprung handeln: die Verpflanzung des Horrors des Dritten Reiches und des Zweiten Weltkrieges in das postkoloniale Afrika; das Überspringen einer Mensch-Tier-Grenze in der Empathie für den Elefanten – politische Themen, artikuliert über einen Umweg.

In der Ausstellung selbst – so betont die Künstlerin beim Gespräch in ihrem Berliner Atelier – ist natürlich kein Elefant zu sehen. Aber dann ist er doch irgendwie da: Zumindest auf den fotografierten Ausstellungsansichten aus dem menschenleeren Museum in Seoul, die ihr Studio schickt, tänzelt ein elegant dandyesker Elefantenmann durch die Ausstellungsräume. Sein Gesicht verbirgt er hinter einem um seinen Kopf gewundenen Schaltuch, dessen Ende wie ein Rüssel umherbaumelt. Er wirkt wie ein jenseitiges Zwitterwesen, halb Besucher, halb Ausstellungsstück. Der Status dieser Gestalt, die nur im Kontext der Ausstellungsdokumentation, im Abbildungsteil des Katalogs – und somit eher indirekt im Kontext des eigentlichen Werks – auftaucht, bleibt rätselhaft. Braucht es womöglich genau solch eine Geisterfigur, die als transzendente Umherstreifende die verschiedenen Referenzpunkte innerhalb des Yang-Universums zu verknüpfen vermag?

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Follies, Manifold: Gabriel Lester – Haegue Yang Installation view Bonner Kunstverein 2014

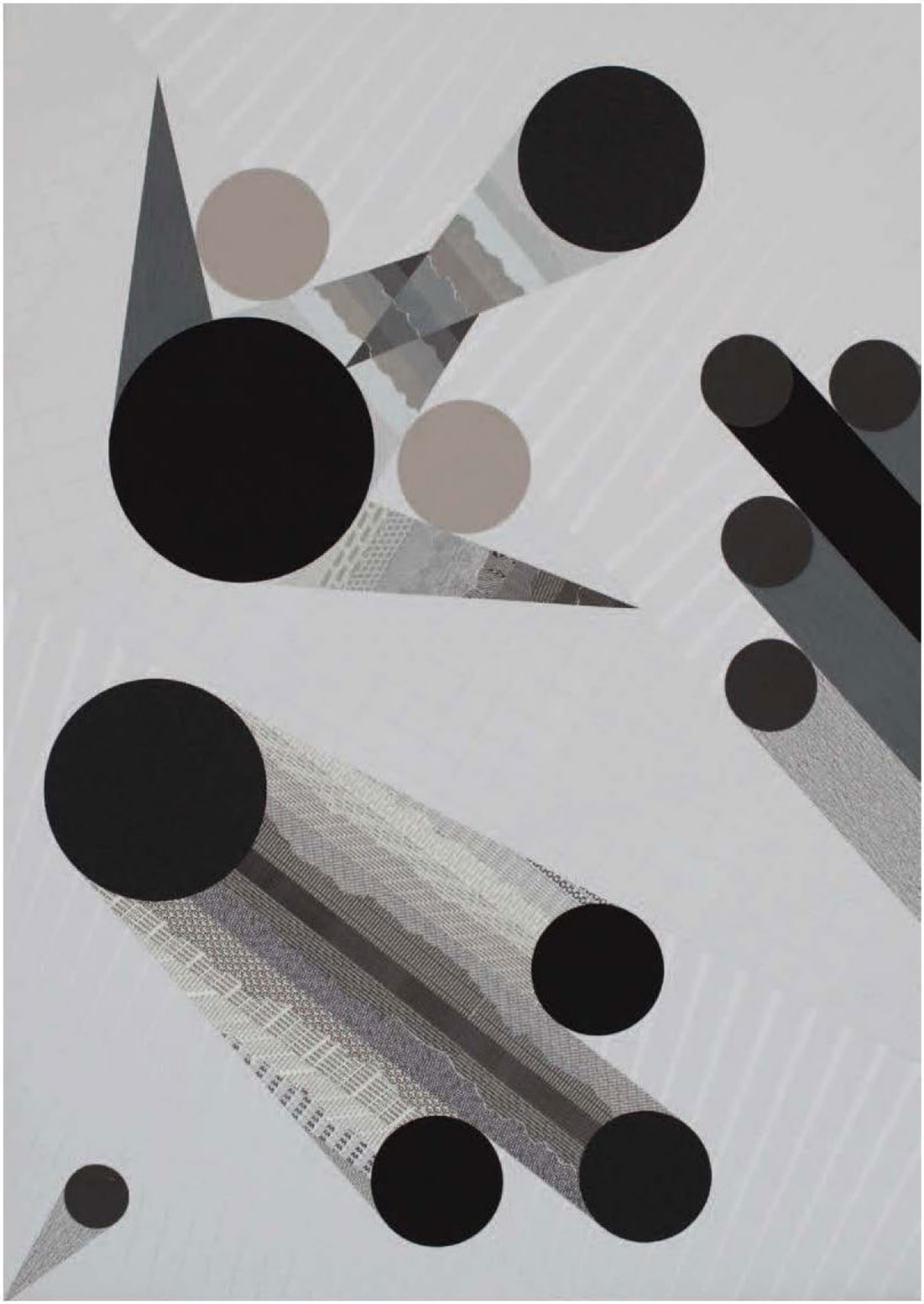
5
Rocket Panpipe – Trustworthy #235, 2014 Envelope, security patterns and sandpaper 102×72 cm

For her installations, Yang often works with everyday objects and materials, but she never contents herself with their ready-made character. Instead she subjects them to further artistic treatment but without stripping them of their original connotations. She has taken ordinary laundry drying racks and enveloped them in weaves of different coloured wool (*Non-Indépliables*, 2006/09–10), transforming the mass-produced commodity into unique pieces of folk art; she has manipulated Filofax calendar inserts (*Week on Two Pages Diary*, 1999) by making almost imperceptible changes to company logos, holidays and typography; and she has stacked 16 empty drinks crates into two towers on a small wooden ramp set at an angle that almost, but only almost, caused them to topple (*Tilted on a Plane*, 2002).

In her *détournement* of a A3 block of graph paper that plays havoc with standardization (*Grid Bloc A3*, 2013, in collaboration with Jeong Hwa Min) or her hanging interlocking aluminium blinds (at dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012, for instance) that produce beautiful moiré effects, there is a geometrical rigour characterized less by norm-based inflexibility than by the breaking of such strictures. She populates exhibitions with anthropomorphic sculptures (*Warrior Believer Lover*, 2011), at times accompanied by Igor Stravinsky's ballet music *Le sacre du printemps*: the vision of a pagan sacrifice that caused riots when first performed in Paris in 1913. Another classic 20th century avant-garde work for the stage, Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet* that premiered in 1922 in Stuttgart, provided a point of reference for the bell-covered sound sculptures that visitors were invited to touch and move at Bonner Kunstverein last autumn (*Sonic Figures*, 2013/15). Through reference to dance, movement is understood here as including a more flexible relationship between viewer, object and space. Although these sculptures refer to specific moments in art history, they come across as contemporary. This may be because Yang's sculptures have an aesthetic that oscillates between the object's original practical nature and its character as a work of art. This was true of the bell-covered Schlemmer sound sculptures: they stood there majestic and golden, but as soon as one took hold of their black foam-rubber handles, there was a certain feeling akin to being in physiotherapy.

Yang's installations are thronged with avatars that appear to have been beamed into the exhibition space from very different worlds. She takes the space between objects as seriously as the objects themselves. This is reflected, for example, in her deliberate use of sounds, music or smells and by the mobile hospital stands she often uses as the basis for her avatar sculptures. The resulting field of associations allows the mind to wander, but also the art itself. It is in these interspatial

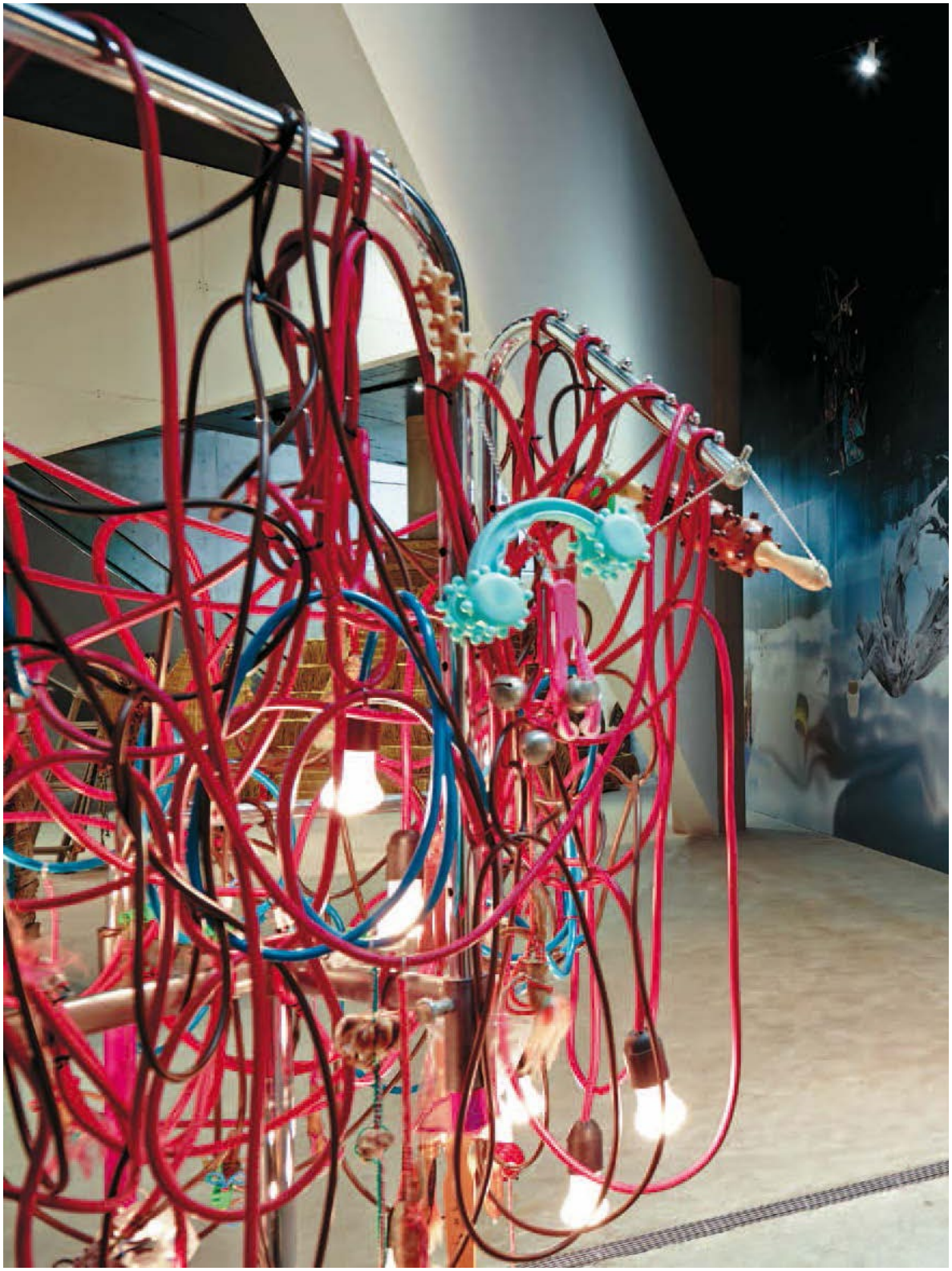
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5 courtesy Galerie Wien Lukatsch, Berlin; photograph: ©Studio Haegue Yang, Berlin

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In ihrem Werk sind einige solche Spuren vergraben, denn statt Eindeutigkeit setzt die Künstlerin auf den Überraschungsmoment, auf Widersprüche und abrupte Wendungen, darauf, eine bestimmte Offenheit zuzulassen und einen Raum zu schaffen, in dem Bezüge, Ideen und Objekte – sowie das Verhältnis zwischen ihnen – in Bewegung geraten. Selbst so ein im Grunde wenig umstrittener Begriff wie Konzeptkunst wirft in der Auseinandersetzung mit Yangs Werk mehr Fragen auf, als er Antworten gibt. „Die Anwendung des Begriffs Konzept fällt mir sehr schwer", sagt sie im Gespräch. „Ich würde zustimmen, wenn jemand meine Arbeit als konzeptuell betrachtet, aber gleichzeitig bin ich sprachlos, wenn ich selbst begründen soll, inwiefern sie wirklich konzeptuell ist. Vielleicht leben wir in einer Zeit, in der der Begriff Konzeptkunst auf der Kippe steht. Was die Konzeptkunst der 1960er Jahre war, wissen wir, aber was der Begriff aktuell heißt, muss, glaube ich, noch neu definiert werden."

In einer Art Pendelbewegung neigen Yangs Skulpturen mal zum ursprünglichen Gebrauchscharakter, mal zum Kunstcharakter.

Für ihre Installationen arbeitet Yang oft mit alltäglichen Dingen und Materialien, gibt sich jedoch nicht mit ihrem Readymade-Charakter zufrieden, sondern unterzieht sie einer weitergehenden künstlerischen Bearbeitung – ohne sie ihrer ursprünglichen Gebrauchskonnotation zu berauben: Handelsübliche Wäschetrockner umhäkelte sie mit verschiedenfarbiger Wolle (*Non-Indélébiables*, 2006/09–10), was diese Massenwaren in Folk-art-hafte Unikate verwandelte; sie manipulierte Filofax-Kalender-Einlagen (*Week on Two Pages Diary*, 1999), indem sie Firmenlogos, Feiertage und Typografie fast unmerklich veränderte, oder stapelte 16 leere Getränkekisten in zwei Türmen auf eine kleine Holzrampe, deren Neigung die Türme fast – aber nur fast – zum Kippen brachte (*Tilted on a Plane*, 2002).

Bei der grafischen Verfremdung von Millimeterpapier, mit der die Norm zum Tanzen gebracht wird (*Grid Bloc A3*, 2013, gemeinsam mit Jeong Hwa Min), oder ihren frei hängenden Leichtmetalljalousien (etwa auf der dOCUMENTA(13), 2012), die ineinander verschachtelt schöne Moiré-Effekte produzieren, herrscht geometrische Strenge vor, die sich weniger durch ihre genormte Starrheit, sondern mehr durch die Brechung ebendieser auszeichnet. Dann wieder bevölkert Yang ihre Ausstellungen mit anthropomorphen Skulpturen (*Warrior Believer Lover*, 2011), zeitweise untermalt mit Igor Strawinskis Ballettmusik *Le sacre du printemps*: die Vision eines großen heidnischen Opferrituals, die bei ihrer Uraufführung in Paris 1913 für Tumulte und Empörung sorgte. Auf ein anderes klassisches Avantgarde-Bühnenwerk des 20. Jahrhunderts, das 1922 in Stuttgart uraufgeführte *Triadische Ballett* von Oskar Schlemmer, beziehen sich wiederum die großflächig mit Schellen besetzten Klangskulpturen zum Anfassen und Herumschieben (*Sonic Figures*, 2013/15), die im letzten Herbst im Bonner Kunstverein ausgestellt waren. Bewegung wird hier, über die Referenz auf den Tanz, dahingehend verstanden, dass auch das Verhältnis von Betrachter, Objekt und Raum flexibel wird. Auch wenn sich diese Skulpturen auf Kunstgeschichte beziehen, wirken sie so gar nicht historisch, sondern im Gegenteil sehr gegenwärtig. Was vielleicht daran liegt, dass Yangs Skulpturen eine Ästhetik innewohnt, die sich in einer Art Pendelbewegung mal zum ursprünglichen Gebrauchscharakter neigt, dann wieder zum Kunstcharakter. So auch bei den schellenbesetzten Schlemmer-Klangskulpturen: Majestätisch und goldig-glänzend standen sie im Bonner Kunstverein. Doch fasste man sie an den mit schwarzem Schaumstoff umwickelten Griffen an, stieg sofort ein Gefühl von Rehaklinik auf.

In Yangs Installationen wimmelt es nur so von Avataren, die aus ganz unterschiedlichen Kontexten in den Ausstellungsraum hineingebeamt erscheinen. Den Raum zwischen den Dingen nimmt die Künstlerin dabei genauso ernst wie die ausgestellten Dinge selbst. Das lässt sich etwa am gezielten Einsatz von Geräuschen, Musik oder Gerüchen ablesen. Oder auch an ihrer Verwendung von beweglichen Krankenhaus-Infusionsständern, die oft die Basis für ihre Avatar-Skulpturen bilden. In dem Assoziationsraum, der sich öffnet, sollen nicht nur die Gedanken des Betrachters wandern, sondern die Kunst gleich mit. Und genau in diesen zwischenräumlichen Gefilden geistert in Seoul dann auch der Elefantenmann umher. Und sind nicht auch die von Yang so oft verwendeten Jalousien – in der seltsamen Fort-Da-Logik, der sie gehorchen, wenn sie von einem Moment zum anderen zwischen Abschluss und Durchlässigkeit umschalten – perfekte Sinnbilder für Zwischenräume?

Nichts läge Yang ferner, als mit dem Holzhammer auf ihren Inhalten herumzuklopfen. Das würde die konstitutive Offenheit dieser Arrangements in einem Akt der Sinnzuschreibung sofort wieder abschließen. Stattdessen provoziert sie Ahnungen und unterschwellig platzierte Assoziationen – wie in Seoul, wo sie erstmals Objekte zeigte, die aufgrund ihrer Form und handwerklichen Gemachtheit wie ethnologische Artefakte wirkten. Formal beziehen sich die drei Stroh-Skulpturen aus der Werkreihe *The Intermediates* (2015) auf kulturell-religiös konnotierte Orte oder Denkmäler: eine antike Maya-Pyramide, die buddhistische Tempelanlage Borobudur in Indonesien sowie Ljalja-Tjulpan – eine der größten modernen Moscheen in Russland, eröffnet Ende der 1990er Jahre in Ufa, der Hauptstadt von Baschkortostan, rund 26 Bahnstunden östlich von Moskau. Zwischen diesen architekturbezogenen Konstruktionen platzierte die Künstlerin weitere Stroh-Gebilde,



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fields that the Elephant Man finds himself in Seoul. Aren't the blinds so often used by Yang (with their strange now-you-see-it-now-you-don't logic of a sudden switch between closure and transparency) the perfect symbols for this interspace?

Yang is not one to hammer away at her subject matter and attribute specificity to her meanings, however, as that would immediately close the constitutive openness of her arrangements. Instead, she provokes intimations and subliminal associations – as in Seoul, where many of the works' forms and crafted quality made them look like ethnological artefacts. Formally, three large straw-looking totems from the series *The Intermediates* (2015) refer to places or monuments of religious significance: an ancient Maya pyramid; the Buddhist temple complex of Borobudur in Indonesia and Lala Tulpan, one of the largest modern mosques in Russia, opened in the late 1990s in Ufa, the capital of the Russian republic of Bashkortostan, around 26 hours east of Moscow by train. Between

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6+7 Photographs © Hyunsoo Kim, Seoul

die in ihrer anthropomorphen Anmutung an kultische Kostüme erinnern (ähnlich denen, wie sie etwa im alten Schweizer Silvesterklausen-Brauchtum auftauchen). Doch das Flair des Traditionellen, Handgemachten und ethnografisch Inspirierten wird durch einen Touch Industrie gebrochen: Das vermeintliche Strohmaterial ist aus Plastik. Deshalb handelt *The Intermediates* nicht so sehr von der Vermittlung zwischen Unterschiedlichem, sondern von der Unvermittelbarkeit und Unvermitteltheit selbst. Die künstlerische Anspielung auf das Verhältnis von Natur, Mensch und Kultur ist gut imprägniert gegen jede naturromantische Verklärung.

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Haegue Yangs Einzelausstellung Temporary Permanent *ist vom 1. Mai bis 31. Juli in der Galerie Wien Lukatsch, Berlin, zu sehen.*

these architecture-invoking constructions, the artist placed other straw figures whose anthropomorphism recalled unusual cult costumes (like those of traditional Swiss New Year Mummers). But the aura of the traditional, handmade and the ethnographically inspired was broken by an technical note: the 'straw' of these figures was actually plastic. Consequently, *The Intermediates* is not so much about mediating between different spheres as about things that are not and cannot be communicated and reified. Through this Yang's artistic allusions to the relationship among nature, man and culture are immunized against any rose-tinted romanticization.
Translated by Nicholas Grindell

Kito Nedo lives in Berlin where he works as a freelance journalist for several magazines and newspapers.

Haegue Yang's solo exhibition Temporary Permanent *at Galerie Wien Lukatsch, Berlin is on view 1 May – 31 July.*

6+7
Shooting the Elephant &
Thinking the Elephant
Installation views
Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art
Seoul, 2015

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Part One

Haegue Yang discusses her current solo exhibition at the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul

HEMAN CHONG *Your exhibition has a curious title...*

HAEGUE YANG *Shooting the Elephant 象. Thinking the Elephant* contains a Chinese character, 象, which is a hieroglyph in itself. I found it fascinating to imagine the origin of this character, since the elephant doesn't inhabit any region in which Chinese was or is used. The same goes for another metaphor of the exhibition, which is a Lion Dance, a folk dance that's widespread across the whole of Asia, a region that's not inhabited by lions. You won't find an elephant or a lion in the show either. They served as a metaphor of living – a living that was only imagined, yet which was territorialised as a part of folk culture so that it could be even claimed as 'ours' and understood as something 'familiar'.

Another reference in the title comes from literature, George Orwell's short story 'Shooting an Elephant' [1936, about a British police officer in Burma who feels forced to shoot an elephant] and Romain Gary's novel *The Roots of Heaven* [1956, about an environmentalist in French Equatorial Africa who sets out to preserve elephants from extinction]. In the first, the elephant appears as an unpredictable, yet innocent animal (or cipher for nature), killed by the irrelevant human-centric power system of colonialism. Orwell (who is recounting his experience as a police officer in colonial Burma) was pressured by that system and eventually had to shoot the elephant when he was surrounded by thousands of Burmese expecting to witness the violence of their coloniser. In the other work, the elephant shows its power as well as weakness: on the one hand it provides a most unlikely source of hope to Morel (the main protagonist of Gary's novel), who subsequently wishes to preserve the African elephant from extinction; on the other hand, the elephant is nothing but a helpless and vulnerable species, which can't be saved despite Morel's complete devotion and eventual sacrifice.

Besides that, there are two general aspects of the show that are worth mentioning at the beginning: one is the lighting, the other is the wall treatment. The lights on the ceiling of the Ground Gallery at Leeum are all pointed in one direction, not so as to illuminate the work, but so as to act autonomously. This is done to liberate the lights from their functional existence in this completely open space.

Three right-angle-triangle-shaped built-in walls, hung upside down from the ceiling, have been treated so that each side is distinctly different from the other: the outer surface has an ordinary finish while the inner side is rough and grainy like sandpaper. Also I've allowed the grid of the panels on this inner side to be revealed. Over the course of the exhibition, there will be some stains from people touching this side of the walls: this contact and the sensation of texture, as well as the collective trace of visitors, will be significant.

HC *Let's talk about* Storage Piece *[2004]. It is a work that has been discussed greatly within the context of your practice. Why did you choose to exhibit it now, among the other works in the show?*

HY *Storage Piece* is located in the middle of the exhibition, it's a work originally made for a show while I was on a Delfina Foundation residency in London. It is often said that *Storage Piece* marks an important turning point in my practice. The background to it was that there was an offer of a commercial gallery space for an exhibition but I had no ability to make the show, either financially or physically. And parallel to this offer, there were numerous requests that I should pick up works, returning from other exhibitions for which I couldn't afford any storage space. So I proposed to use the exhibition budget to bring all those works – which remained packed on palettes – together in an exhibition. There were about 13 pieces in all, some are complete, some of the works only survived in parts. There are also early pieces included in *Storage Piece*, for instance from 1994, which had never been exhibited, but which I was asked to remove from my flat in Frankfurt, where I was no longer living.

This type of personal circumstance hadn't been a part of my practice at that time; indeed it had seemed inevitable not to assert this kind of circumstance, but it came to a point, through *Storage Piece*, where I did, and this helped me to break this conceptual boundary. Within the tendency to cling to both the physicality and the fetish of conceptualism inherent in *Storage Piece*, there is a kind of concern and doubt that remains and that is contained within it. Personally, I'm very pleased to have *Storage Piece* on view here, a work that a lot of people have heard about many times, yet not so many people have encountered; it is important that people face the work in person.

Storage Piece is always accompanied by a speech that will be given at the opening of the exhibition by someone other than myself. The script for this speech has been modified slightly each time it has been delivered, reflecting the changed circumstances and the ways in which my own reaction to the work cumulatively changes over time. The crisis born out of a simple, poor circumstance disappears, while new challenges around the piece emerge, so the modification is necessary. The speech describes a couple of pieces found within the work that people cannot see, because everything is wrapped up. Very much a monologue, which fluctuates from being super-confident on the one hand – suggesting that this is a great solution, even a brilliant one, given the challenge of the circumstances – but at the same time being filled with doubt, based on a belief in concept and idea – that one should not hold on to the physicality of the work. Overall, this oscillation itself reinforces the potential and the ecology behind the work. It reflects a kind of timid negation of the 'either/or' dichotomy of an object. When *Storage Piece* was sold, I handed over the conceptual authority over the work, thus the collector could unfold the piece according to his own desires and situation.

HC *So he could have unpacked the work?*

HY Indeed. In 2007 the collector Axel Haubrok proposed that he unpack the work in order to see what he had collected. As part of this agreement, under the title 'Unpacking the Storage Piece', everything would be fiercely unpacked and neatly installed. I agreed, and the traces of *Storage Piece* – the packaging – were also included in the exhibition, as 'Cabinet of Packaging'. And there was a new speech written for this chapter. So ever since then, *Storage Piece* has been unpacked many times, sometimes gradually, sometimes as it is.

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opening pages Heman Chong, *Smoke Gets In (Your Eyes)*, 2015, two ashtrays. Photo: Sang-tae Kim. Courtesy the artist, Art Sonje Center, Seoul, and Wilkinson, London

above Haegue Yang, *Shooting the Elephant & Thinking the Elephant*, 2015 (installation view, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul). Photo: Kim Hyunsoo. Courtesy the artist

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Haegue Yang, *The Intermediate – Triple Sphere on Pyramid Totem*, 2015 (installation view, *Shooting the Elephant & Thinking the Elephant*, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul), artificial straw, steel stand, powder coating, casters, Indian bells, artificial plants, plastic twine, cord, metal rings, metal bells, 280 × 120 × 120 cm. Photo: Kim Hyunsoo. Courtesy the artist

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HC *Let's move along to the next work. Tell me more about your light sculptures.*

HY Here there are six individual light sculptures, which are in the collection of Leeum, shown as one installation, *Seoul Guts*, which was first exhibited at Artsonje Center in 2010 (that exhibition, *Voice Over Three*, was also my first institutional exhibition in my hometown; this one is my first in five years). I spent three months in Seoul preparing the show, and *Seoul Guts* is one of very few light sculptures that I produced out of my studio. The portrait of the city of Seoul is articulated by the small objects, mostly expressing ridiculous and trivial desires and the nostalgia of people. Here you see an object made of seashells and urban waste, disguised as a romantic souvenir of a possible holiday, which I collected from seafood restaurants, day by day. There you see some artificial plants, cosmetic supplies, pseudo health devices, all of which constitute a pitiful portrait of Seoul. Pill cases were somehow most touching to me.

HC *Why were these the most touching for you?*

HY Seoul is full of people who are 'sick': in a sense they're all not fit, they're tired and wasted. The daily life in Seoul is just tough, you come up with ideas to survive – taking vitamins or medicine against cancer, for diabetes, it's just crazy. They're all functioning, but at the same time they're not functioning at all. There is no border any more between healthy and sick. These two things build a parallel, and in this you still have to keep going. For example, these objects I use, these small objects for massaging your body, it's at once humorous and pitiful. You only can spend a small amount of money with such a big hope that it will make you feel better. These items I discovered while I was shopping, or 'hunting' for material; I think this shopping process in the city was crucial.

HC *What was the trigger for you to use these standing structures to hang these objects on?*

HY At the very beginning I started using IV (intravenous) drip poles, which are frail, much like a line in space, on which you cannot hang so much. I used them for the first time in 2006, in a project called *Sadong 30*, at an abandoned house. The ceiling in that house was about to collapse, so you couldn't hang anything from it. In order to illuminate the space, I registered and reinstalled the electricity supply, but I needed a stand from which to hang lights. The IV poles were easy to get and it seemed natural to have them in that space. But I wasn't aware of the association of that object with body and health. After using them once as a lighting device, I started to make sculptures of out this stand. I was very touched by the melancholic look of it, how the cables are draped from/over it. Over time, it became an autonomous sculpture. By the time I switched over to the much chunkier clothing racks, each stand became anthropomorphic, to portray certain qualities of possible figures.

HC *In a way you're building characters.*

HY Yes, quite. In this series it comes across very strongly. Originating from the *Sadong 30* project, where I plugged in the lights, it became apparent to me that this work comes from this gesture: plugging into a power source. This gesture meant a lot to me. The house was locked up for many years, and the address, Sa-dong 30, was dropped out from the redevelopment of the city of Incheon. So there was no electricity, no water, and the house was kind of dead. When I succeeded in reregistering the address in the city council's system in order to reconnect the electricity, the house could finally be illuminated. I locked the space with a lock that had a number code on it so that people with the code could have 24-hour access. I had limited the luminosity of each bulb to under 25W; again, at the beginning I was afraid that the bulbs would get too hot while there was no guard or other attendant there, so it was a practical decision. But over time I really liked the low luminosity, because it prevented the lights from being absolutely functional: they would be able to light up little corners – efficient enough. The light sculptures inherited this principle, where each bulb is only 15 to 25W.

By critically reexamining the notion of 'folk', I realised that the use of natural straw would only conform to the given narrow idea of 'folk art', confirming the notion of 'us,' which is often a race, nation, religious or language group, etc.

HC *What are these chairs and tables on the other side of the space?*

HY In 2001 I was commissioned to conceive the so-called VIP lounge for an art fair, Art Forum Berlin. Commenting on the aspect that one can only access this space with a VIP pass, I decided to equip the space with furniture pieces borrowed from Berliners, whose equivalent significance (VIP) can be only measured by their participation rather than predetermined and hierarchical status. And people (VIPS) could sit on the furniture (from VIPS), achieving an open heterogeneity. The loan of the furniture would be for the duration of the exhibition, and each piece would be returned after the show. I continued to adopt this principle and made a lot of lounges ever since in the middle of exhibitions, and now this is the Seoul version. Seen in the same space as *Storage Piece* and *Seoul Guts*, you can sense that they are different configurations of similar observation, an expression of my position as a semi-insider/outsider.

HC *Let's address your new work in this show. Can you walk me through it?*

HY This is a new series of sculptures titled *The Intermediates*. They are made of straw, woven into different architectures and figures. They create a kind of 'parcours' through a set of obstacles. These pieces reference actual architectural sites, such as those produced by the Mayan civilisation, the Borobudur Temple, and features found in a contemporary Islamic mosque with minarets in Russia. In between them there are figures. Some of them are abstract, some are more figurative.

HC *This material that you use, is this real straw? How did you discover and begin to work with this material?*

HY No, it's artificial straw. By critically reexamining the notion of 'folk', I realised that the use of natural straw would only conform to the given narrow idea of 'folk art', confirming the notion of 'us,' which is often a race, nation, religious or language group, etc. But this artificial straw gives me a bit of distance from this definition of 'our tradition', empowers the works and makes them immune to this tribal claim. The project is not about expressing traditional craftsmanship, but to take a step out of it, to become alien to or a hybrid of it. In a sense, for me, they rather associate with rituals and exotic forms than the familiar.

HC *You are personifying the technique, extending the technique as a metaphor, rather than simply mastering the technique of straw weaving. It's far from rejuvenating the idea of folk.*

HY It has never been a primary feature of my production method, but I always worked with two very different ways simultaneously. One relies on using industrially manufactured objects, while the other is based on craft – almost a domestic way of approaching craft – believed to be of low efficiency – such as crochet and knitting. At some point I realised that I'm completely into weaving. But a very inefficient weaving. I used to take a lot of photographs of these straw wraps around trees over the winter in Japan and Korea. These appeared once in a while as reference material in my catalogues, but I never used the observation of straw wrap, realised as a production yet. But when I settled in Seoul a year ago, the first thing I wanted to learn was straw weaving from a craftsman, and *The Intermediates* was initiated.

Kito Nedo
The multiple registers and references in the work of Haegue Yang
ArtReview Asia, Hong Kong Special Edition, March 2015, pp.36-41

OCULA

Haegue Yang (Part Two)



Haegue Yang (b.1971) is a South Korean artist, who lives and works in Berlin and Seoul. She is best known for drawing on a wide repertoire of ordinary household objects to create visually abstract sculptures and installations that often evoke the senses on several levels and delve into a cacophony of social, historical and political narratives.

While venetian blinds have come to be the most recognisable motif of Yang's practice, they obscure a far reaching exploration of both materials and ideas that has continued to evolve. Two presentations of the artist's work this year will serve as timely reminders of the scope of her work and the ongoing development and exploration of her practice, namely *Medicine Men* and *Female Natives* (2010) which will be shown at the Taipei Biennial and the sculptural ensemble of so-called 'Sonic Sculptures' for Mediacity in Seoul.

Anna Dickie
Haegue Yang (Part Two)
Ocula, September 3, 2014
https://cutt.ly/EXSL1Gg

While the first part of this two part interview investigates her earlier works, and some of the ideas underpinning her practice, this second part delves into her upcoming projects, and in particular the works that will appear at the Taipei Biennial and Mediacity Seoul, as well as the challenges she still wishes to explore.

WHAT NEXT

What projects do you have coming up?

There are only several projects on this year, often where I will be showing older works, yet juxtaposing them with a new context. There is one group show and two Biennale participations: there is the light sculptures *Medicine Men* and *Female Natives* from 2010 for Taipei Biennial, blind installation Mountains of Encounter from 2008 for a three-men show at the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston and lastly, a sculptural ensemble of so-called sonic sculptures for Mediacity in Seoul.

There are also some pending projects in 2015 and 2016, including solo shows in Seoul, Beijing, Berlin, Brussels and presentations at Biennales, such as Sharjah Biennale and Asian Pacific Triennial in Brisbane. One of my current areas of focus is my solo exhibition at Leeum, Seoul in February 2015. I am conceiving some new pieces, while setting up a second studio in Seoul, which is in fact my first working space ever other than in Berlin.

TAIPEI BIENNIAL 2014

You will show *Medicine Men* and *Female Natives* (2010) at the Taipei Biennial 2014. Both *Medicine Men* and *Female Natives* were part of a large group of 33 sculptures, *Warrior Believer Lover* that you created in 2010. What was the impetus for originally creating this group of sculptures?

Originally conceived for Kunsthaus Bregenz in 2011, *Warrior Believer Lover* is a selection of thirty-three anthropomorphic light sculptures that can be further distinguished into groups, couples and individuals, including the group of six of *Medicine Men* and *Female Natives*. Each light sculpture is a composition of light bulbs, electric cords and readymade and handcrafted materials such as artificial plants and wigs around a commercial metal stand, conjuring up figures imbued with personality and history. I have been creating light sculptures since 2006 and when thinking about the title, the human-like quality of these sculptures prompted me to consider archetypes whose lives testify deep commitment to a particular value. For instance: the warrior who fights for something with intensity; the believer who lives with absolute faith; and the lover who courageously exposes themself to the other.

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Is there a specific significance in the process and materials you used to create these works?

Each set of sculptures are adorned with elaborate ornaments and I work intuitively, drawing on the associations and origins of the industrial, readymade or handcrafted objects, while decontextualizing them - allowing their inherent qualities to emerge in new and unfamiliar ways. For example, in using artificial plants for *Female Natives*, there is an evident narrative around understandings of nature and artifice. One could possibly relate to these sculptures as indigenous females who have a close relationship to a nature that is apparently manmade. Isn't all that we seek or obtain artificial, in some way? Is our nature in fact essentially akin to an extraterrestrial being?

Questions on humankind's achievements and pursuits come into play too. The selection of plants addresses various vegetation and climates; and is also made to draw a landscape of multiple cultures and communities.

And what about *Female Natives* male counter-part, *Medicine Men*?

Medicine Men are decked out with party wigs of multiple colors and hair types, destabilizing the title's masculine connotations. If we look at medicine men in animalistic religions, many assume an ambiguous gender. A myriad of decorative objects from mylar to tinsel, aluminum reflectors, feather dusters, dried spices, plant leaves, and even seashells, reinforce this ambiguity. Wigs are also part of the transformation that shamans went through when they intended transforming their appearances to 'connect' themselves to spirits, inhabiting another world.

The original shapes and substances of the readymades are retained and the sculpture is at times, an insight into crisscrossing migratory and trade routes. Yet, one should venture beyond the conventional readings of these objects. Assembling these objects, often ordinary and domestic items, decontextualizes and transforms them in surprising ways. They become foreign, yet strangely familiar. I am interested in both my own process of discovery, and also that of the viewer. I am also interested in how the chance encounters with an object can open up new, and sometimes unexpected narratives or emotions.

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Research into cultural, social and political history often underpins your work. I understand the sculptures in *Warrior Believer Lover* refer to a multiplicity of cultural references from the ballet and orchestral concert work, *The Rite of Spring* to Walter de Maria's *Lighting Field*. Can we discuss some of these references?

For installations of *Medicine Man* and *Female Natives*, Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913) is played two to three times a day and at the Islamic prayer hour. *The Rite of Spring* was written for the 1913 Paris season of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes company; and the original choreography was by Vaslav Nijinsky. Its dissonance and primitive rhythms underline the anthropomorphism of the light sculptures and the asynchronous layering of ritualistic practices. Through the ballet and allusion to Islamic prayer, we encounter layers of multiple cultural references, which in turn are intended to build upon those already implied by Stravinsky and Nijinsky's use of Native Indian's spring ritual in the radical eclectic choreography and challenging musical score of the ballet. It is as if the sculptures are Nijinsky's dancers, gathered together as historically marginalized cultural subjects, demonstrating the different topography and chronology of the globe and juxtaposing the primitive with the industrialized; and ultimately in pursuit of hybrid bodies that capture the moment of community in constant mutation.

In complete violation of classical traditions and representing a sacred pagan ritual, shudders, jerks and thumps dominated the choreography of Nijinsky - a reflection of the anticlassical trajectory of my light sculptures. Written for the Ballets Russes, the primitivism of the dance did not enjoy the same radicalism claimed by Gauguin, Picasso, and other Parisian artists. As Russians bearing pagan and mysterious origins, they were considered exotic which ironically worked against them, as only those from within were deemed capable of producing exotic art. The ambiguity of exoticism is, still today, an issue for artists. But I am less interested in political correctness around post-colonial discourse. I am more interested in the concept of 'detour' - the strategy of diversion and the presentation of alternative paradigmatic formulas for understanding identity.

MEDIACITY SEOUL

Tell me about what you will be showing at Mediacity Seoul, which opens soon?

I will create an entirely new ensemble for Mediacity in Seoul.

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"Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers", is the theme of the upcoming Mediacity Seoul, and my contribution to this event is very much driven by these keywords. Against the prevailing socio-political climate in Asia of rising nationalism and mutual distrust, and underpinned by economies powered by technological advancements, figures whose voices have been silenced or under the radar are being awakened. These otherworldly and traditional figures from a past era, typified by the 'Ghost, Spy and Grandmother', are summoned back as alternative voices of counsel, tradition and hope to the dominant narratives of today.

On the ground floor of Mediacity Seoul, a spherical bell sculpture, *Sonic Full Moon – Medium Regular #2* (2014) is hung from the ceiling, right above the start point of the taped drawing, implying a kind of orbital constellation while *Sonic Dance – Half Sister* (2014) and two Windy Orbits, *Windy Orbit– Brass Plated* and *Windy Orbit– Brass and Nickel Plated* (2013), are placed at a junction of lines.

I understand movement is very relevant to these works?

The notions of movement animated by visitor's manual input, as well as the cosmic geometry resulted from each movement is one of the focal interpretations of this ensemble. The viewer could actually 'dance' with the sculptures, supplying the given space with new sonic effects that are created by bells attached on the surface of metal-mesh structures. The bells are intended to trigger associations with ancient times in the history of civilisation, where they were often used for shamanic rituals, calling out to the spirits through their sound. In my recent sculptural development, the bells seem to be endowing a life-giving and communicative quality to robot-like and rigid figures.

The bells also mirror and therefore multiply the viewer's reflection. In the Mediacity presentation, these visual as well as the non-visual sensorial and metaphoric aspects are accentuated by focusing on the wind, sounds and patterns that movement brings to the work. This ensemble on the ground floor of Seoul Museum of Arts at Mediacity will construct a constellation of an imaginary cosmic order, which is less rational, yet valuable to reconsider less pre-determined ways of thinking.

In the upper floor, a range of *Sonic Rotating Ovals* are hung, where the 'blurring' of the initial geometric form that occurs through the rotation suggest the 'unlearning' of the original form and material. This spinning transforms the ovoid shape of the piece into a circular form, a moment close to a 'perfect geometry.'

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REFLECTION

When looking back over the course of your career – from early works like *Traces of Anonymous Pupil Authors* (2001) to *Storage Piece* (2004), to more recent work like the sculptures in *Warrior Believer Lover* (2011) or the *Sonic Rotating Ovals* and *Sonic Dances* that will be presented at Mediacity Seoul 2014 – is there a common thread that you feel defines who you are as an artist?

Well, I guess I am not an artist whose practice could be bound to specific topics or subject matters easily. In fact, I am almost ignorant to that. My aspirations relate to fostering an understanding of how human interests extend beyond the given boundaries and categorisations. In other words, an artistic practice should be something actual; something to experience, not necessarily to understand; and it should rather resist the conventional idea of possessing a common thread or summary in the sense of an understandable message.

There is an evolution of an artist's practice and even if I feel I am aware of this, I might be not the best person to analyse it or draw conclusions from it. The only thing I could tell for a moment is what unknown mental adventure my work attempts to cause and what goes beyond that. I would rather hear from the audience, writer and various recipients a desire to interact further with my work, or an idea fostered by the work.

Is there anything in particular you feel you would like to explore that you have not yet tapped into?

Well, I wish to explore more about Korea, especially the significance of the country's division. I also generally would like to further explore Asia as a region, which ranges from Istanbul via the Middle East and Central Asia and up to the so-called Far East (over India or via Central Asia). I guess it will be a long-term engagement that will occupy me for a while as an almost-subconscious task underlying all the projects I am currently conceiving. It is exciting and terrifying, since whatever I attempt to delve into, requires a visual response through materials, method and the creation of a new way of perception. It is a long way..., but I guess I am willing to face a new chapter of challenges. Since my development from 2006 up to now has been rich and rewarding, I look forward to a new complex and difficult chapter to struggle through.

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Libération

Haegue Yang, compliment d'objets

Arts. Dans son exposition «Equivoques» présentée dans deux lieux à Strasbourg, la plasticienne sud-coréenne poursuit son travail conceptuel de mise en scène et de poétisation des articles du quotidien.



«Blind Curtain- Flesh Behind Tricolore», 2013. (Photo M. Bertola. Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg. Courtesy Gal. Ch.Crousel, Paris)

On avait vu le travail de Haegue Yang, séoulienne de Berlin, entre autres à l'expo «documenta (13)» l'an passé, une flopée de stores vénitiens s'ouvrant et se fermant lentement au-dessus des rails de la gare désaffectée de Cassel : *Approaching : Choreography Engineered in Never-Past Tense* (2012). A la galerie Chantal Crousel à Paris, aussi, ses *Dress Vehicles*, encore des stores vénitiens, richement décorés, arrangés en costumes délirants dans lesquels le visiteur est convié à se glisser pour, peut-être, interpréter une danse dada.

Strasbourg propose la première grande expo française de Haegue Yang, 42 ans, où le conceptuel plus dur cohabite avec les expériences sensorielles des stores. Avec les *Certificates* (2010-2011), par exemple, œuvres qui consistent en contrats conclus entre l'artiste et leurs acquéreurs, aux termes desquels Yang livre à celui qui l'achète un secret (un code bancaire, un mot de passe en ligne, etc.). Si l'interface du *Certificate* est un bout de papier, son contenu est une épreuve mentale, fondée sur l'engagement et la confiance.

Eric Loret
Haegue Yang, compliment d'objets
Libération, August 22, 2013
https://cutt.ly/WXSZuiX

Hameau. Résistance, opposition et contre-pied passifs par réarrangement de l'espace *(Grid Bloc,* série de papiers millimétrés non standards *)* et des gestes, en tissant un «milieu» où tous les rapports sont potentiellement inversables, l'univers de Haegue Yang n'est pas très aisé à résumer ni même à appréhender - on ne va pas faire les malins.

Une de ses œuvres «anciennes» (*Picture Study,* 2003 *)* consiste en deux murs de photos faites par les enfants d'un hameau nippon. D'un côté, les images dans l'ordre de leur prise de vue, chaque ligne correspondant à un écolier. En face, les mêmes clichés réorganisés par l'artiste en fonction des thèmes, matières ou couleurs car, de fait, eu égard à la petite taille du village, les photographes en herbe ont souvent immortalisé les mêmes objets, animaux et lieux : où l'on se rappelle que l'art précède le réel, dont nous ne voyons que ce que nous en avons appris à voir.

Encore plus tôt, Yang s'était intéressée aux traces, autre grand passage obligé de la création conceptuelle : *Traces of Anonymous Pupil Authors* (2001, jamais exposé jusqu'ici), des soulignages de manuels scolaires (lignes, encadrés, etc.) dont le texte a été effacé. Il ne reste plus qu'une sorte de dessin étrange de la page, témoignant du plan de lecture des élèves qui l'ont eue entre leurs mains, comme pour *Carsick Drawings* (2006), créé en bus sur des routes cahoteuses du Japon, où Yang entourait des blocs de texte dans un journal, le trait obtenu rendant compte à la fois de la suspension (mauvaise) du bus et du trajet oculaire de l'artiste dans la feuille de papier.

On comprend donc à peu près que c'est sur l'appropriation, la façon dont on saisit les objets et les idées, comment ceux-ci glissent des mains et des synapses, comment ils s'imposent à nous tout en se refusant : ainsi d'un miroir ovale retourné vers le mur *(Back,* 2006 *)* ou des frustrants *Whatever Beings* de 2011, *«sculptures murales avec déviation tangentielle vers le haut et sur le côté»*, à savoir des rectangles moulés dans le mur, mais inclinés à 10 degrés d'un côté, et dans les tailles exactes des papiers de format A0, A1, A2, A3, A4 et A5, qui sont des normes internationales. Le résultat est la matérialisation d'un étalon sous une forme inhabituelle et littéralement «déviante», puisque nous ne connaissons généralement la série des «A» qu'en fournitures de bureau. On a envie de décrocher ces *Whatever Beings* (pour quoi faire, on l'ignore), de les prendre en main, et l'on ne peut pas.

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Contrariété. Dans un entretien de 2006 pour le BAK d'Utrecht (traduit à partir du catalogue d'«Equivoques»), Haegue Yang explicite le principe de contrariété sensorielle qui régit son œuvre : «*J'aimerais [...] créer dans le public une impression d'immédiateté et d'accessibilité. Ce faisant, j'entends aussi mettre en place un cadre étrange mais "(en) commun", où puisse prendre corps l'idée quelque peu fragile et vulnérable de "communauté d'absence".*» On croirait entendre Maurice Blanchot revisitant Marguerite Duras. Normal, Haegue Yang compte l'écrivaine parmi ses sources et elle a déjà mis en scène plusieurs fois *la Maladie de la mort*, dont la dernière fois à Kassel avec Jeanne Balibar.

Origamis. *La Maladie...*, on le sait, est le socle de «La communauté négative», article de Maurice Blanchot. Ce dernier s'intéressait peu à la danse, autant qu'on se rappelle. Il existe en revanche chez Haegue Yang un geste inversé de la «communauté d'absence», qui est le «déploiement du corps» par la chorégraphie : à la fois accueil et annulation.

Qu'il s'agisse de tancarvilles (2006-2011), photographiés en train de faire leur gymnastique quotidienne ou d'origamis dépliés et écrasés en 2D, les objets mis en scène par Yang sont vivants et, dit-elle, «*généreux*», à l'instar du portant ou de l'étagère : «*Pour moi, cette capacité du portant de recevoir des objets très hétérogènes est presque touchante. Comme s'il était suffisamment tolérant ou généreux pour accepter la différence et la variété. [...] J'aime "lire" des choses dans des objets simples et apparemment insignifiants et m'intéresser à leur capacité cachée d'accueillir autre chose*» (catalogue page 37).

Les tendances de Haegue Yang à l'ouverture, au déploiement, à la danse, se manifestent dans des œuvres à la limite du cinétique (Rotating Notes, 2010) et de l'op art (*65,21 m²* et *35 m²*, 2013) mais surtout dans les *Trustworthies* de 2012-2013, grands collages géométriques réalisés à partir de motifs d'enveloppes, déchirés d'un côté, découpés de l'autre et assemblés par couleurs ou formes. La déchirure, explique Haegue Yang, est d'origine, puisque toutes ces enveloppes ont été ouvertes. Le découpage est de son fait. Les arrangements de l'artiste ressemblent ainsi à des origamis, dépliables et repliables à l'infini, «*l'état animal ou animé par excellence : l'inquiétude*», comme disait Gilles Deleuze, qui s'y connaissait en plis.

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ARTASIAPACIFIC



HAEGUE YANG, Dress Vehicle – Zig Zag, 2012, mobile performative sculpture, aluminium Venetian blinds, powder- coated aluminium frame, magnets, knitting yarn, bells, rubber ropes, castors, 278 cm high, 343 cm diameter. Courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Installation view,



HAEGUE YANG, Sonicwear – Poncho, Nickel Plated, 2013, nickel-plated bells, rings, 60 × 82 cm, 8.90 kg. Courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Photo: Studio Haegue Yang.

Between the modern art capitals of Paris and Berlin, the modest city of Strasbourg made a just brief cameo in the interwar chapter of European Modernism. This oft-forgotten moment is central to the plot of Haegue Yang's first large-scale solo show at a French institution, "Family of Equivocations," a project two years in the making with Strasbourg Museum's curator Camille Giertler.

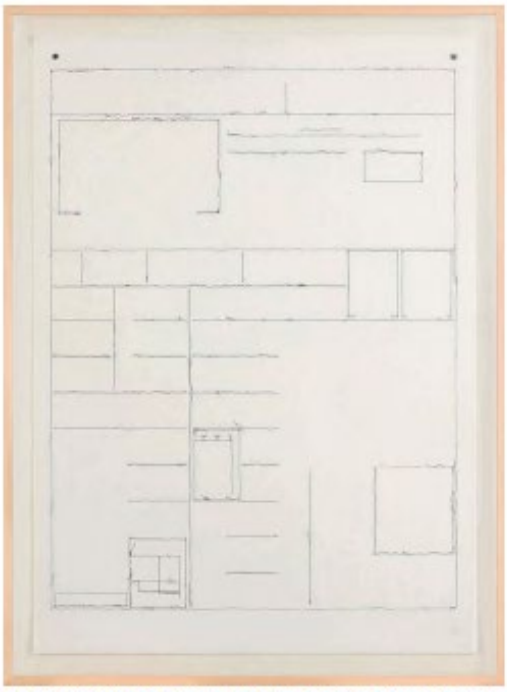
Historical personages—often intrepid, and sometimes tragic, women—are central figures in Yang's practice, their lives and works serving as inspiration for the artist's diverse sculptures, installations and conceptual projects. In Strasbourg, the central protagonist was Sophie Taeuber-Arp, the Swiss-born artist, textile maker and dancer, who, until her death in 1944 of carbon monoxide poisoning, was a major figure in Zürich's Dada movement and an early Constructivist. Her work, however, was often overshadowed by that of her husband, fellow Dada-ist Jean Arp. In 1926, the couple had relocated to Strasbourg from Switzerland and there were commissioned to design a new social space at the heart of the city, the Café de l'Aubette. They invited Theo van Doesburg, founder of the De Stijl movement, to join them in what was intended to be the "Sistine Chapel of Abstract Art." Together they produced a jubilant and elegant modern banquet hall, foyer-bar area and Ciné-Dancing hall, including a film screen, with large, colored square panels on the walls and ceiling. Before World War II, L'Aubette was a temple to both abstraction and the popular arts of film and dancing, where locals spent the evenings in the company of friends.

The commingling of the modern and popular arts—including painting, sculpture, architecture, design, film, dance, music and theater—is perhaps lost from the vantage point of today, when the exhausted 20th-century avant-garde disciplines look codified and discrete. Yet Yang's recent sculptures, as hybrid objects, return to the early 20th-century when artworks were much more free to be their own curious things. In

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HAEGUE YANG, Non-Foldings – Scenarios of Non-Geometric Folding, 2013, flattened origami objects, spray paint, framed, 6 pieces, each 62.4 × 62.4 cm. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery, Seoul. Photo: Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, Mathieu Bertola.



HAEGUE YANG, Carsick Drawings, 2006, ink, tracing paper, framed 10 pieces, each 65 × 47.6 cm. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, Mathieu Bertola.

Yang's case, her Dress Vehicle – Zig Zag and Dress Vehicle – Yin Yang (2012), located in the Salle des Fêtes, in the Aubette 1928, which served as the first exhibition venue for Yang's solo show, are three-meter-tall sculptures on wheels. The panels of colorful macramé, yarn and bells and Venetian blinds can be wheeled (and danced) around the space, and have bells and blinds that make noise and rattle. From the inside, a walker drives the sculptures, while from the outside, their many pointed sides can be swung open or closed and the blinds lifted and lowered. Wonderfully awkward to steer, they are at once machines, structures, costumes, prototypes and models.

Making noise and dancing about was further encouraged in the Ciné-Dancing hall, where Yang's new series of garments made from miniature bells, "Sonicwears" (2013), were placed on tables in the middle of this film-viewing and dance salon. Made of nickel-plated bells, some of the "Sonicwears" are like ponchos or vests, others like shawls, bracelets, ankle socks, or elaborate (and vaguely kinky) handcuffs. All are terrifically heavy to wear, like chain-mail armor, and offer a wide percussive range of sounds—depending on the wearer's motion while strolling, skipping or twirling around the space. They are homages to Taueber-Arp's Dada costumes and an invitation to the audience to make something like a performance.

Between these two festive spaces is the Foyer-bar, where dancers and revelers could cool off and quiet down with the introspective sculpture Incarnation of Wind and Condensation (2013), which features a black metal fan atop a custom-designed bar where two bottles of frozen water taken from a small freezer underneath are placed at regular intervals throughout the day. Situated between the two grand rooms of L'Aubette, the two perspiring bottles perhaps represent the chance meeting of two revelers, or for the meeting of past and present. The new work harks back to Yang's sculptures from the 2009 Korea



HAEGUE YANG, Central Composition in Explosion – Trustworthy #184, 2012–2013, various envelope security patterns, framed, 11 pieces either 98.1 × 98.1 or 68.1 × 68.1 cm. Courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Installation view, MAMCS, Strasbourg, 2013. Photo: Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, Mathieu Bertola.

Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, "Condensation," and an earlier cycle of her works that featured fans and heat-lamps. In these works, the motif of "condensation" (the transformation of vapor into liquid) was an analogy for how intellectual ideas become tangible realities, or for the survival of progressive ideals long after their originators had physically departed from the world.

The exhibition's second venue, Strasbourg's Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, houses a model of L'Aubette 1928 and many artworks by both Arp and Taeuber-Arp, including her Coupe Dada (1916), a rounded painted-wood object resembling a hat stand and assuming a kind of anthropomorphic presence. Yang's "Family of Equivocations," located in a two-storey gallery nearby, is demarcated by a hanging installation of colored Venetian blinds, Blind Curtain — Flesh Behind Tricolore (2013), comprised of seven vertically suspended rows of 60-centimeter-square shades. The semi-transparent forms allow the colors—ranging from white, gray and "flesh-tone" to solid reds and forest green—to mingle and vary depending on the vantage point. This work, like their siblings that Yang has created in recent years, may be a "domesticated" object—being made of this simple household material—yet, as an abstraction, it is a sharp rebuke to the principles of High Modernism that command a single, frontal vantage point, a flat surface and solidity of form. In other words, the blind series are made of a material that light passes through, rather than a flat structure that dominates a space or reflects the light off its surface. These hanging structures—in their colors, variations and lightness—are everything that a minimalist steel sculpture or Barnett Newman canvas is not. This is abstraction as we have not known it before.

Inside the galleries were many new works by Yang, several ongoing series shown in a new, fuller form, and several works that had never or rarely been shown before. Greeting one in the middle of the gallery, like a familiar, old friend, is Non-Indépliable, Azuré (2010), a drying rack covered in a blue fabric with its "arms" outstretched—an inadvertent figure. On the walls is Eclectic Totemic (2013), a wallpaper created in collaboration with London graphic designers OK-RM (Oliver Knight and Rory McGrath), that, in the manner of the Surrealist game "cadavre exquis," combines figures taken from 1920s literature and dance.

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Family of Equivocations Haegue Yang
ArtAsiaPacific, July 2013

On top of this, on the wall in frames are "Non-Foldings – Scenarios of Non-Geometric Folding" (2013), which are flattened origami objects used for the "Non-Folding — Geometric Tipping" series (works made by placing origami objects on paper and spray-painting the paper in black, leaving behind only their outline forms). The "Non-Folding — Geometric Tipping" works, themselves austere black-on-white constellations of forms from the origami figures, return to the idea of a single geometric form (the origami object) dancing across the page to produce these improvised images. Hardware Store Collages (2012–13) translates animatronic-motion across a flat surface with its catalog clippings of light bulbs, door handles and other fixtures pasted across a black surface. Motion and abstraction arises again in the never-before-seen Carsick Drawings (2006). Yang made the jagged tracings around the perimeter of articles in Japanese newspapers while riding the bus in the rural Akiyoshidai region in Japan. A whole room upstairs is devoted to the Trustworthies, which are Yang's collages made from the security linings of envelopes and graph paper. Diagonal Composition in Flow — Trusthworthy #183 (2013) takes up three walls of the gallery, the colorful forms spanning multiple framed panels, and on the fourth wall Central Composition in Explosion — Trusthworthy #184 (2013) uses more complicated, octagonal forms.

While the "dancing object" and "abstraction in motion" are key motifs in Yang's oeuvre, these are abstractions that do not privilege one vantage point or one material—they are aspects of a larger conception of the "minority" that runs throughout Yang's works in Strasbourg. For one thing, Taeuberg-Arp herself had long been the neglected partner in her marriage with Jean Arp, and thus within the Dada movement at large. Textiles feature less prominently in the history of abstraction than paintings. Materials such as the macramé, Venetian blinds, origami, the inside linings of envelopes, hardware-store catalogs, the reverse side of a mirror (a piece called Back, 2006), the slightly malformed or "defective" origami objects in the photograph series "Imperfections" (2010) and the hand-knitted sleeves of Roll Cosies – Cash Register Rolls, 50 Meter (2012) are Yang's veneration of the humble, marginalized and overlooked. You don't have to name the structures and ideologies that she is pushing back against—or even know that there are any—to appreciate the ways in which Yang is proposing a revised understanding of abstraction, modernism and 20th-century history.