

SLG

PRESS RELEASE

HAEGUE YANG: TRACING MOVEMENT

8 MAR – 26 MAY, MAIN GALLERY

PREVIEW: THU 7 MAR, 6.30–8.30pm

A new solo exhibition *Tracing Movement* combines new and recent works born of acclaimed South Korean artist Haegue Yang's ongoing exploration into ideas around identity politics and migration, alienation and difference. Her choice of materials is similarly wide-ranging, often integrating industrially manufactured with crafted items, revealing otherwise overlooked juxtapositions and co-existences through her own, very particular sensibility. Acts of tracing, from perceiving the physical terrain of spaces to revisiting obscured voices in history, provide the defining thread between the works in this sensorially charged show, some of which add to series developed over many years, while others are site-specific pieces.

Inspired by the potential of the South London Gallery's elegant Victorian exhibition space to be a ballroom, two works from the *Dress Vehicle* series (2011–), *Sonic Dress Vehicle – Hulky Head* and *Sonic Dress Vehicle – Bulky Birdy* (both 2018), take centre stage. These wheeled, angular sculptures occupy an indeterminate territory between abstraction and figuration, motion and stillness. Their powder-coated aluminium frames are dressed with venetian blinds and brass- and nickel-plated bells that create a subtle yet distinctive rattle when periodically activated by performers. The unevenness of the floor is traced by this rattling, which intermingles with the sounds of birdsong emanating from clusters of speakers positioned in diagonally opposite corners of the space.

Poignantly, this birdsong was recorded in April 2018 when thousands of journalists were gathered to report on the historic inter-Korean summit in the DMZ (demilitarised zone), an event watched by millions of viewers worldwide. The leaders' every move and word were scrutinised, fuelling speculation of a real breakthrough in tense military relations between North and South since the division of the Korean Peninsula after the Korean War (1950–53). Unexpectedly, the leaders asked to talk in private at a distance from the press. Lacking any evidence of the political significance of the moment or the heavily guarded nature of the site which represents deep human conflict, the audio recording of only peaceful birdsong and occasional camera sounds piqued the artist' interest.

Another sound element is triggered when visitors approach the centre of the gallery where hidden beneath the wooden floor is the original marquetry panel designed in 1891 by the English artist, book illustrator and socialist activist, Walter Crane (1845–1915). Generated through TTS (Text to Speech, a speech synthesis), 26 distinctly different artificial productions of human speech are heard uttering the words "the source of art is in the life of a people", the phrase inscribed on Crane's floor. Voices have long been significant in Yang's work, frequently referred to in her titles and important tools as what she calls 'aural writing'. Departing from her focus on human voices and their inevitable association with particular people and personalities, mechanically-generated voices enable Yang to trace Crane's sentence with "voices without throats", highlighting its invisibility as a buried piece of history.

The geometric design marked out in tape on the floor also responds to Crane's panel. Yang traced certain lines of the original design, before rotating the motif in two different directions. The off-kilter repositioning serves as a metaphor for processes of translation and interpretation, migration and movement. Yang's interest in abstraction and geometric designs, as well as in acts of recycling, informs the *Trustworthies* series (2010–), in which aesthetic value is blown into scraps of envelopes, origami, graph and sandpapers, integrating otherwise insignificant materials into expansive, dynamic wall designs. These are shown alongside other works which in various ways trace the processes of their own production. For example, Yang keeps all the blades used to make her *Trustworthies*, and has integrated some into *Blade Notations* (2019), a group of recently-made works within her ongoing *Lacquer Paintings* (1994–) that incorporate by-products from her studio and environment such as

chipboard, hair, dust and insects. She arranges the salvaged blades in specific formations suggestive of a language or code, hinting at the existence of underlying narratives.

The *Cutting Board Prints* (2012) were produced during Yang's residency at the world-renowned print-making institution, STPI, Singapore. Inspired by Singapore's multicultural population and its diverse eateries, she drew on the impressive array of vegetables and spices to produce simple vegetable prints. Yang then used the underlying juice-stained paper to make the *Cutting Board Prints*, works which trace the process of making her vegetable prints.

Hardware Store Collages date back to 1994, the year when Yang arrived in Germany. Speaking only basic German, the product catalogues of hardware stores became an artist's lexicon from which to compose her non-verbal narratives and counter her linguistic isolation. From popular products and items, the *Hardware Store Collages* have since evolved to narrate and trace our contemporary existence by including commodities that have newly emerged, such as technological devices, from electronic appliances through to sophisticated medical equipment and, in the most recent examples shown here, QLEDs, electric bidet toilet seats, airbags and bucket seats.

The *Carsick Drawings* (2006 and 2016), relate more literally than any others in the exhibition to its title, *Tracing Movement*. Again, the artist was in a foreign place, on a residency in 2006 in Yamaguchi, a remote part of Japan with an extraordinary volcanic landscape and hot springs. Yang explored the environment by taking bus trips, each one initiated with the purchase of a local newspaper. Unable to comprehend the newspaper text, she traced all the straight lines and boxes which, for her, demarcated a "structurally evident yet non-verbal and therefore incomprehensible communication". The lines of these drawings, made on large sheets of tracing paper, capture the bumpiness of her rides and as such are abstract recordings of her experience, interrupted only when she became too carsick to continue. In 2016, on a field trip with friends by car over the China-Vietnam border where massive construction of infrastructure was under way, Yang attempted another *Carsick Drawing*, this time in a small notebook. The two drawings shown here trace that road, capturing the variations of terrain and differing degrees of discomfort along the way.

Myriad influences have informed Haegue Yang's artistic practice: the life and work of historic figures, including the artist Oskar Schlemmer, Dadaist Sophie Taeuber-Arp and the spiritualist George I. Gurdjieff; the music of the Korean composer Isang Yun; and the significance of dance and rattle instruments in European pagan cultures and Korean Shamanism. These reference points are often hidden but contribute additional layers of meaning to her probing of ideas around migration, and its vast and nuanced impact. To Yang, movement is not only a physical act, but is also felt mentally, emotionally and socially. In her fundamentally anachronistic approach, ancient and futuristic go hand in hand. Her work offers us a metaphorical map of a place where time is collapsed and hierarchies between history, personal narratives, human solidarity and mechanical tracing are eradicated.

EVENTS

Performance: Okkyung Lee

Sat 30 Mar, Main Gallery, 2&4pm, Free

Cellist, composer and improviser Okkyung Lee presents a solo performance dedicated to the music of twentieth century Korean composer Isang Yun. Lee's improvisations take motifs and gestures from Yun's compositions as well as the works in Haegue Yang's show, within which it is presented.

Performance: Anton Lukoszevieze and Bartosz Glowacki

Sat 20 Apr, Main Gallery, 2pm, Free

Anton Lukoszevieze and Bartosz Glowacki of Apartment House present a recital of music for cello and accordion by Isang Yun. Founded by cellist and interdisciplinary artist Lukoszevieze in 1990, the group has presented performances of avant-garde and experimental music worldwide.

Talk: Haegue Yang with Yung Ma

Wed 15 May, Clore Studio, Main Building, 7pm, £5/3

Haegue Yang discusses her practice and current exhibition at the South London Gallery with Yung Ma, Curator, Contemporary Art and Prospective Creation at the Centre Pompidou, Paris.

LIST OF WORKS

All works courtesy of the artist unless otherwise stated.

Sonic Dress Vehicle – Hulky Head

2018

Aluminium venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminium frame, casters, brass- and nickel-plated bells, metal rings

313 x 245 x 343 cm

Courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City

Sonic Dress Vehicle – Bulky Birdy

2018

Aluminium venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminium frame, casters, brass-plated bells, metal rings

281 x 295 x 295 cm

Courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City

Carsick Drawing – Toward Huu Nghi and Youyiguan #1

2016

Carsick Drawings, 2016

Ink on paper, framed

28 x 21.5 cm

Carsick Drawing – Toward Huu Nghi and Youyiguan #2

2016

Ink on paper, framed

28 x 21.5 cm

Carsick Drawings

2016

Ink, tracing paper, framed

10 pieces, 65 x 47.6 cm each

Cutting Board Print – Eggplant #1

2012

Natural dye, 100% cotton paper, eggplant

52.5 x 63 cm

Cutting Board Print – Yellow Ginger #1

2012

Natural dye, 100% cotton paper, turmeric

39 x 42 x 3 cm

Mountainous Eyes Shielded in Sunset and Moonrise – Trustworthy #313

2017

Various security envelopes, graph paper, origami paper, and sandpaper on cardboard, framed, self-adhesive vinyl film

13 parts, either 29.2 x 29.2 cm, 57.2 x 57.2 cm or 86.2 x 86.2 cm

Courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City

Big-eyed Tongue-tied Mountains beneath Solar and Lunar Orbs – Trustworthy #315

2017

Various security envelopes, graph paper, origami paper, and sandpaper on cardboard, framed, self-adhesive vinyl film

11 parts, either 29.2 x 29.2 cm, 57.2 x 57.2 cm or 86.2 x 86.2 cm

Courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City

Pregnant Mountains – Trustworthy #316

2017

Various security envelopes, graph paper, origami paper, and sandpaper on cardboard, framed, self-adhesive vinyl film

7 parts, either 29.2 x 29.2 cm or 57.2 x 57.2 cm
Courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City

Blade Notations – Seed of E, E, E, E

2019

Chipboard, wood varnish, blades, seed, found plants, dust, insect, hair

35 x 25 x 2.3 cm

Blade Notations – Triple Downward Score

2019

Chipboard, wood varnish, blades, found plants, dust, insects, hair

35 x 25 x 2 cm

Blade Notations – Discordant Step

2019

Chipboard, wood varnish, blades, found plants, dust, insect, hair

17.5 x 25 x 2 cm

Blade Notations – Parallel Cuts

2019

Chipboard, wood varnish, blades, dust, insect

25 x 17.5 x 2 cm

Hardware Store Collages – Samsung QLEDs and Remotes #1

2019

Clippings from electronics sales brochures on chromolux paper, mounted on alu-dibond, framed
2 parts, 36.2 x 51.2 cm

Hardware Store Collage – SK Magic Electric Bidet Toilet Seats #1

2019

Clippings from electronics sales brochures on chromolux paper, mounted on alu-dibond, framed
36.2 x 36.2 cm

Hardware Store Collage – KIA Airbags and Bucket Seats #1

2019

Clippings from automotive sales brochures on chromolux paper, mounted on alu-dibond, framed
51.2 x 71.2 cm

Floor element

2019

Tape

Site-specific dimensions

Sound element

2019

Audio player, speakers, motion sensor, Text to Speech (English), loop

Sound element

2018

Audio player, speakers, twelve birdsongs from an open sound database, loop

Sound element

2018

Audio player, speakers, recording granted by the President Office of Republic of Korea, loop

NOTES TO EDITORS

Haegue Yang Haegue Yang (born 1971, Seoul, South Korea) currently lives and works in Berlin and Seoul. Yang's work has been exhibited internationally since the mid-1990s. Recent solo exhibitions include La Panacée – MoCo, Montpellier (2018); La Triennale di Milano (2018); a survey exhibition at Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2018); Kunsthaus Graz (2017); Serralves Museum, Porto (2016) and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016). She represented South Korea at the Venice Biennale in 2009, and took part in dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (2012). Her works are in the collections of major institutions, including MoMA, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and Tate Modern, London. Yang is Professor of Fine Arts at the Städelschule, Frankfurt, Germany, and recipient of the 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize

Isang Yun (1917–1995) was a Korean-born composer whose life and work are an important ongoing influence for Haegue Yang. Isang Yun is celebrated for his compositions which combine East Asian musical traditions and European avant-garde techniques. Yun gained international acclaim working in West Germany, before his abduction and imprisonment alongside hundreds of Korean intellectuals and musicians in the notorious 1967 East Berlin Incident. Yun's contentious life symbolises the ongoing ideological divisions of the peninsula, while his work translates impressions from his turbulent transnational biography into a distinctive musical language.

About the South London Gallery

The South London Gallery (SLG) was founded in the 19th century by philanthropist William Rossiter to 'bring art to the people of south London'. Today the gallery comprises its original site at 65 Peckham Road; the Fire Station, which opened to the public in September 2018; Art Block, a space for local children and families on Sceaux Gardens Estate and two permanent gardens.

The SLG has an international reputation for its contemporary art exhibitions by established, mid-career and younger artists and programme of film and performance events. Its highly regarded, free education programme includes a peer-led young people's forum; family workshops; artist-led projects and commissions on local housing estates; and a BBC Children in Need-funded programme for looked after children.

The South London Gallery is a registered charity which raises more than half of its income from trusts and foundations, sponsors and fundraising events.

Opening Hours

The Gallery is open Tue – Fri 11am-6pm, Sat and Sun 10am-6pm.

Late opening: every Wed and last Fri of the month until 9pm.

Free entry, all welcome.

South London Gallery, 65-67 Peckham Rd, London, SE5 8UH

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Haegue Yang: Tracing Movement is supported by the Korean Cultural Centre UK

IMAGE SHEET

HAEGUE YANG: TRACING MOVEMENT

Captions and credits:

1., 2., 3. & 4. Installation view of *Haegue Yang: Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow*, 2018

Photo: Masiar Pasquali. Courtesy: Fondazione Furla and La Triennale di Milano

5. Installation view of *Haegue Yang: Ornament and Abstraction*, kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Mexico, 2017

Photo: Omar Luis Olguín

6. Haegue Yang, *Hardware Store Collages – Samsung QLEDs and Remotes #1* (detail), 2019

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