

HAEGUE YANG TRACING MOVEMENT

8 MAR - 26 MAY 2019



HAEGUE YANG: TRACING MOVEMENT

Tracing Movement combines new and recent works born of Haegue Yang's ongoing exploration into ideas around identity politics and migration, alienation and difference, which she approaches not as resolved concepts but rather as lingering, interconnected thoughts. Her choice of materials is similarly wide-ranging, often integrating industrially manufactured with crafted items, or those that are labour-intensive to produce, 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 [1]. Lacking any evidence of the

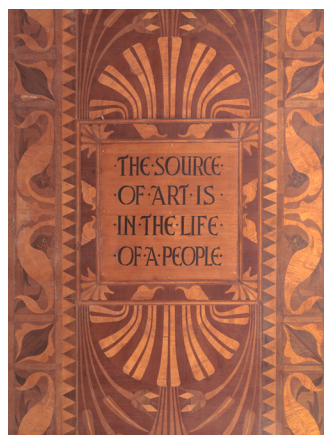


1. Moon Jae-In and Kim Jong-Un, 27 Apr. 2018. Inter-Korean Summit Press Corps/Pool/AFL/Alamy Live News

political significance of the moment or the heavily guarded nature of the site which represents deep human conflict, this audio recording of only peaceful birdsong and occasional camera sounds piqued the artist's 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) [2]. 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 for 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, before rotating the design 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*



2. Walter Crane inlaid wooden floor panel, 1891

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.

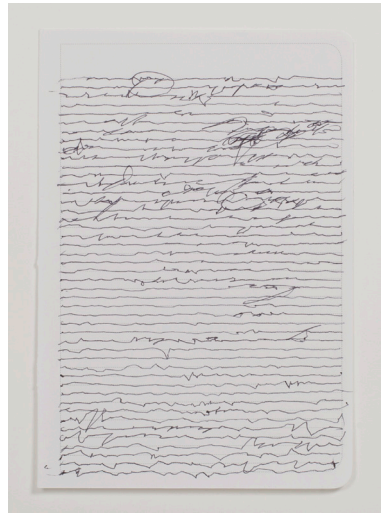
The *Cutting Board Prints* (2012) were produced during Yang's residency at the world-renowned print-making institution, STPI, Singapore. Inspired by Singapore's multicultural population and its diverse eateries, she drew on the impressive array of vegetables and spices to



3. Hardware Store Collages – Samsung QLEDs and Remotes #1 (detail), 2019

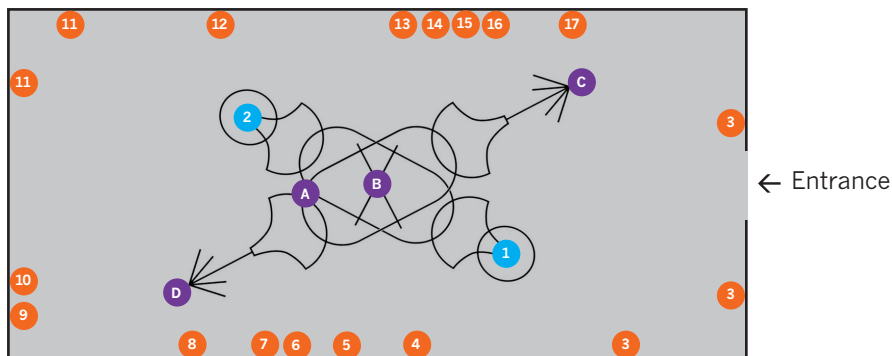
produce simple vegetable prints. Yang then used the underlying juice-stained paper to make the *Cutting Board Prints*, works which trace the process of making her vegetable prints. *Hardware Store Collages* [3] date back to 1994, the year when Yang arrived in Germany. Speaking only basic German, the 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) [4], 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.



4. *Carsick Drawing* — Toward Huu Nghi and Youyiguan #2, 2016

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.



1 2

SONIC DRESS VEHICLES

Hulky Head, 2018

313 × 245 × 343 cm

Bulky Birdy, 2018

281 × 295 × 295 cm

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

3 11 12

TRUSTWORTHIES

Mountainous Eyes Shielded in Sunset and Moonrise #313, 2017

13 parts, 29.2 × 29.2 cm,

57.2 × 57.2 cm or 86.2 × 86.2 cm

Big-eyed Tongue-tied Mountains beneath Solar and Lunar Orbs #315, 2017

11 parts, 29.2 × 29.2 cm,

57.2 × 57.2 cm or 86.2 × 86.2 cm

Pregnant Mountains #316, 2017

7 parts, 29.2 × 29.2 cm or

57.2 × 57.2 cm

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

1–3, 11, 12 courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Mexico.

All other works courtesy of the artist.

4 5 8

HARDWARE STORE COLLAGES

SK Magic Electric Bidet Toilet Seats #1, 2019

36.2 × 36.2 cm

Samsung QLEDs and Remotes #1, 2019

2 parts, each 36.2 × 51.2 cm

KIA Airbags and Bucket Seats #1, 2019

51.2 × 71.2 cm

Clippings from electronics and automotive sales brochures on chromolux paper, mounted on alu-dibond, framed

9 10 17

CARSICK DRAWINGS

Toward Huu Nghi and Youyiguan #2, 2016

28 × 21.5 cm

Toward Huu Nghi and Youyiguan #1, 2016

28 × 21.5 cm

Carsick Drawings, 2006

10 pieces, 65 × 47.6 cm each

Ink, (tracing) paper, framed

6 7

CUTTING BOARD PRINTS

Eggplant #1, 2012.

52.5 × 63 cm

Yellow Ginger #1, 2012

39 × 42 × 3 cm

Natural dye, 100% cotton paper, vegetables (eggplant or turmeric)

13 14 15 16

BLADE NOTATIONS

Parallel Cuts, 2019

25 × 17.5 × 2 cm

Triple Downward Score, 2019

35 × 25 × 2 cm

Seed of E, E, E, E, 2019

35 × 25 × 2.3 cm

Discordant Step, 2019

17.5 × 25 × 2 cm

Various materials including chipboard, wood varnish, blades, seeds, found plants, dust, insects, hair

A

Floor element, 2019

Tape

B C D

Sound element, 2019

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

Sound element, 2018

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

Sound element, 2018

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

*works grouped in series, titles are abbreviated and differ from original

BIOGRAPHY

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.



Blade Notation – Discordant Step, 2019



Studio Image. Courtesy Studio Haegue Yang, Berlin.

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. Her improvisations depart from 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 SLG with Yung Ma, Curator, Contemporary Art and Prospective Creation at the Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Visit our website for further information and event bookings

This exhibition is supported by the Korean Cultural Centre UK

Large print guides available

Isang Yun (1917–1995)

Korean-born composer Isang Yun's 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.



Portrait of Isang Yun, 1972.

Courtesy: Keystone Pictures USA/ZUMAPRESS

SLG

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