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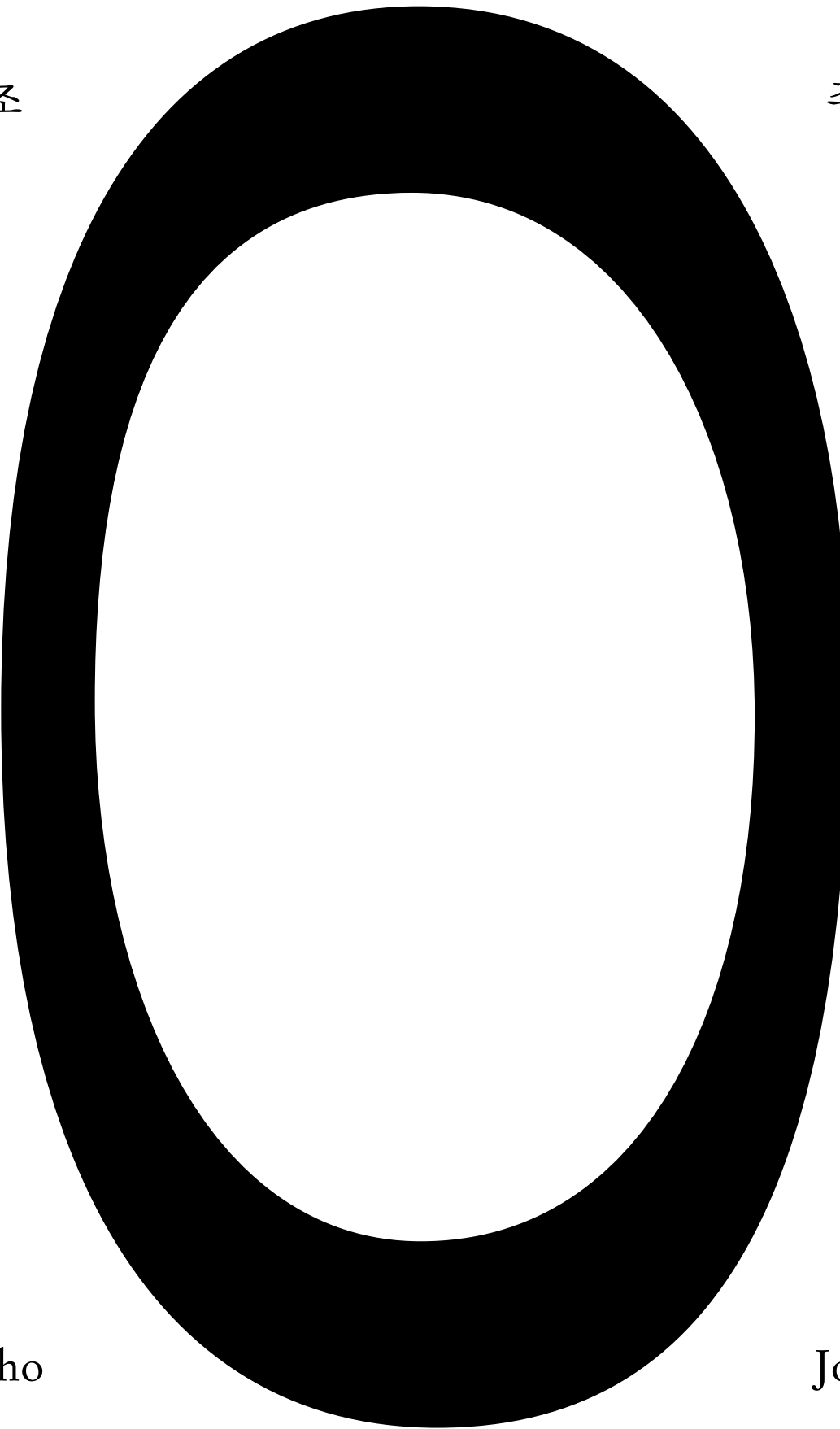
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Score of Three breaths

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주

Cho

Joo



**Cho 0 Joo**  
**2022-2023 Artistic**  
**Research-Study-Critique**

Book

Cho 0 Joo is an Artistic Research-Study-Critique book that comprehensively documents the artistic trajectory of Younjoo Cho over a span of approximately 20 years. Cho, a South Korean artist, undertook studies in France following her graduation from a university in South Korea. Subsequently, she spent approximately five years in Germany before returning to South Korea to resume exhibiting her work, particularly in the mid-2010s. This Artistic Research-Study-Critique publication received support from Arts Council Korea.

Nine Korean art critics and three international writers collaborated on this artistic research endeavor, focusing on Cho’s foundational materials, descriptions of her seminal works, and recent critical analysis conducted over the past year. A catalog of 69 works spanning from her debut in 2002 was categorized into ‘Solo,’ ‘Collective,’ and ‘Collaboration’ projects. Each work is accompanied by essential details such as production year, medium, collection location, participants, and exhibition history. Additionally, seven project manuals outlining Cho’s methodologies in constructing her works were compiled. The critical discourse revolves around themes of body, gender, care, and performance.

The research team, spearheaded by Dongyeon Koh, Namsee Kim, and Minjoo Lee, demonstrated consistent interest in Cho’s oeuvre. Yoonjeong Koh directed and edited the entire project, with contributions from domestic and international scholars including performance researcher Sinae Ra and art critic Woong Nam. Munjung Lee conducted interviews with Cho regarding her recent endeavors, while global writers Jo-Lene Ong, Claudia Mattos, and Adeena Mey also participated. Feminist researcher Hwajeong Kim Yoo and art critic Sunyeong Lee were integral team members, along with contributions from Taehyun Kwon’s previous writings.

The book provides readers with a critical lens that identifies gaps in Cho’s artistic endeavors and systematically elucidates her works through an exclusive archive encompassing films, drawings, installations, and live performances.

About the Artist

Born in Seoul in 1978, Youngjoo Cho graduated with a degree in Western painting from the art education department of Sungkyunkwan University. After going on to earn an undergraduate and graduate (DNSEP)

degree at the École Nationale Supérieure d’Arts de Paris-Cergy, she pursued an artistic career for several years while based in Berlin. She returned to Korea in 2012 and began working as an artist there; she remains based in Seoul today while taking part in numerous overseas projects. During her time in Germany, she combined her artistic activities with participation in private group activities, including her work with the Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt Art IT program and the Social Science Association. In Korea, she has participated in numerous residencies at the Gyeonggi Creation Center, the Hong-ti Art Center (Busan), Artist Residency TEMI (Daejeon), Incheon Art Platform, and Seoul Art Space Geumcheon, among others. She laid the groundwork for renewed artistic activity in Europe through a three-month residency in 2023 with the Delfina Foundation in the UK. She has received support funds from the Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture, the Institut Français (art project), and Gender Equality Fund. In 2020, she was honored with the 20th SongEun Art Award. In 2022, she was selected to take part in the SFAC’s arts and technology project Unfold X. She is currently scheduled to hold a solo exhibition at the Songeun Art and Cultural Foundation in 2024.

Cho’s body of work can be divided into several major strands: her Global Alien-based collective activity, her community-oriented artistic work in Korea, her video work based on collaborations with various invited partners, and her live performances. In formal terms, she has experimented with media in numerous areas, including installation, photography, video, performance, and dance. In terms of content, she has long focused on themes of “images of women’s bodies” and “women’s lives,” exploring the physicality of women and its various physical associations. This includes physical experiences (with a focus on contact within the home) along with numerous issues treated as taboo in different cultural spheres. Around 2020, she began expanding beyond women’s issues into the larger theme of caregiving, incorporating vulnerable members of society and the subtle irrationalities they may experience in Korea.

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## Chronology

1978 Born

1997 Began undergraduate studies in art education at Sungkyunwan University; experiences with folk art club in high school and SKKU drama club would influence her later work

2001 Graduated with BFA in art education from SKKU (Seoul).

2003–05 Master’s program in plastic arts at Paris 8 University

2005 Graduated with BA from École Nationale Supérieure d’Arts de Paris-Cergy

2007 Graduated with MA from École Nationale Supérieure d’Arts de Paris-Cergy

2008–12 Worked as artist for five years in Berlin; activities as member of social science study group and the group New Society for Visual Art and teacher at a Berlin Korean school would influence her artistic efforts to connect individuals with society

2007–14 Based between Seoul and Berlin while engaging in exhibitions and activities with Global Alien, an international artists’ group

2012 Returned to Korea

2013 Held Mild depressive episode (Corner Art Space) as first solo exhibition since returning

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2014

2015

2016

2016

2014–18

2017

to Korea; presented a performance and experimented with collaborations with artists from different genres (including composer Youngran Park)

Began residency at Hong-ti Art Center in Busan

Focused on region- and community-oriented work such as city of Seoul’s Artist’s Lunch Box and Art Sonje Center’s Real DMZ Project; entered Artist Residency TEMI in Daejeon

Participating in ARKO Art Center’s The City of Homeless; continued working as an artist until giving birth

Gave birth to a child.

Produced dance videos with middle-aged women while taking part in regional public arts projects during different residencies; encountered over 100 such women in five regions through projects such as Floral patterned romance and established reputation for video and community art

Took part in Video Portrait (Total Museum of Contemporary Art) and presented the Miss Lee and Mrs. Kim project at Incheon Art

1 Global Alien project (2006-2015)

Between 2006 and 2015, Youngjoo Cho collaborated with various artists through her activities as leader of Global Alien, a collective of Asian and European artists formed during her time in Berlin. Organized for artists residing in Berlin, Global Alien engaged in projects with themes relating to globalization, power relations, and fragmentary aspects of cultural identity.

Global Alien has explored methods of community that show social realities while allowing viewers to take part naturally in theater, performances, and games. The aims of the artists are to create fluid spaces where borders can be blurred and regional conditions surmounted. Global Alien's artistic activities span areas such as exhibitions, talks, screenings, and publications. After returning to Korea in 2012, Cho continued working with Global Alien until 2015.

As artists of various nationalities participate in the Global Alien project, its activities includes overseas shipping boxes, outdoor containers where illegal immigrants stay, places where people with different regional, personal, and religious backgrounds gather, and activities that address the uniqueness of language and the unfamiliar feelings that come when trying to understand language. The majority of its works have been ones that evenly portray the underside of power. Their interest is in the communication systems that preside in foreign lands, as well as in the invisible structures that create identity in the cultural sphere, such as media, space, walls, and media, as portrayed by artists who have experienced these difficulties when visiting new countries and encountering unfamiliar systems.



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2 One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed (2006-2007)

This "t-shirt exchange" project was carried out by Youngjoo Cho while she was based in Europe. For one evening, she would borrow the t-shirt off the back of a man she met in a cafe, on the street, at a party, or at some other location. The work itself consists of the photographs showing her when she had just woken up from sleeping in that shirt. The shirts were then laundered and given back to their owner.

Designed to show the perceptions about Asian women that are commonly held in Western societies, the work involved participatory performances with unspecified men whom the artist randomly encountered. The entire process behind the acquisition of t-shirts — the exchanges of conversation and contact information, the request for another meeting — was based on the project design. In this and other works, Cho has revealed social preconceptions either by performing a role based on ethnic stereotypes or by designing elements that might elicit misconceptions from the viewers and participants.

Exhibition History

- 2021 MMCA Residency Changdong (Banner Project), Seoul, Korea
- 2013 Port City Exchange Exhibition Busan, Hamburg, Shanghai
- Exchange Exhibition, Busanjin Station, Busan
- 2013 My public affairs, Space MASS, Seoul, Korea
- 2012 CYAYAF 2012 (Contemporary Art & Young Artists Festival), Kintex, Ilsan

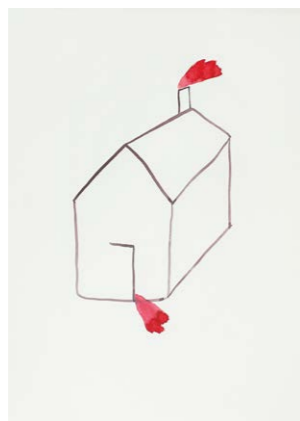
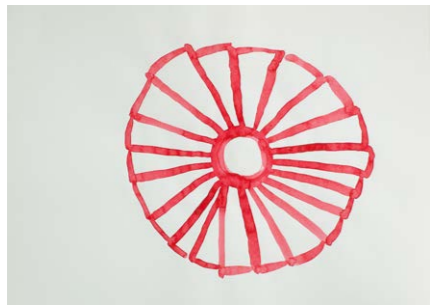


3 True stories 2 (2012)

True stories 2 was produced during a roughly yearlong period when the artist was suffering from depression. Consisting of something like a daily sketch journal, it adopts the motif of a red skirt. It explores where the trauma was situated in her personal history – as well as where she herself was situated in its wake. The work is a monument to the past, which cannot be returned to from the present as though passing from one room into another. It was created in a catalog format, where drawings are matched to excerpts from a hospital journal and texts by the psychoanalyst responsible for her counseling. The red skirt would often appear as a motif in Cho’s later drawings and installations.

Exhibition History

- 2015 A beautiful match made in heaven, Artist Residency TEMI X Gwangju Media Art Festival residence, Artist Residency TEMI, Daejun
- 2014 Symbiotic Sharing, Hongti Art Center, Busan
- 2013 Port City Exchange Exhibition, Busan, Hamburg, Shanghai Exchange Exhibition, Busanjin Station, Busan
- 2013 Good job Good place Good time, Osan Cultural Foundation, Osan
- 2013 Mild depressive episode, Corner Art Space, Seoul



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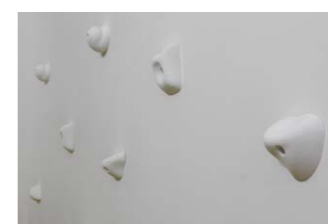
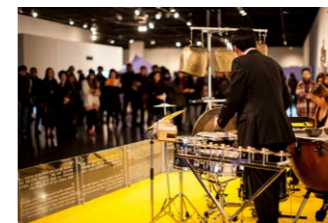
4 True stories 1 Ver. 1-4 (2013-2014)

True stories 1 began with installation work artistically representing personal incidents that happened to the artist in 2011 and 2012, which she relates to absurd aspects of Korean society. She shares the personal stories that inspired her through collaborations with artists in other areas, including composers, dancers, and performers of traditional Korean gugak music.

Presented at Cho’s first solo exhibition after her 2012 return to Korea (Mild depressive episode, 2013, Corner Art Space), the work involved collaborations with genres such as music composition, dance, and percussion. Bearing aspects that related the artist’s own personal traumas to the historical and political scars affecting Korea, it was a performance combined with aesthetic elements created with her artistic collaborators, including colors, texts, and objects.

Exhibition History

- 2014 Gwangju Biennale's 20th-anniversary exhibition, Sweet Dew – After 1980, at the Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju, Korea
- 2013 Round-up, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 2013 Mild depressive episode, Corner Art Space, Seoul, Korea
- 2013 My public affairs, space MASS, Seoul, Korea



Feathers on lips marked the beginning of a new series focusing on “care,” encompassing numerous subtly irrational aspects of Korean society. Focusing on the theme of contact within the home, it addresses physical experiences and various taboo issues in Korea and other cultural spheres.

Developed with choreographer Minkyung Lee, the work features four female performers. The bodies that appear in Feathers on lips are more varied than the hardened stereotype of the “female body.” Inspired by observations of gestures from jiu-jitsu and other sports that Cho adopted for her work, the scenes may come across as somewhat violent, as the video adopts a neutral perspective to show the physicality of women against a white backdrop. The different physical movements that appear before that bleached background are meant to show social perspectives and aspects that society treats as taboo or seeks to ignore.

Exhibition History

- 2021 HA-HA-HA HAUS, Suwon Museum of Art, Suwon, Korea
- 2020 Balance & Tension, Space TYPE, Seoul, Korea
- 2020 The 20th SongEun ArtAward Exhibition, Songeun, Seoul, Korea
- 2020 Cotton Era, Alternative Space LOOP, Seoul, Korea



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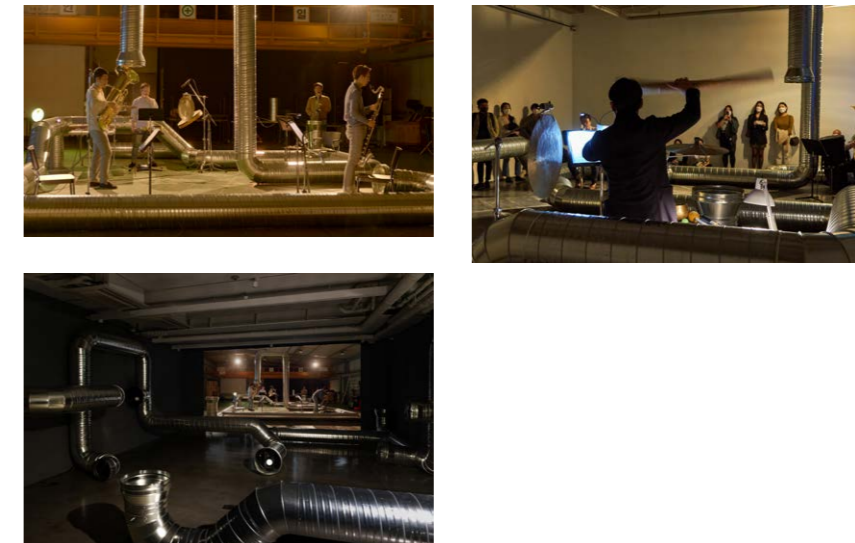
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Three breaths is a work of performance, video, sound, and installation. Working with composer Eunji Lee, the artist created a three-movement score based on her childcare journal, which was developed into a quartet performance for the bass clarinet, alto saxophone, tuba, and percussion. In addition to the performance footage, Three breaths also includes an enormous duct tube structure that surrounds the exhibition setting. The structure is based on the motifs of the “umbilical cord,” “windpipe,” and “tunnel,” while the breaths that appear in the work have been divided into air sounds from the process of the baby’s breath separating from the mother’s body (first movement) and the child’s breathing as it grows (second and third movements). The performance footage includes four male performers. These professional classical musicians appear dressed in pastel tones as they perform amid the components of the duct structure, which they sometimes use as part of their instruments. The sound configuration varies with the type of exhibition setting (including four- and eight-channel formats), and the duct structure can be installed in variable formats based on shapes that appear in the video.

Three breaths was presented alongside Feathers on lips (2020) at Youngjoo Cho’s solo exhibition Cotton Era at Alternative Space LOOP. It is a standout example of the artist using performance and video media to express her feelings of anxiety and urgency as an artist after giving birth to a child. The breaths, which may appear discordant, represent the different forms of physical contact that take place between the recipient and giver of care, and they also signify the coexistence of sadness, anger, and joy as the two individuals grow together.

Exhibition History

- 2023 Voices from the Walls, Art Space Hohwa, Seoul
- 2020 The 20th SongEun ArtAward Exhibition, SongEun Art Space, Seoul
- 2020 16 Columns: Gallery without Roof, PS333, Seoul Art Space Geumcheon, Seoul
- 2020 Cotton Era, Alternative Space LOOP, Seoul



Caring exercise consists of a participatory performance staged as part of an interactive art research and development program by the Asia Culture Center, as well as a video work based on it. It was created as a continuation of the “labor of caregiving” perspective presented by Youngjoo Cho between 2021 and 2023. In Caring exercise, the spongy white structure of Humangarten is used as a tool for movement by performers and participants. As in Cohabiting with yellow Benjamin, with its use of massage as a metaphor for different forms of caregiving (childcare, household labor, patient care, etc.), Caring exercise starts from the bonds that exist in all of us as people who give and receive care. It is a two-person activity based on rehabilitation therapy movements, developed by a research team consisting of an artist, a psychotherapist, a physical therapist, an activist, and a dancer. The video incorporates the physical experiences of various performers (including children, adolescents, young adults, disabled persons, and senior citizens) as they help and support one another in partnerships where they compensate for each other’s physical weaknesses. The video’s production was preceded by a Caring exercise workshop, which involved research into the movements of mutual care with 50 Gwangju resident participants, based on the theme of “caring, communicating, and forming relationships.” Cho’s perspective on caregiving as observed in Caring exercise is also something she plans to experiment with further in subsequent works.

Exhibition History  
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1	Performance	수기 요정 Fée suki	2002	Audience participation performance Fir tree, special regional products		N	Solo	N	3 7 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2002	BOUNDARY AND CHANGE, Korea-Japan Exchange Workshops and Exhibitions, Nakatsu, Japan	Artist	Tea delivery performance, Performer: Youngjoo Cho	-	N	2023
2	Installation	교정된 일기 Corrected diaries	2003-2004	Slide projectors, mounted slide films, speakers, plaster	Dimensions variable	N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130			Artist		-	N	2023
3	Installation	258버스 승객을 부러워 말자! Ne soyez pas jaloux du bus 258!	2004	Cushions, magazines, candy, posters		N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2004	A bus stop in Rueil-Malmaison, neighborhood of Paris	Artist	Artist documentation about the audience reactions	-	N	2023
4	Video	밤의 작은 음악 A little night music	2005	Single channel video, color, sound	2min	N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2014	Changwon Asian Art Festival, Sungsan Art hall, Changwon, Korea	Artist	-	-	Y	2023
5	Video	기린에 대한 기억 Memory of a giraffe	2005	Single channel video, Black and white, sound (Korean), subtitles (French/English)	4min	N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2013	Good job Good place Good time, Osan Cultural Foundation, Osan	Artist	-	-	Y	2023
6	Installation	퍼블릭 파크 Public parks	2006	Variable setup, park soil from famous tourist spots in France, plastic bag (15x23cm each), Mixed Media	Dimensions variable	N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2005	Nouveau Cinema, Cine Qua Non, ESSEC digital film festival, Paris	Artist	-	-	N	2023
7	Installation	모국 방문 Visiting my motherland	2006	Mixed media	Dimensions variable	N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2011	The end of the dream, Micamoca Project e.V., Berlin, Germany	Artist	-	-	N	2023
8	Project	글로벌 에일리언 Global Alien	2006	-	-	N	Collective	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2006	Global Alien, Meinblau Gallery, Berlin, Germany	Artist	[Disassembled Currently] Main Member: Youngjoo Cho, Thorbjørn Reuter Christiansen, Namsee Kim, Kuo-Wei Lin, Christopher Mayer, Lizza May David, Jakob Schaible, Marte Kiessling, Jae-Hyun Yoo, Ingirafn Steinarsson	<a href="https://globalalien.net/">https://globalalien.net/</a>	N	2023
9	Photography	나는 받아들여질 수 없는 I'm not acceptable	2006-2007	Digital print	Dimensions variable	(ed. 1/5 + A.P.1)	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2013	My public affairs, Space MASS, Seoul, Korea	Artist	-	-	N	2023
10	Photography	원 나이트 위드 썸원스 티셔츠 인 마이 베드 One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed	2006-2007	Digital print	50x35cm (Dimensions variable)	(ed. 1/5 + A.P.1)	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2021	MMCA Residency Changdong (Banner Project), Seoul, Korea	Artist	Performer: Youngjoo Cho	-	N	2023
11	Installation	나는 많은 러브 레터를 받고 싶다 I want to get a lot of love letters	2006-2007	Mixed media	16x23cm	N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2013	Good job Good place Good time, Osan Cultural Foundation, Osan	Artist	-	-	N	2023
12	Photography, Installation	파리 루르멜가 77번지의 크리스마스 (1) Christmas at the 77, rue de Lourmel, Paris (1)	2006-2007	Digital print, lettering stickers	106x150cm	(ed. 1/5 + A.P.1)	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2013	My public affairs, Space Mass, Seoul	Artist	-	-	N	2023
13	Photography	파리 루르멜가 77번지의 크리스마스 (2) Christmas at the 77, rue de Lourmel, Paris (2)	2007	Digital print, lettering stickers	28x21x5cm	N	Solo	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2013	My public affairs, Space Mass, Seoul	Artist	-	-	N	2023
14	Video	글로벌 에일리언 - TV 스피치의 자유 Global Alien - TV freedom of speech	2007	Gallery: Audience participation performance, installation, video / Outdoor: performance	A total of 3 videos (aired on RTV at the time) *Currently unavailable as the videos have been expired	N	Collective	N	14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 28 31 45 59 130	2007	Freedom of Speech-Global Alien TV-Studio, Ssamezie Space, Seoul, Korea	Artist	Global Alien project	-	Y	2023

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15	Installation	앨리스의 메시지 Message from Alice	2007/ 2009	Gypsum	180×110×4cm	N	Solo	N	3 7 Yoonjung Koh 14	2009 <u>Splendid Isolation-Goldrausch 2009</u> , Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany	Artist	-	-	N	2023
16	Installation	접근할 수 있는, 허용할 수 있는, 가치 있는 Accessible, acceptable and valuable	2007	Aluminum	48×38×17.5cm	N	Solo	N	15 16 17	2011 <u>Sommer auf dem Balkon</u> , Antje Wachs Gallery, Berlin, Germany	Artist	-	-	N	2023
17	Photography	즐거운 명절 Happy holiday	2007	Digital print	150×100cm	N	Solo	N	18	2012 <u>True stories 1, Ver. 1-4 (2013-2014)</u>	Artist	-	-	N	2023
18	관객 참여형 Performance, Photography	티셔츠 교환하기 Exchanging t-shirts	2007	Mixed media	Dimensions variable	N	Collective	N	19 20 21 22	2009 <u>Power of Spoken Words 'Import Export'</u> , Gallery rum 46, Århus, Denmark 2008 <u>Congress of Culture-Global Alien</u> , Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany 2007 <u>Freedom of Speech-Global Alien TV</u> , Ssamezie Space, Seoul, Korea	Artist	Global Alien project	-	N	2023
19	Sound, Installation	구술 시험 Oral exam	2008	Sound	Dimensions variable	N	Solo	N	23 24	2008 <u>Congress of Culture-Global Alien</u> , Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany	Artist	Global Alien project	-	N	2023
20	Exhibition (Project)	글로벌 에일리언: "문화 회합" Global Alien "Congress of culture"	2008	Audience participation performance, installation, video	-	N	Collective	N	25 26	2008 <u>Congress of Culture-Global Alien</u> , Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany	Artist	Global Alien project	-	Y	2023
21	Installation	진짜일 수도 있다 It could be real	2009	Fax, 100 sheets of A4 paper	Dimensions variable	N	Solo	N	28 31	2009 <u>Splendid Isolation-Goldrausch 2009</u> , Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany 2009 <u>ARTIST AS A MEDIA</u> , Gallery Jungmiso, Seoul, Korea	Artist	-	-	N	2023
22	Exhibition	임포트 익스포트: 발화된 말의 힘 Import export: Power of spoken words	2009	Gallery: Audience participation performance, installation, video / Outdoor park: Installation and audience participation performance	-	N	Collective	N	45 59 130	2009 <u>Import Export: Power of Spoken Words</u> , Gallery rum 46, Århus, Denmark	Artist	Global Alien project	-	Y	2023
23	Video	Tscho가 아니라 Djo Nicht Tscho, sondern Djo	2009	Single channel video, color, sound	Dimensions variable	N	Solo	N	140 142	2013 <u>Good job Good place Good time</u> , Osan Cultural Foundation, Osan 2009 <u>Venice, Souvenir, Pavillon, Inselgluck Festival</u> , Berlin, Germany 2009 <u>CameraCartell-scenario 3</u> , Hedah Gallery, Maastricht, the Netherlands	Artist	Katarina Zdjelar Hommage	-	Y	2023
24	Installation	마이 인터내셔널 스탠다드 홈 My international standards home	2010	Sound, mixed media	Dimensions variable	N	Solo	N	145	2010 <u>Step toward Home</u> , Dam Stuhltrager Gallery, Berlin, Germany	Artist	-	-	N	2023
25	Performance, Video	글로벌 에일리언의 국토 안보 Homeland security of Global Alien	2010	Audience participation performance	-	N	Collective	N	148	2010 <u>Step toward Home</u> , Dam Stuhltrager Gallery, Berlin, Germany	Artist	Global Alien project	-	Y	2023
26	Performance, Photography	ICCD: 국제 문화 협력 만찬 ICCD: International cultural cooperated dinner	2010	Audience participation performance	Dimensions variable	N	Collaboration	N	151	2010 <u>Schnell &amp; Schmutzig</u> (Curated by Lab-Montage), Markthalle IX, Berlin, Germany	Artist	Collaboration/ Youngjoo Cho & Nicoll Ulrich	-	N	2023
27	Performance, Video, Photography	희망과 실패: 아메리칸 드림 조사하기 Hope and failure: Invasgating the american dream	2011	Gallery: Audience participation performance, installation, video / Outdoor: Audience participation performance	-	N	Collective	N	155 160	2011 <u>Hope and Failure</u> , Gallery Homeland, Portland, Oregon, USA	Artist	Exhibition of performance records (take twice) Global Alien project	-	Y	2023
28	Performance	리버스 뉴욕 시티: 도시 공간에서 언어를 재점유하기 Rebus New York city: Re-occupy language in urban space	2012	Gallery: Audience participation performance, installation, video / Outdoor: Audience participation performance	-	N	Collective	N	165 170	2012 <u>Rebus New York City</u> , Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, USA 2012 <u>Rebus New York City Re-occupy Language in Urban Space</u> , Art Space qqool, Seoul, Korea	Artist	Global Alien project / 2012, artspacekkoolpool	-	Y	2023
29	Painting	진실된 이야기 2 True stories 2	2012	Aquarelle on paper	21×29cm	N	Solo	N	173 176 182	2015 <u>A beautiful match made in heaven</u> , Artist Residency TEMI X Gwangju Media Art Festival residence, Artist Residency TEMI, Daejun 2014 <u>Symbiotic Sharing</u> , Hongti Art Center, Busan 2013 <u>Port City Exchange Exhibition</u> , Busan, Hamburg, Shanghai 2013 <u>Good job Good place Good time</u> , Osan Cultural Foundation, Osan 2013 <u>Mild depressive episode</u> , Corner Art Space, Seoul	Artist	-	-	N	2023

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Project Manual

**1.**  
**I'm not acceptable**  
 (2006-2007)  
 Digital print, dimensions  
 variable

About the Work

Created while Youngjoo Cho was a student at the Ecole nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris Cergy (ENSAPC), *I'm not acceptable* was affixed in poster form throughout that institution's campus. It expresses the discrimination that she faced as an Asian female outsider and the anxieties that she experienced whenever she renewed her visa. Originating from existential fears related to social acceptance and inclusion, the work captures a personal scene from the artist's life as an individual. Photographs showing intimate settings such as the artist's room and bed were printed out into large images like the ones used on banners in public settings such as schools and parks. The method of placing the work bears similarities to a protest movement, using the most trivial of scenes to elicit major impact. In that sense, the most important aspects of the work's form lie not in the method of printing or the surface on which the images are printed, but in the scale or methods of their placement in space.

Archive Composition

- 1 Digital files (images of artwork)

Directions for Component Use

[Printing Photographs]

To reflect the size of the space where the photographs are to be shown, the size of the printed surface should take up roughly half the wall (at least one meter across).

[How to Place the Photographs]

The photographs should be placed unframed in poster or banner form in either indoor or outdoor settings. When using the poster format, the images should be affixed quickly and crudely with transparent or yellow box tape.

Solo

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**2.**  
**It could be real**  
 (2009)  
 Fax, 100 sheets of A4 paper,  
 dimensions variable

About the Work

*It could be real* is a predecessor to the 2022 work *Discrete bodies reunite*. The artist attempts to join the boundaries of different spaces by faxing an identification card that she has drawn herself. In the environment of the early 2000s when online communication was becoming much more common, faxes were still seen as potentially more reliable than email. The devices were used to transmit important documents such as contracts and identification. Using this one-time "medium of trust," Cho presents a process of transmitting and receiving an identification card documenting her presence in a country. This is rooted in the belief that a subject who is absent "here and now" can verify their presence "over there." This work requires a drawn replica of an ID card, two locations for the transmission and receipt of information, and a medium connecting those two places. The medium is not limited to a fax machine or paper and may vary with the forms of contemporary technology. However, the subtitle and year are represented differently when the medium changes, e.g., *It could be real (Fax)* (2009) vs. *It could be real (Zoom)* (2023).

Archive Composition

- 1 Digital files (images of artwork)
- 2 Youngjoo Cho's ID card drawing
- 3 Paper printout received via fax

Directions for Component Use

[Displaying Existing Work]

The drawing (replica) within the archive may only be displayed in archival form. The artwork's title should be listed as *It could be real (Fax)* (2009). When a fax machine is included in the display, it should be used to allude to the fact that the drawing was transmitted by fax, regardless of whether it actually operates.

[Creating a New Work]

Hire at least three individuals to produce the ID drawing. Some spatial separation is necessary for transmission and reception (distance is unimportant). Select some technological medium for the sender and recipient in two different spaces to verify each other's presence (in consideration of the technological environment at the time). The printout may be displayed differently depending on the medium.

For instance, if the drawing's image data is being transmitted through a real-time videoconference format rather than by fax, it may be shown via monitor display or other formats besides printing, based on the designer's determination.

The artwork's title should be given as *It could be real* (\*name of medium\*) (\*year of exhibition\*). The received copy of the drawn ID and the device(s) used for transmission and reception must be included in the display.

Solo

**3. Humangarten**  
(2021)  
polyurethane, sponge, infrared lamp, dimensions variable

**About the Work**

Humangarten consists of an installation that reinterprets a scene of caregiving labor. The individual installation components are bleached fully white and produced with shock-absorbent polyurethane and sponge materials, which are often found in settings such as daycare centers and long-term care facilities. The viewer can lean against or sit on the work, which consists of forms such as cylinders, semicircles, and circular carpet. Conceiving it at a time when physical contact was restricted, Cho was attempting to complete the significance of physical contact as a way of forming and maintaining bonds and closeness with others. The work was also used as a setting for Cho's live performance *Human beings don't spring up like mushrooms* (2021) and reused later in her *Com pani* (2021), *Cohabiting with yellow Benjamin* (2022), and *Colere* (2022). Humangarten was additionally used as material for the work *A Clockwork Orange 1, 2, 3* (2023) by Ahnlee Lee. As this shows, it has been repurposed as a stage or material for other artwork. As the spotless white installation is used in different exhibitions, it ends up tarnished and damaged with various excretions and dust. In that sense, the installation may remain in use while continuing to serve its purpose in terms of the artwork's nature, but it should be dismantled and reproduced once a certain level of damage is exceeded.

**Archive Composition**

- 1 Digital files (artwork images)
- 2 Directions for production

**Directions for Component Use**

The standard for this work is the fourth white-series code (#E6E6E6) from the HTML Color Chart. Once the white surface is fully tarnished, it should be discarded. Partial cleaning is allowed for a certain amount of isolated tarnishing, but the work as a whole should not be renovated or repaired.

**Solo**

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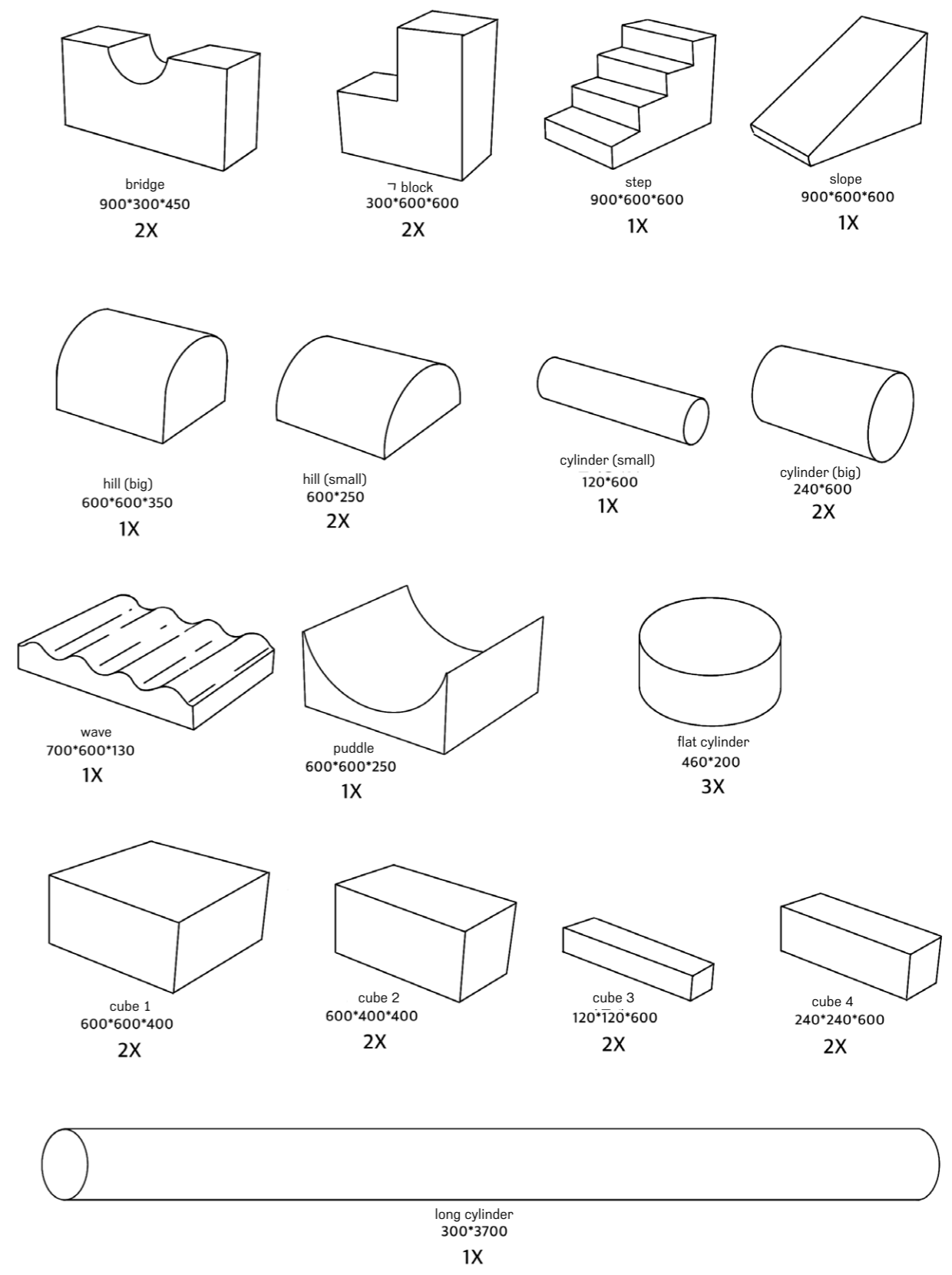
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Humangarten Installation Equipment List

other performers are blonde or brunette, hers might be dyed light purple, light blue, or light green to distinguish her from them.)

d Eunjeong Im's role: Short deep purple shorts, sleeveless red bean-red t-shirt (may be layered with gray or apricot strapped top). Short or medium-short hairstyle.

3 Setting and Stage

a White circular mat (at least four meters across and three centimeters in thickness), with performers using the surrounding space to enter and exit.

[Exhibition Format]

- 1 Performance Alone: Refer to directions above for live performance composition.
- 2 Performance with Archival Video: Play the video only when the live performance is not taking place.
- 3 Video Alone: Rather than showing as an archival video, consider an installation format that emphasizes the live nature of the performance.
- Ex.) Balance & Tension (2021), which was presented at Space TYPE, has a circular mat at the center serving as the performance stage, with monitors positioned at three locations around it leading away from the stage. All the monitors were synced to allow the same video to play simultaneously. Speakers were installed to integrate the entire setting.
- + This archive manual was based on the acquisition explanatory materials developed for the Perform PCS project in 2021.

(Drafted by PCS researcher Minjoo Lee)

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**6. Three breaths** (2020)  
Single-channel video, eight-channel sound installation (12 min., 37 sec.)\*, galvanized steel exhaust piping, live performance

\* Eight-channel sound record including bass clarinet, percussion, tuba, and alto saxophone along with bell performances by each musician.

Composer: Eunji Lee  
Performers: Wook Kim (bass clarinet), Subok Seo (percussion), Donghwa Lee (tuba), Inhyeon Jeong (alto saxophone)  
Cinematography & Editing: Seonyeong Lee  
Camera: Jeonghun Lee & Junha Choe  
Sound: Garam Heo  
Sound Assistant: Sinwon Park

About the Work

Three breaths is a three-movement composition by Eunji Lee based on Youngjoo Cho's child care diary. It is performed by a quartet consisting of a clarinet, alto saxophone, tuba, and percussion, with a galvanized steel exhaust pipe installation structure and a video played after the performance. While the work is a single performance consisting of a child care diary and composed sound, video, and installation elements, it is also designed for all of them to be collected separately. In particular, an element of performativity can be detected in the performance's sounds. As the sounds of the composition based on the childcare diary are emitted through an organ (in the human body or galvanized steel), they cause friction between air molecules, and the resulting vibrations cause the listener to imagine the organ's movements. The sounds posited for the Three breaths performance draw on the format of ASR, which uses auditory sensations to create a sensory experience of psychological stability, pleasure, and so forth. This encourages listeners to imagine the movement of air and breathing in the body's organs.

Archive Composition

- 1 Single-channel video file (HD/4K)
- 2 Sound source (four-channel sound source file)
- 3 Galvanized steel pipe installation manual (variable installation based on setting)
- 4 Score (overall score and individual percussion, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, and tuba scores)

Directions for Component Use

- 1 (Spatial) Sound Installation Alone:
  - a Four to eight channels
  - b Playing sound: The use of a headset/earphones is suggested when a spatial installation is not possible.
- 2 Video Installation Alone: Single-channel playback
- 3 Structure Installation Alone:
  - a Based on archival images of the installation, the steel pipe structure should be designed to occupy the entire space. The arrangement may vary with the nature of the setting.
- 4 Structure, Video, and Sound Installation:
  - a Provide headsets (earphones) so that the video and sound output do not overlap.
  - b The video should be projected on one wall, while the steel pipe structure should be installed to occupy the entire space. The arrangement may vary with the nature of the setting.
- 5 Structure and Sound Installation:
  - a The steel pipe structure should be installed to occupy the entire space, and the sound should be played on stereophonic speakers.
- 6 Video and Sound Installation:
  - a After removal of the video's sound, the four-channel sounds stored in ASMR format should be mixed and played along with the video on stereophonic speakers. Headsets may be provided in cases of group exhibitions.
- 7 Structure and Video Installation:
  - a The video should be projected on one wall, while the steel pipe structure should be installed to occupy the entire space. The arrangement may vary with the nature of the setting.
- + This archive manual was based on the acquisition of explanatory materials developed for the Perform PCS

Collaboration



Fée Suki, 2002, fir tree, special regional products

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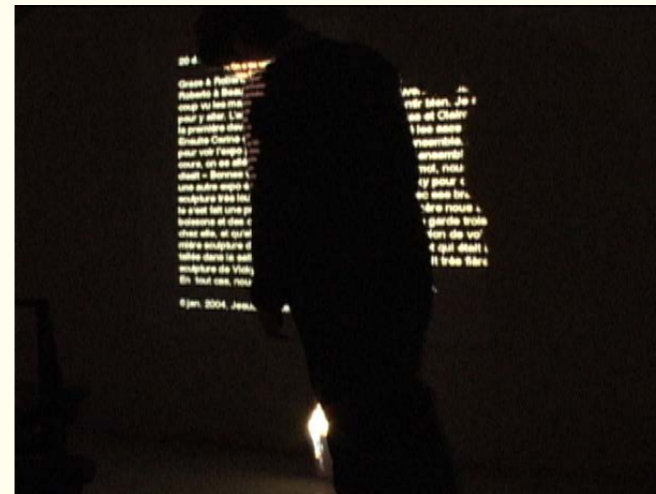
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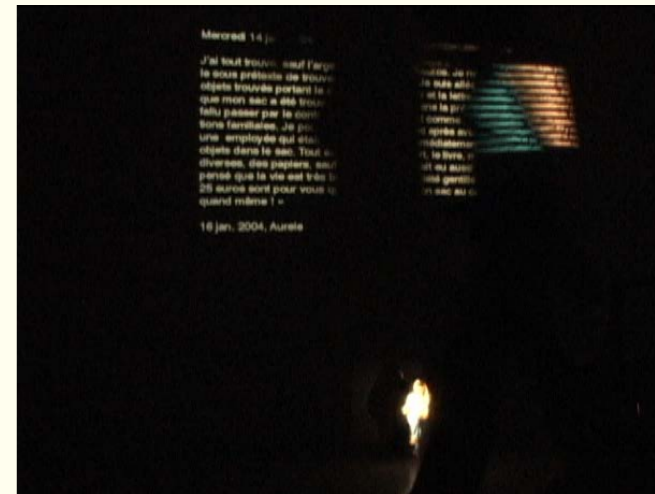
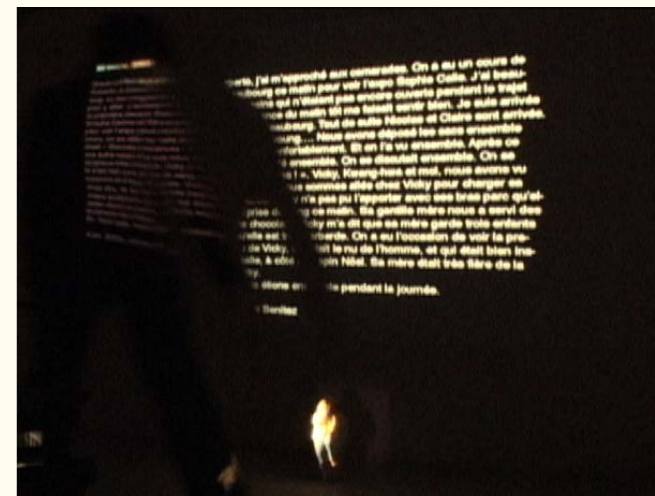
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Corrected diaries, 2003-2004, slide projectors, mounted slide films, speakers, plaster





Ne soyez pas jaloux du bus 2581, 2004, cushions, magazines, candy, posters

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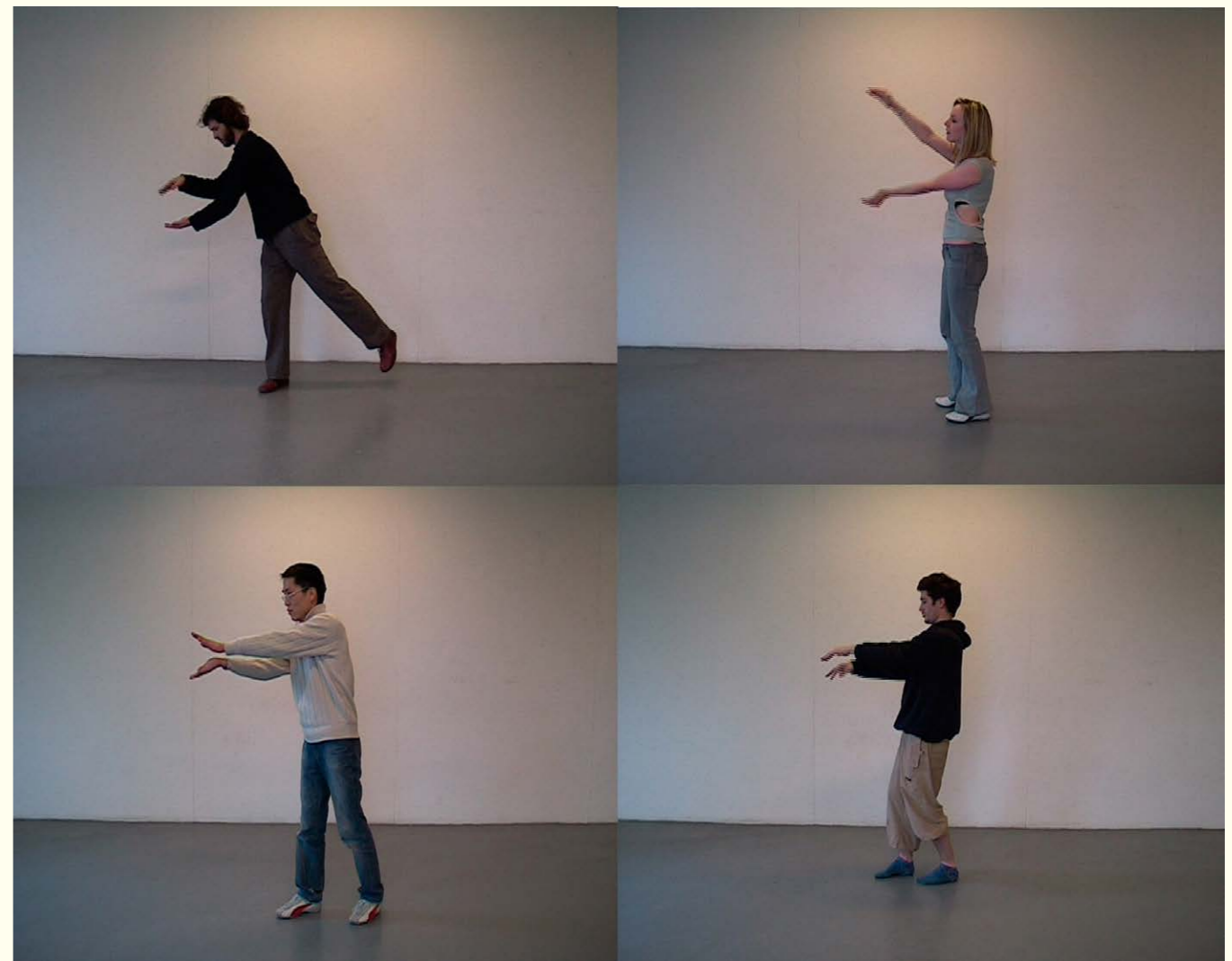
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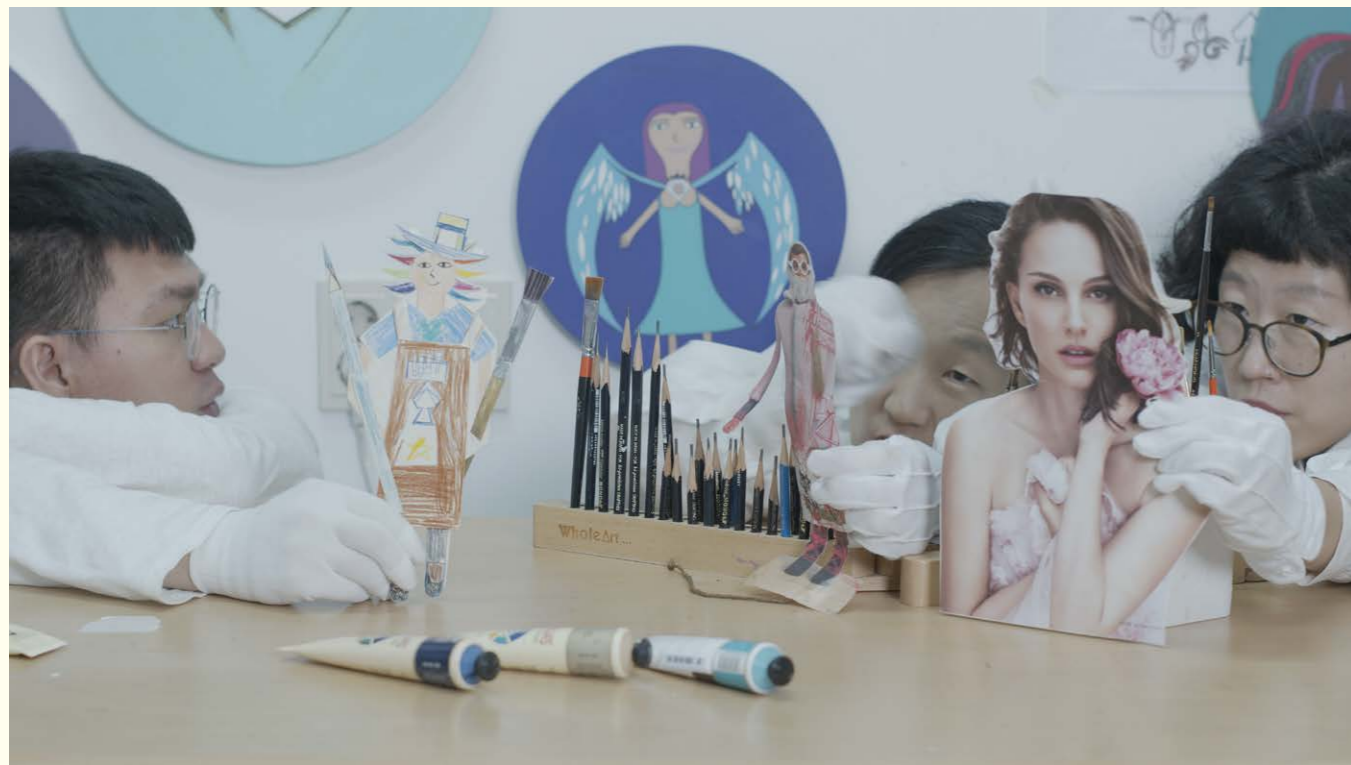
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A little night music, 2005, single channel video, color, sound, 2 min



Turn up, 2020, single channel video, color, sound, 12 min 22 sec

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Humangarten, 2021, polyurethane, sponge, infrared lamps, dimensions variable



Human beings don't spring up like mushrooms, 2021, live performance, 25 min

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Com pani, 2021, single channel video, color, sound, 18 min 6 sec



Discrete bodies reunite, 2022, live satellite performance, 2 channel video installation, 30 min, dimensions variable

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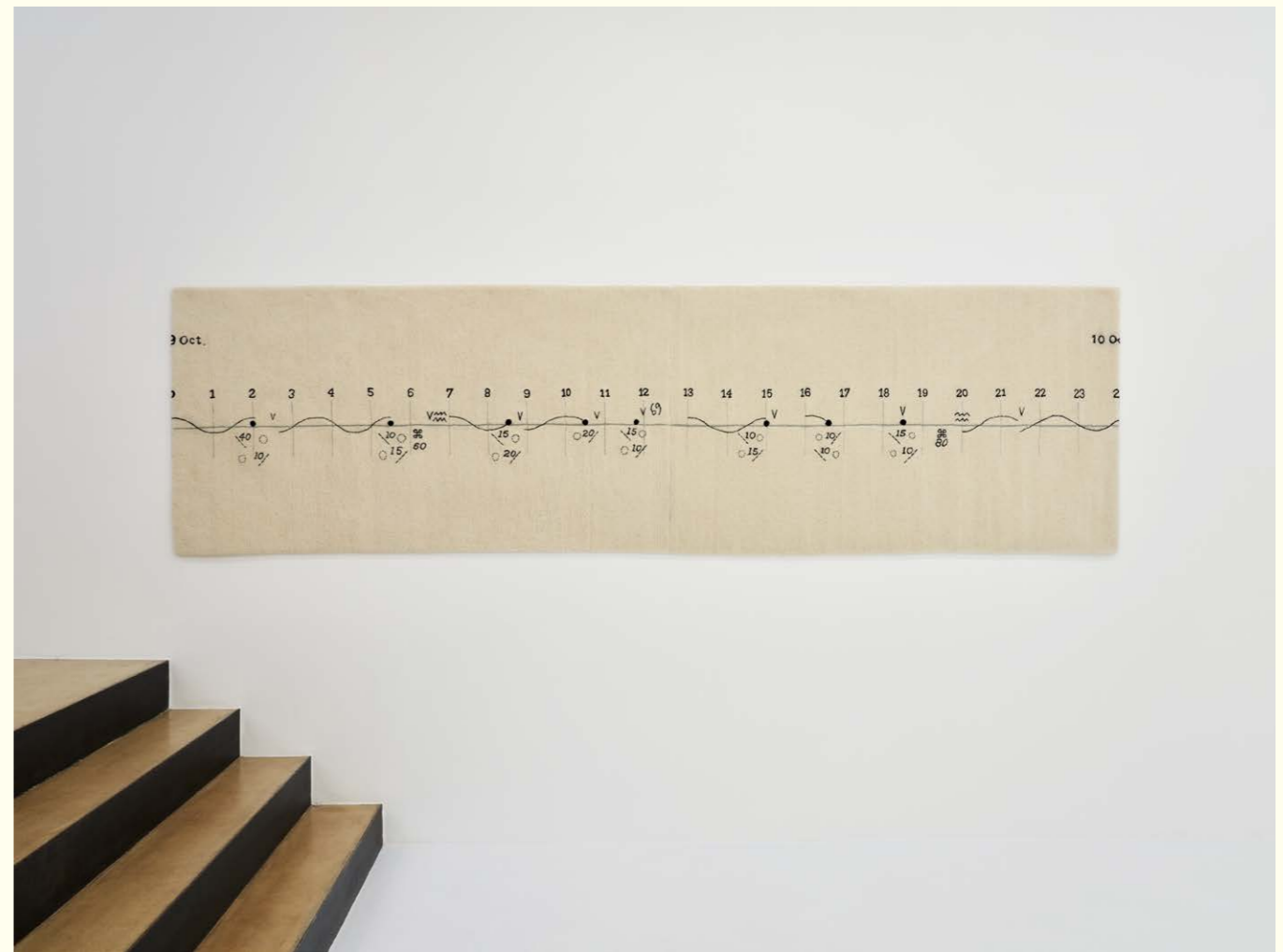
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Full time-double: 9 Oct, 2022, wool, 110x440 cm



Caring exercise, 2023, single channel video, color, sound (stereo), 18 min 30 sec

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## Critique

**Colliding with the Other: Youngjoo Cho's Gendered Spaces and its Boundaries**

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  - 2) The Female Body and the Artist's Body in Contemporary Art
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I. Women's Bodies and Boundaries  
 1) "The Private Is Political"  
 "The private is political" was a catchphrase used by the feminist or counter-cultural movements during the 1960s. The phrase was originally coined to emphasize women's physical differences; yet it was circulated more widely amongst the women's movement as a way of bringing attention to issues that had previously been dismissed as "private" such as women's place in the home and relationships between women and men.<sup>[1]</sup> That said, prevailing societal notions held value even in the most personal settings emblemized by the home or intimate matters such as relationships. Certainly, the word "privacy" has also taken on some negative connotations, being associated not only with personal freedoms and rights but also with the personal pursuit of profit in ways that may go against the public interest in a capitalist society.<sup>[2]</sup>

Youngjoo Cho's participatory art and collaborative performance art typically begin from the female body — both as an object and means of representation. From her

works in the early 2010s to her participatory practices in the mid-to-late 2010s and her performances and installations based on her parenting journal since 2018, Cho has focused on the physical experiences of being a mother and a middle-aged woman in South Korea. Through such, Cho raises a question that all women come to face in the private sphere: what role and significance does the female body come to have when discussing the private realm of women?

Instead of addressing the theme of women's bodies, child-raising, married life, domestic violence, or the subjecthood of otherized women as they are, Cho has situated them in historical, social, and cultural contexts. After all, the private realm of women is a product of public discourse and thus becomes interdependent. It is impossible to speak about the female subject without acknowledging the existence of the otherized. The female bodies and private realms that appear in Cho's work exist in forms that are constantly being infiltrated by others in contemporary society. While studying overseas in 2006 and 2007, Cho undertook a performance cum archival project in which she wore, washed, and returned a t-shirt that had been in contact with the body of a foreign man she met at a party the night before. In addition to countering her sense of alienation as a foreigner, she was subverting the hierarchy between the East Asian woman and the foreign, Western man by situating herself in an active position. By bringing her own body in contact with the scent of the male's body, the man's odor comes across the unexpected penetration of another.

Even after Cho's return to Korea in 2012, female bodies have remained a key theme and medium in her work. The physical contacts with other beings intensify in *Feathers on lips* (2020), a performance partly inspired by Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Physical contact, often hidden from public view, comes before the viewer's eyes. A possible factor underlying the artist's transition from her collaboration with middle-aged women in the 2010s to her orchestration of confrontations and conflicts among performers' bodies may have originated from her experience of being a mother, of learning to accept and tolerate as a mother. And such brings the question of the child — on whether it's the mother's alter ego or an independent entity.

Throughout this process, there is a constant dismantling of boundaries between self and the other or between the private and public. At times, this destruction of the boundary appears dangerous. The private domains of the participants/others end up invaded as they remain uninformed of the project's direction or the artist's aims. The man who lent his t-shirt shared a part of himself

[1] Vincent Geoghegan and Rick Wilford, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 179–208. A discussion of the private and public realms can also be found in Simone de Beauvoir's famous work *The Second Sex* (1949).  
 [2] A study of the historical transformations of the public and private realm from a sociological perspective can be found in Michelle Sheller and John Urry, "Mobile Transformations of 'Public' and 'Private' Life," *Theory, Culture and Society* vol. 20 no. 3 (2003), pp. 107–125.

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without knowing exactly how the garment that bore the traces of his physical presence would be used. The collapsing boundaries sometimes become a part of Cho's artistic performances in public. The performers' bodies may collide or rest against one another for long periods. For the audience, this can be uncomfortable to witness. It is far from being pleasant to repeatedly observe scenes of various bodies bumping into each other. Upon witnessing such, how is the viewer supposed to respond?

As criticized by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, loosely constructed physical contact without a script does not lead to the kind of spectacular conclusion or message created in traditional theater.<sup>[3]</sup> There is no harmonious ending among the various groups or a dramatic arrival at self-reflection. At the same time, there is no artificial distancing that dialectically forces the audience to engage in analytical reflection. Instead of any specific message taking shape, Cho's performances simply present moments that are awkward and strange. The dancers appearing before the audience depend on one another while they also attack and show hostility toward each other.

Performance art is a means for an artist to form relationships with others, such as lovers, colleagues, mothers, and objectified collaborators. The repetitions of movements are a way for the artist to build relationships with others, and it also has the purpose of self-discipline. The notion of performativity stems from the philosophical theory that describes the formation of subjecthood, wherein the repeated movement of the body leads to internal changes triggered by habitual self-understanding or fantasy occurring from the outside. Drawing inspiration from drag queens and their performances, Judith Butler used terms such as "performative act" or "performativity" to describe the process of constituting identity through the repetition of external gender traits such as appearance, makeup, and gestures.<sup>[4]</sup> Butler explained the concept of identity as the result of ongoing and repetitive performances of the self,

[3] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Korean trans. Changryeol Yang (Seoul: Hyunsil Munhwa, 2016), p. 25.  
 [4] Butler likens performativity to a speech act: much like naming, the performance of a given name leads to that name (identity) defining the subject. Just as names are spoken repetitively and publicly, identity is shaped and revealed through performative acts that are repeatedly named and externally expressed. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 13. All social symbolic systems fall within the space of performative acts, including language and gesture. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" in *Performing Feminism: Feminist Critical Theory and Theater*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 270.

which is in dialogue with its environment. However, it is unclear how capable these performative gestures are of eliciting the changes in identity and interpersonal relationships that Cho seeks to touch upon. While performativity can be seen as bringing a new model for the relationship between the body and identity, the key questions remain as to how much real-life changes can be brought about regarding the norms of sex, gender, and the boundary between private and public spaces. Butler also observed that whereas performativity can confuse societal concepts pertaining to gender and sexuality, it does not directly lead to actual subversion of gender roles and perceptions.<sup>[5]</sup> So, what does Cho aspire to do with her performative proxy bodies? What alternative bonds could be constructed in the triangular structure of the artist, performer, and audience?

Cho is a rare case in Korean contemporary art as she has continued using human bodies as her main medium. She has taken over the bodies of her middle-aged female collaborators, her daughter, dancers, and, more recently, the audience, not to mention her own body. Within this essay, I wish to focus on the feminist significance connoted by Cho's bodies in the context of contemporary Korean art, where women's bodies have, for the most part, appeared in only a limited context or a few typified forms. I examine the question of what alternative the artist strives to bring whenever she uses human bodies to express complex inter-human relationships, especially amidst prevailing social norms of gendered bodies. Furthermore, the question of how Cho's collaborations with dancers and theatrical performers shed light upon the potential power of human bodies not only as a means of oppression but also as liberation to reconfigure the limited definition of the private and women's bodies in contemporary Korean society and art will be examined.

2) The Female Body and the Artist's Body in Contemporary Art

In the history of contemporary art, it is not unusual for the body to serve as a tool for creation and not just as an object of representation. Notably, the female body was used as a paintbrush of sorts by the French nouveau

[5] Butler suggests that when gender distinctions are rendered strange through performativity, this can have the effect of reinforcing prevailing concepts and effects. She notes the example of transvestite males and how the performance of gender effects beyond biological boundaries ends up exaggerating and retreading existing gender effects. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 231.

réaliste Yves Klein in works such as *Anthropométries de l'époque bleue* (1960) — although the intention in this case could be interpreted as something more complex, the artist's and women artists' bodies were regarded as a new instrument of critique and challenge in performance art and experimental theaters in the 1960s.<sup>[6]</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the exposure of the female body in public was also regarded as a form of obscenity in art. Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* (1964) exemplifies a key counterculture strategy of the 1960s, with the female and male performers exposing their bodies in real-time and transcending their status and class while being lumped together in a single setting. Thus, the film documenting the event was banned from public screenings. The work *Tapp-und-Tast-Kino* (1968–1971) by Valie Export, whom Cho has cited as an influence, is an important historical precedent of showing how the blasphemy associated with the female body could be used to convey a theme related to political resistance. In Export's street performance, she wore a box that had one open side reminiscent of a cathode-ray tube or film screen and exposed her body through the hole in the box, through which she invited the public to touch her bare breast.<sup>[7]</sup> The work generated feelings of unfamiliarity and discomfort experienced by passersby when the naked female body was brought out into the street. It stirred huge controversy simply by forcing the streetwalkers to encounter the actual female nude disrupting the public space.

With the *Living Theatre* and other forms of experimental theater gaining traction in the 1960s, the male body also drew newfound attention in contemporary art. An important shift was how the male body came to be used not as a symbol of beauty or a consummate agent of creation but as a private subject, scarred and otherized. In *Claim Excerpts* (1971), Vito Acconci placed closed-circuit cameras around the gallery and presented himself blindfolded under the stairs at the gallery's rear in real-time, swinging a pipe whenever he heard audiences approaching him. His most notorious and bizarre work *Seedbed* (1972) featured him sharing his fantasies and the sounds of him orgasming with audiences

[6] As a nouveau réaliste, Klein applied paint to the bodies of women and conducted their movements over a canvas based on a musical performance; the artwork was the image created from the marks left by those movements. His work illustrated both his aim of introducing “non-material materials” to art in the early 1960s and his dichotomous attitude toward the excessive mythologization of the artist (i.e., self-caricature based on exaggerated gesture). In the process, women's bodies became little more than tools “used” for the ends of the male artist's exaggerated mythology.

[7] Helen Molesworth, *Work Ethic* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. 177.

in real-time. His work can be interpreted as expressing a critique of social and technological systems of surveillance over individuals which were rapidly developing in the late 1960s and attempting to deconstruct the status of the artist as a veiled agent of creation. Acconci was also influenced by Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), a classic text in sociology. In this vein, Acconci's works dealt with major areas of interest for the counterculture generation of the 1960s, namely the gap between the individual's personal rights and domain and the public realm of traditional social obligation.

Where Acconci was ironically attempting to address the oppressive state of individuals in reality by exposing his masculine self and private desires in public, the female body emerged in the 1970s and onward as the grounds of a new social battle. Women's sexuality which had previously been dismissed as belonging to the personal realm, emerged as a major theme in female art — from the bra-burning campaign of the 1970s to the compilation of sexual violence statistics at the California-based rape crisis centers in the 1970s and Suzanne Lacy's 1989 survey of female workers in sex-related industries. Such was also because, within an androcentric society, women's bodies were being objectified and misused. In that sense, the phrase “the private is political” could be seen as meaning that the intimate aspects associated with women — such as their bodies and sexuality — should be made into political issues rather than confined to the personal realm so that autonomy over women's sexuality and bodies could eventually be returned to women.

In Korean contemporary art, the example most cited in connection with women's bodies is Lee Bul's 1989 performance *Abortion* at Seoul's Dongsoong Art Center. Often presented in photographic form and included in *Burning Down the House* at the 2012 Gwangju Biennale, *Abortion* starkly deviates from the social perception of women's bodies. Featuring a many-armed monster which would become a defining feature of Lee Bul's work in the following years, *Abortion* departed from the image of the compliant and “normal” woman passively obeying the natural order. According to Confucianism, abortion is seen as forsaking the woman's traditional obligation to propagate their ethnicity; the body of the woman who rejects childbearing is itself an act of provocation against the natural order and family ideology. From a feminist standpoint, however, abortion can also be seen as an example of women casting aside the role forced on them in the name of nature and exercising their right to take responsibility and make choices for their bodies as agents.

The work of other female artists also shows the female body as another role besides reproducing

offspring or serving as an object of male sexual desires. For example, Hyun-Sook Hong Lee is noteworthy for her preoccupation with the bodies of menopausal women. Hong Lee, demonstrates powers of spatial contraction as she runs around and over buildings in ordinary residential neighborhoods; her ideology of a woman's body does not seem the least bit submissive or passive.<sup>[8]</sup> In the scene where women are scrubbing each other's backs, a positive statement insinuating that one opportunity opens up another was written on the back of one woman. This can be interpreted as a declaration that a new road opens when the female body gives up the reproductive capabilities that represent its biological function. However, it could also be expected that the female body only becomes free when it lets go of its traditional encumbrances. As the spatial contraction powers suggest, Hong Lee's work is an example of a Korean contemporary artist accentuating women's bodies liberated from gravity and the natural order.

In Korean contemporary art, women's bodies are sometimes portrayed as symbolic presences with great transcendental powers, such as shamanic figures in Bul Lee's and Jia Chang's works. In contrast, Cho, with the way she pays close attention to the female body in relation to their ordinary lives, comes to be a rare example of portraying women. Beginning with *Floral patterned romance* (2014), Cho began featuring victims of domestic violence and middle-aged women — groups that had typically been overlooked and undermined among feminist art critics and theorists. She brought urgent and imminent social issues of domestic violence into art museums. Interviews and text-based works about spouses committing violence against women's bodies certainly make the audience uncomfortable. As grim as the situations were, they were even more chilling because these tragedies could potentially happen to anyone.

Korean middle-aged women — known as *ajumma* in Korean — have hardly appeared in contemporary Korean art. These women are not physical paragons of beauty nor have they supernatural mythological powers such as shamanic and mythological figures. If anything, they exemplify the most traditional gender roles and the most ordinary faces of women that we encounter in daily life. From the viewpoint of feminist politics, they are not regarded as either progressive or innovative. Such is as *ajummas* are considered as the group most loyal to family ideology. For Cho, however, their common physical aspects draw her attention. After returning from Europe,

[8] Hyun-sook Hong Lee, *Running to Venus and Back* (Seoul: Goraebaetsok, 2014).

Cho came to gain a new perspective on the fate of the majority of ordinary women in Korea, including her own mother's generation.

The recruited middle-aged women later examined in the text offered a means for the artist to actively incorporate the bodies and movements of ordinary women into her work. Rather than using her own body to stage performances or record its movements in video like Lee Bul, Um I, Hyun-Sook Hong Lee, and Jia Chang, the artist has stayed true to her role as a mediator or coordinator. Such is the result of Cho's consideration of how she might usher the female body out of the private realm or personal space and into public discussion. It can also stem from her curiosity and a sense of mission as an art educator.

Accordingly, Cho has attempted to make full use of community roles in the process of restoring female subjecthood and reflecting on the relationship between the body and the subject. At the same time, she also emphasizes the rehearsal as her *ajumma* subjects pick out their own clothes and work with the choreographer to create their movements. Through this opportunity, participating women could rediscover one's body and reflect upon one's past and future. This also explains why Cho's dance workshop activities have generated text-based works about their autobiographical experiences. A crucial objective and significance behind Cho's use of the *ajummas'* bodies in contemporary art have been to apply the private autobiographical bodies and stories of women as tools for understanding the generation of middle-aged women while also guiding these women to discover new avenues toward subjectivity.

## II. Body-Based Relationships: Boundaries of the Self and Other 1) Meeting the Unfamiliar Other: Breaking Down Boundaries

Cho's interest in the human body traces back to her experiences in the field of theater, not visual art.<sup>[9]</sup> She encountered how the body was used as art through

[9] As can be observed in interviews with Youngjoo Cho, the prevailing notion that the conceptual art movement led naturally into performance art is merely an example of grafting the history of Western art onto the Korean example, and it was less feminist art or the conceptual currents of the art world that had a direct impact on the development of artists in the late 1990s than activities in the women's movement and theater and film circles. Not only that, but members of the university film club that Cho was a part of in the late 1990s were accustomed to the macho culture exhibited by their seniors in the Minjung art lineage; the environment was not a favorable environment where female members felt capable of speaking out subjectively (Youngjoo Cho, interview with the author, October 22, 2022).

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gendered (against women).

In this context, the message Youngjoo Cho gives us is particularly significant. It highlights how gendered mindsets are embodied by children through gender performativity and this is why the gender performances given by the children resonate with the audiences. As one of those who have been intermittently involved in the project from the early stage, I greatly appreciate Youngjoo Cho's work challenging gendered norms and gender hierarchy. As Youngjoo Cho and her young participants said, it was a shame that there was so little time (just three to four weeks) to do the project and I hope she and many other artists will continue to produce feminist art work. I conclude my review here.

(2014)

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Claudia Mattos

### (De)militarized, (De)materialized: Of Women, Agency, and the Body in the Work of Youngjoo Cho

The opening frame of artist Yongjoo Cho's 2015 dance film *DMG: Demilitarized goddesses* encapsulates the central crux of the work across a series of trenchant symbols that appear on screen: In the foreground, a length of white fabric is gripped tightly in a fist; and beyond, in softer focus, is pictured a rusted, industrial landscape. The scene then shifts, pulling out into a broader shot, revealing the white fabric to be a wedding dress worn by an elegantly coiffed woman. She poses and performs graceful, languid gestures in front of the wreckage of a train, standing in stark contrast to the blighted and ruined setting. From the signage pictured in-frame, one can discern that the scene unfolds in Woljeong-ri Station, a train station closed since the Korean War and located in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates Korea, North from South.<sup>[1]</sup>

These symbols begin to unfurl the film's powerful exploration of the ways in which women's lives are shaped by the political and social structures that surround them, using the rapid industrial and economic development of South Korea in the latter half of the twentieth century as the context through which to frame this investigation. *DMG: Demilitarized goddesses* traces this history in tandem with the lives of the seven women cast in the work, offering a personal, emotive, and poetic valence through which to understand issues that are often filtered through the cold, impersonal, and distant lens of the global political stage.

The artist challenges dominant narratives and patriarchal power structures entrenched within society and offers nuanced juxtapositions between the roles of women in South Korea, the nation's bifurcation, and beyond. And Cho draws out these linkages in visual metaphors between memorials of military history, the presence of the seven women who embody the politicization of women's bodies and their roles in society, and the gestural vocabulary of the artist's own choreographic practice. In this essay, I examine the artist's approach across these conditions in terms that I will delineate as (de)militarization and (de)materialization. It is important to understand that the prefix 'de' is used to denote a reversal or undoing of something,

[1] Kwigon Kim, *The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) of Korea Protection, Conservation and Restoration of a Unique Ecosystem* (Springer Berlin, 2016).

and I employ the prefix within parentheses in both terms to signify how Cho's work calls both to extant conditions while contributing to their subversion and their possible undoing: Her work addresses militarization and demilitarization, as well as materialization and dematerialization, across examinations of gender norms, histories of wartime violence, and the place of Korea on the global political stage.

The film follows seven middle-aged women, all born in the aftermath of the Korean War, who spent their working lives — thirty to forty years — serving as tour guides in the DMZ. Having worked decades in providing visitors with a glimpse into the history of this unique and politically fraught area, many of these women have since moved to other regions in South Korea. In the film, they return to the DMZ, captured across sites of memorial and remembrance along the border. *DMG: Demilitarized goddesses* in many ways marks a return to a prior state or condition, a reunification between the women and their pasts.<sup>[2]</sup>

The second scene of the film takes place against the backdrop of the former Korean Workers' Party Headquarters, one of the only structures in the county of Cheorwon to survive the heavy fighting that took place in the area during the Korean War.<sup>[3]</sup> Another woman dressed as a bride stands here, performing a choreography in which she gestures towards the decaying building with a fan held in her hand. Her movements evoke both those of Buchaechum — a Korean tradition of dancing with fans, performed primarily by women — and of the gesticulations employed by tour guides to direct tourists' attention towards key landmarks. These layered gestural references of graceful, feminine-coded movement demonstrate a coupling of constructions of femininity in South Korea with cultural perceptions of the country beyond its borders. This is one of the many roles women have played in South Korea's program of nation-building following the ceasefire agreement of the Korean War, and it is one of the key motifs that stretches across the course of the film, coupled alongside Cho's choreography, the historic sites marked by war, and the wedding dresses worn by the women in the work.

[2] Youngjoo Cho, *DMG: 비무장 여신들\_ Demilitarized Goddesses, 2015* – youngjoo cho, accessed December 7, 2022, <http://youngjoocho.com/works/demilitarized-goddesses-2015/>.

[3] "Korean Workers' Party Headquarters, Cheorwon," Cultural Heritage Administration, accessed December 5, 2022, [http://english.cha.go.kr/chaen/search/selectGeneralSearchDetail.do?mn=EN\\_02\\_02&sCcebKdcd=79&ccebAsno=00220000&sCcebCtcd=32&pageIndex=1@ion=&canAsset=&ccebPcd1=&searchWrD=HEADQUARTERS&startNum=&endNum=&stCcebAsdt=&enCcebAsdt=&canceled=&ccebKdcd=&ccebCtcd=](http://english.cha.go.kr/chaen/search/selectGeneralSearchDetail.do?mn=EN_02_02&sCcebKdcd=79&ccebAsno=00220000&sCcebCtcd=32&pageIndex=1@ion=&canAsset=&ccebPcd1=&searchWrD=HEADQUARTERS&startNum=&endNum=&stCcebAsdt=&enCcebAsdt=&canceled=&ccebKdcd=&ccebCtcd=)

Women have long been key to nation-building projects across time. The figure of the woman is often approached in such schemes as a symbol or archetype indicative of the healthy family, the nurturing of the rising generation, and the labor performed at home in sacrifice to the family and nation.<sup>[4]</sup> In such programs, these tropes reinforce the image of the nation's growth and development both within and outside the state's borders. And yet women, in playing this important role in the identity-formation of the state, are often deindividuated and stripped of personal agency in the process.<sup>[5]</sup> The women in DMG: Demilitarized goddesses, for example, belong to the postwar generation, many of whom have often been defined by their roles as wives, mothers, and their duty to family, rather than as individuals with aspirations and identities beyond familial duty and the home.<sup>[6]</sup> Cho outfits the seven women in the film in wedding dresses to point towards the role played by these women and others like them in the modern history of South Korea: They represent societal constructs of the roles of women in society as nurturers of the marital unit, the family, and the country.<sup>[7]</sup>

Turning here to the concept of (de)militarization, one can frame the military history revisited in Cho's film throughout the various sites of memorial as a representation of the nation and the sometimes brutal road traveled in its development. The recent history of South Korea is one in many ways defined by the division of the Korean peninsula along the DMZ. And, as such, demilitarization or militarization in this context refers to the quintessentially political formations of national sovereignty and identity along which the Korean War and the Korean Armistice Agreement were defined. The (de)militarization of DMG: Demilitarized goddesses spans both the highly militarized, monitored, and politicized border of the DMZ and, as well, the politicization of women and their autonomy.

In her 1969 essay "The Personal Is Political", feminist scholar and activist Carol describes the control and regulation imposed on women and their bodies within society as being intimately connected to broader

political conditions.<sup>[8]</sup> The politicization of women's bodies is often tied to issues of power and control. In many cases, women's bodies are viewed as sites of conflict, where different groups and interests compete for dominance across vertices of power, identity, and politics.<sup>[9]</sup> Cho's film in many ways draws out these associations: As the bodies of women are often framed as battlefields — of sexual violence, patriarchal gender norms, and anti-woman legislation — the seven brides depicted in DMG: Demilitarized goddesses walk among memorials commemorating a conflict wherein women and their bodies have also served as sites of struggle.

While all individuals who enter the DMZ are subject to strict policing and regulation, it is women who have faced a particular kind of violence and erasure in this context. To relay a personal anecdote, I visited the DMZ in late September of 2022. Led by a female tour guide — younger than the women in the film, likely belonging to their daughters' generation — the group was shown through various sites that marked critical moments of contention between North and South. On our visit to Imjingak — where the ticketing office allowing us into the DMZ is located — the group was toured through memorials on foot. The guide explained each monument in detail, conveying the heavy emotions and histories commemorated by each site. However, there was one memorial at the Park that was omitted from her tour: One of two girls in traditional dress sitting beside an empty chair. The statues, often euphemistically called Statues of Peace, commemorate victims of systematic sexual violence in Korea known (euphemistically, as well) as 'comfort women'.<sup>[10]</sup> Honoring the lives and accounts of these women across the Japanese occupation of Korea and through World War II, these statues — perhaps more controversially — as well commemorate the women forced or coerced into sexual labor during the Korean War in service to the American troops stationed on the peninsula; these women were held in sites known as "camp towns" and while comfort women were outcast and shamed for decades following WWII, those who were forced into camp towns were even more heavily stigmatized.<sup>[11]</sup>

[4] Jinkyung Park, "Bodies for Empire: Biopolitics, Reproduction, and Sexual Knowledge in Late Colonial Korea," *Korean Journal of Medical History* 23, no. 2 (2014): pp. 203-238; John P. DiMoia, "(Let's Have the Proper Number of Children and Raise Them Well!): Family Planning and Nation-Building in South Korea, 1961-1968," *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* 2, no. 3 (January 2008): pp. 361-379.

[5] 5) Park.

[6] 6) Cho.

[7] DiMoia.

[8] Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political," accessed November 26, 2022, <https://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Heo Yoon and Jamie Chang, "The Story 'Our Grandmothers' Could Not Tell: Representation of the Comfort Women and the Physical Manifestation of Memory," *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 14, no. 14 (2021): pp. 311-334.

[11] Chunghye Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), 211.

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It can be disconcertingly easy for a majority population to deny the testimonies of marginalized groups, particularly when their experiences are stigmatized, lack much official documentation, and often go untold. This has been the strategy of those who have raised doubts about the accounts of this group of women forced into sexual slavery.<sup>[12]</sup> However, the statues at sites like Imjingak Park materialize this dematerialized history, offering a site of accountability and contemplation that cannot be so easily ignored or denied. And yet, in my experience of the site, the tour guide overlooked the memorial, leaving this history untold, perhaps deciding it is too extreme, too uncomfortable, or too unpalatable for touristic consumption.

DMG: Demilitarized goddesses does similar work of materializing untold histories and locating them within the body while at the same time dematerializing them within the ephemerality of performance and gesture. We come here to the term of (de)materialization, a process of transformation or transition from a physical form into one that is abstract or symbolic, or vice versa. In their canonical 1968 essay "The Dematerialization of Art", critics Lucy Lippard and John Chandler coined the term "dematerialization" to describe artists' rejection of traditional artistic modes, allowing them to challenge and subvert conventional forms and create new, dynamic, and responsive avenues of expression unbound by the limits of materiality.<sup>[13]</sup> Performance is one such dematerialized medium that turns to the body, and its capacity to embody, as the platform for conveying a work's meaning. In Cho's film, the bodies of the seven Goddesses, donning wedding dresses and enacting referential movements, embody the conflicts and contemplations addressed within the work. Cho's choreography materializes this history, codifying it within the body; at the same time, the dances strip this history of its familiar form, dematerializing it within fleeting movements and allowing it to be transposed, retold, and interpreted anew.

Cho explores the political and social role of women in South Korea, particularly in the aftermath of the Korean War Armistice and the country's division. Through gesture, costume, and histories embodied by the performers themselves, Cho's film highlights the important and often untold contributions of women to

[12] Jeannie Suk Gersen, "Seeking the True Story of the Comfort Women," *The New Yorker*, February 26, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/seeking-the-true-story-of-the-comfort-women-j-mark-ramseyer>.

[13] Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," in *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971), pp. 255-276.

the nation's modern development: It addresses the vital and unrecognized work of women as nation-builders, workers, and carriers of intergenerational knowledge. The wedding dresses worn by the performers in the film serve as an armor here, an empowered and reclaimed (de)militarized symbol of the often unacknowledged personal wars women must soldier through within society.

The commentaries cut clearly within Cho's work, resonating across her practice on a political valent to address the urgent, sometimes uncomfortable, yet necessary questions about the position of women in society, both past and present. Her work explores the impacts and sacrifices of women, showing them to be crucial contributors to the nation's history, rapid industrialization, and economic growth. These commentaries whisper, as well, to the untold violence and inequities faced by women in their roles within the country's official, heroic retellings of its own history and nation-building program.

The questions put forward within Cho's works extend well into the present, tracing how women continue to be represented within the country's political and social spheres. As an example, the rise of the #MeToo movement in South Korea in the last half-decade has exposed deeply entrenched gender inequality that persists across many segments of society, calling for justice for those — primarily women — who have faced harassment, violence, and discrimination due to conservative patriarchal strictures.<sup>[14]</sup>

Cho's DMG: Demilitarized goddesses addresses through movement how women have long lived across highly politicized terrains. While the stretch of land between North and South Korea is said to be a demilitarized neutral territory, the women whose lives shape these national theaters are not afforded the same neutrality. They endure within bodies that continue to be contested.

(2023)

[14] Kiyoung Shin, "Beyond #WithYou: The New Generation of Feminists and the #MeToo Movement in South Korea," *Politics & Gender* 17, no. 3 (2021): pp. 507-513.

only to realize, to her surprise, that her four-year-old child is imitating her. Words such as “hope, wish” along with other unrecognizable onomatopoeia, which her linguistically gifted child imitates and murmurs, are included in the music of the work. In the music, lies the relationship between sound and music, breath, and language. A child learns language through the voice of the other (mother). The signifier preexists the subject. Psychoanalytical hypothesis proposes that oppression and division are inevitable in the journey of becoming a subject through language, thus becoming human, and therefore, suggests that the future of the daughter, at the receiving end of the loving care, will not be so easy.

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**States Encountered by the Body: The Mediative Performances of Youngjoong Cho**

The Performing Body True stories 1, Youngjoong Cho's 2013 solo exhibition at Corner Art Space, included an artwork entitled A beautiful match made in heaven. A speaker plays a telephone call placed by the artist to a marriage information agency. Draped over the speaker is a red skirt that also appears in a drawing in the same gallery. Introducing herself as “Eunkyung Cho,” the artist explains that she is a graduate of a Korean art college (the Sungkyunkwan University Art Education Department) who has returned to Korea after studying art in France. She describes herself as a divorced woman in her thirties and says she is “looking for a man I can truly love.” The friendly counselor, who was a member of the incoming class of 1980 at Hongik University Art College, asks about Cho's age, height, weight, academic background, and whether she has had any children. Sharing the confidence-inspiring message that a divorced woman in her late thirties without any children should be in an advantageous position in the remarriage market, the counselor then asks her what age group she is looking for in a man (same age, older, or younger) and what sort of profession. As the viewer listens to the curious conversation, a question arises: is this counseling session staged, or did it actually happen?

If we focus on the part where the artist identifies herself as a divorced woman in her late thirties named Eunkyung Cho, we might say that the artist is playing the part of someone she is not. Based on the evidence, we can surmise that the counselor is unaware throughout the conversation that the person on the other end is being deceptive about her identity. (In this sense, the counselor is much like the victim of a hidden camera prank.) What is especially notable here is that in this conversation where she is playing the role of “Eunkyung Cho, divorced woman in her thirties,” the artist does not (cannot?) disembodify herself fully from her identity as Youngjoong Cho. The artist is indeed a woman in her thirties who graduated from a Korean art college and studied in France; at the time of the recording, she had not had any children, and she was also facing a possible divorce. In effect, the body of the agent Youngjoong Cho shared certain resonances with the body performing the role of “Eunkyung Cho, divorced woman in her thirties” as she spoke to the counselor — her voice trembling — about “looking for a man I can truly love.” Moreover,

the realities of the (re)marriage market that are so kindly explained by the counselor — namely that the most important qualities for a woman are academic history and physical factors like age, weight, and child-bearing experience, compared with financial factors for men — are not something fictional or staged. They are societal forces that really do operate in our here-and-now reality.

In the similarly structured 2014 work Universal collaborators, Seoul, we see the artist Youngjoong Cho in three different videos, taking on a different appearance in each of them. In the first video, she sits on a small family couch with a French man, who appears to be in his late forties, and two children who joke around as they eat bread at a table. Repeatedly admonishing her playful children, she answers questions about how marriage has affected her life as an artist. She says that it is difficult to generalize about marriage's effects on female artists because there are so many factors at play, including whether their spouse is European or Korean, what the spouse's job and personality are like, and whether they have children. But she adds that marriage unquestionably leaves the artist having to do more in terms of family events and the like, and that it is impossible to meet all of one's familial obligations as an artist without a stable income or clearly defined working hours. She explains that she has increasing disregard for her family's demands of her and encouraged them not to expect too much. “It's a lot more comfortable now, and I feel like I can work freely in my married life,” she adds.

The second video shows a French man in his thirties who appears to be an artist sitting at a minimalist European-style dining table. Next to him is Youngjoong Cho, appearing youthful in a Mickey Mouse t-shirt with her hair pulled back by a hairband. The table where they sit has a moka pot and red coffee cups on it. When asked whether she would encourage young Koreans to study overseas, she replies that while it is important to gain new experiences living in a foreign country where people speak a different language, it takes over a decade to learn the language and adapt to the society. She also voices concerns about the difficulties that arise when re-acclimating to Korean society afterward. She adds that it is difficult for students to remain overseas for ten years or more because of visa issues, explaining that nearly all her acquaintances who have stayed abroad for over a decade without returning are women who remained there because they had married a local man. (As she says this, she stares at the foreign man next to her.) She goes on to talk about Korean society's negative perceptions of female artists who have returned after spending a long time studying overseas on their own, explaining that she herself has been on the

receiving end of attitudes presuming that such female artists must be sexually “free.”

In the third video, Youngjoo Cho conveys a much more casual and stable impression. Sitting next to her is a young and handsome blond Western man wearing sunglasses. Wearing an elegant blue scarf and a one-piece dress with her eyes decorated with expensive makeup, she is asked how to survive as a female artist in her late thirties. She stresses that the most important thing is to have a network, explaining that it was her network that had enabled her recent artistic work and exhibition and that managing an international network is especially crucial. She goes on to say that once a woman reaches her late thirties, she has little time left to have children; if she wants them, she needs to quickly find a partner and give birth. Because of that, women often find themselves torn between their artistic activities and motherhood, she explains, adding that she feels anxiety about her artistic career being interrupted by marriage and childbearing.

All three of the videos feature the same familiar Youngjoo Cho, but the foreign males seated next to her all represent different ages and senses of style. Also different are the places where the interview is conducted, the items there, and the clothing, hairstyle, and makeup of the artist in the video. If we focus on each individual video, Cho appears in the first to be a female artist balancing her artistic activities while raising two children with her French husband; in the second, she is a female artist in her early thirties who is sitting down for breakfast with a mellow artist partner in some European metropolis; and in the third, she is a successful female artist with elegant clothes and hair, a significant reputation and career foothold, and a young lover. In the gallery, the three videos play simultaneously on three monitors placed side-by-side on the wall. From this, the viewer may detect that these different identities are all staged, each of them carefully acted out by Youngjoo Cho. For the exhibition’s opening, Cho hired young Western men to wear specific outfits and hairstyles as they escorted her throughout the event.

The truly fascinating part of the work is what is happening while the artist is “performing” the semiotized bodies of these three figures: the Korean female artist who has two children with her foreign husband, the European-based Korean female artist living with a foreign artist partner, and the successful Korean female artist with a younger foreign lover. Classical acting theory holds that actors must “disembody” themselves in order to embody their character. A superior actor must be successful at perfectly signifying their own body into their character’s body. But in Youngjoo Cho’s work,

something else is afoot. In the process of her realizing these three semiotized bodies, aspects of Youngjoo Cho’s body and the reality associated with it bleed through. Through the three semiotized bodies, certain experiences of the agent Youngjoo Cho and her real-world body make their presence felt: the sense of being perceived as sexually “free” as a female artist who has studied overseas, the way that marriage compounds a female artist’s duties, the wrestling between one’s career and motherhood, the idea of not being able to satisfy one’s familial obligations and the idea of encouraging one’s family to relinquish their demands and not expect too much.

### Mediating Bodies

If this work can be described as a “performance,” with the agent’s body playing a key role, we can identify in it key characteristics of Youngjoo Cho’s performances as a whole. They are distinct from classical performances characterized by physical presence, directness of incidents, and shocking perceptions that arrive unmediated. As a contemporary art genre, performance emerged out of resistance against longstanding artistic norms rooted in imitation and representation. In contrast with classical art (including theater), which imitated and represented things that already existed and events that had already occurred, the performances that arose from the 1960s onward were oriented not toward representation but toward having the physically present body experience the event occurring at that time and place. This necessitated the co-presence of the agent’s body and the audience members’/ participants’ bodies in the same time and setting, with direct interactions taking place between the two sets of bodies based on that. With Youngjoo Cho’s performances, this is not the case. These performances do not necessitate the co-presence of the agent’s and participants’ bodies in the same time and place, and their focus is less on the immediate occurrence of events than on performing a semiotized body or staging a situation confronted by the body. The agent/participant interaction is not direct but mediated through objects, social forms, or videos.

As an example, Cho’s early performance work One night with someone’s t-shirt in my bed (2006–2007), which involved the artist borrowing a male stranger’s t-shirt, sleeping in it, and then returning it, has the bodies of the agent (Youngjoo Cho) and the participant interacting through the medium of the borrowed shirt. This is a pivotal difference between Cho’s work and Sophie Calle’s The Sleepers (1979), which appears to have been a major influence on it. Calle invited strangers to sleep in her bed and stayed with them, asking questions and taking pictures; in Cho’s work, the agent

and participant’s bodies are temporally and spatially separated, forestalling any direct interaction between them. If we compare it with Lips of Thomas (1975) by Marina Abramović, who prompts spontaneous and direct responses and movements from the audience members’/ participants’ bodies through masochistic acts such as breaking a glass with her hand, slashing her own belly with a razor, and whipping herself (as the participants intervene in the performance to stop her), the interaction between agent and participant in Cho’s performance occurs after the fact, as when the participant is angered when the t-shirt is laundered and returned to him.<sup>[1]</sup>

Such mediative characteristics are carried over into Cho’s various projects with middle-aged women. Her Floral patterned romance in 2014 and her DMG: Demilitarized goddesses, The divas go out, Watery madams, and Grand cuties in 2015 were projects involving middle-aged female participants from particular regions of Korea. Most crucially, these projects did not involve an attempt to bring about changes to the participants’ bodies and lives through direct contact and the co-presence of the agent’s and participants’ bodies. If this aspect is understood incorrectly, the project may be regarded as a form of community art for middle-aged women who had “almost never been the protagonists in their own lives,” affording them an experience of “stepping outside of their peripheral role and becoming something alien.”<sup>[2]</sup> This error in interpretation stems from conceptualizing the participants as deprived, marginal presences and the artist as a benefactor from the outside world who “liberates them from the bonds of a depersonalized term” and allows them to experience “a special ‘self’ encountered through a new ‘becoming,’ however temporary.”<sup>[3]</sup> To regard the way Cho dresses the middle-aged women in wedding dresses and other beautiful outfits and films them dancing with young models as though it has brought about some tremendous change to their lives reflects a superficial understanding of human beings. The participants in these projects (who include DMZ tour guides and cultural center participants) did have workshop periods in which they met with the artist and choreographer to share concepts and rehearse their movements, but that aspect is not the heart of the project. More important is the way they act out semiotized bodies; the workshops are essentially a preparatory process for that. This is demonstrated by the fact that the final result of the project

was not an archival record of the workshop process, but the photographs and videos that Cho took as an agent showing their “performances.”<sup>[4]</sup>

Like Youngjoo Cho herself in Universal collaborators, Seoul the participants in the video become actors performing semiotized bodies as “goddesses,” “divas,” “watery madams,” and “grand cuties.” To do this, they don shoulder-revealing white wedding dresses and hold fluttering shawls as they perform graceful movements (DMG: Demilitarized goddesses); they wear wings on their shoulders and garlands on their heads as they dance in a valley wearing billowing skirts and swaying blue one-piece dresses (Watery madams); they perform a dance routine in a shopping mall while wearing solid yellow, red, and pink skirts and the large sorts of headbands one might see in a musical (Grand cuties); and they put on short skirts, long boots, long coats, and opera masks to dance with younger male models (The divas go out). As they embody these semiotized bodies, the camera periodically shows close-ups of the agents’ actual bodies, which can never be perfectly disembodied. Much like the siren that suddenly sounds while they are demonstrating the movements of “goddesses” in DMG: Demilitarized goddesses, the wrinkled hands peek out among the beautiful dresses and elegant hand motions; we see the age spots on their forearms and the wrinkled necks that show above the wedding dresses. The agents’ bodies that filter through the cracks in the semiotized bodies, and the associated marks of reality, also manifest in the wrinkled faces and age spots that appear underneath the pearl necklaces and garlands in Watery madams and the street advertisement banners that form a queer contrast with the brilliant red and black outfits in The divas go out. This is underscored by the strange echoes and unsettling tones of music that sound in the background of these surrealistic scenes.

### Art as Form

If Cho’s aim was to share issues about the societal difficulties faced by female artists or issues related to the lives of middle-aged women (from marriage to childbirth, child-raising, and housework), wouldn’t it have been more effective for her to show and talk about the real-world bodies faced with these matters directly? Why does the artist make a point of including the process of acting out

[4] Cho’s perspective regarding the agent’s movements as more important than the co-presence event in which the choreographer and participant(s) meet can also be witnessed in the fact that Humangarten and Cohabiting with yellow Benjamin, two performances staged in front of museum visitors, were ultimately produced as the video works Com pani and Colere.

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[1] Conversation with Youngjoo Cho, *Leepoétique*.  
 [2] Sera Jung, 'Deprivation is ultimately proof of being', *Video Portrait*, Total Museum Press.  
 [3] Ibid.

these semiotized bodies in her work? The answer certainly bears some connection with her history as part of a theater group during her university studies. But an even more important factor is how these semiotized bodies operate as a device that allows Cho's work to maintain some distance from reality even as it addresses real-world issues. Long subscribing to the belief that art "should be about truth, or at least pursue the truth," the artist does not attempt to include unvarnished lives or direct incidents in her work. Instead, she has real-world bodies form relationships with symbols and imaginary elements that are somewhat distant from them, and the life experiences that she incorporates into her work as a result are captured in certain aesthetic forms. In other words, art is not a place where truth is revealed and directly expressed; it is a place where the life experiences of real-world bodies are revealed and expressed through certain forms.

The biggest reason such a strategy is necessary is to guard art against moral demands. The imperative for art to be truthful and to pursue truth connects with the moralistic demand that art must be "morally sound." It is from this sort of moralism that we find, for example, critics arguing that when middle-aged women are put in wedding dresses, fairy costumes, or chiffon dresses and asked to dance, this depicts women as agents who desire consumer culture, or that the work in which the artist approaches a man and asks to borrow his t-shirt is an example of "using" femininity. Against the sort of moralism that does not seek to acknowledge autonomy in artistic form, Cho's interview in Universal collaborators, Seoul shares these words toward the end: "There tends to be a misunderstanding of female artists as 'exploiting' or 'selling' femininity, but I have not approached the femininity of the female artist in terms of any sort of morality or moral issue. I have operated by my own standards, working with standards I have set for myself entirely based on what I think." This message, stressing the need for standards for artistic work that are "entirely one's own" and free from "any sort of morality or moral issue," emerges at the moment in the video when the semiotized bodies and agent body are most deeply in correspondence.

The life experiences that appear in Cho's work are always mediated by certain aesthetic forms. Cho's solo exhibition Mrs. Jellyby's magnifying glass (2019) is based on the artist's real-world physical experiences in bearing and raising a child. It includes work in which the artist creates a score by graphing detailed daily records from her child-raising experience, including the time her child spent sleeping, how often and how much breast milk and formula were given to the child, and how many

times the child defecated before taking a bath (Full time-double), along with a video in which the artist performs choreography based on that information (Writing my body). The concrete physical experiences of child-raising — the multiple feedings every day, the diaper changing and bathing — are transformed through the medium of mathematical symbols, while the artist's movements are abstracted and semiotized to such an extent that it is difficult to make out what action she is performing. Here, too, we find the same structure that appeared in her past performances, where the agent's body is embodying the semiotized body. If there is a difference, it is that the origins of the semiotized gestures that are "performed" by the agent's body here lie in none other than the specific child-raising activities that were carried out by the agent herself. This recursive quality, where Cho uses her own body to present her own past movements in abstract semiotized form, is what gives the work its unique reflective power. Rather than expressing the difficulty and exhaustion of child-raising in direct, unmediated ways, she shows it through semiotized, formalized gestures. The agent gains some distance from her real-world experiences, while the viewers/participants encountering the gestures in the video gain an aesthetic experience, rather than a sense of compassion or pity. A surprising aspect here is that the camera does not show the artist's face as she performs the choreography. Instead, it places the undeniably revealed "nursing breast" at the center of the frame. First of all, this accentuates the semiotic nature of the moving body. But the visible breast is also the agent's body showing through the cracks in the semiotized body, as well as the materiality of the associated reality (i.e., the nursing of a child).

### Multiple Bodies

The premise behind Youngjoo Cho's performances, where real-world experiences peak through semiotized bodies, lies in the embodiment of a semiotic body by the agent's body. The agent must be free and self-sufficient in embodying whatever is to be embodied, whether it is a "Korean female artist married to a foreign man," a "goddess," a "madam," a "diva," or a formalized gesture of nursing. Notably, Cho's performances since the solo exhibition Mrs. Jellyby's magnifying glass have begun focusing on other situations encountered by our bodies. Where the bodies in past performances were self-sufficient and free with regard to each other, the artist's work now shows multiple bodies that are not self-sufficient; instead, they stand opposite or lean against each other. Our body is free when we are moving self-sufficiently. We can do nothing, we can imitate someone else, and we can follow

along with choreographed movements. But when two bodies are locked together as in a wrestling match, our body no longer fully moves of its own accord. It may be blocked from moving by the power of the opposing body, or it may be forced in an unwanted direction. The same situation applies to the person facing us. So two interlocked bodies are in a different situation from when they are separate and self-sufficient. Their movements are not based on any one party's will alone; they are determined by other factors — the physical and dynamic forces that arise from two bodies in confrontation and opposition with each other.

An example of this occurs when we are raising a child. It is easy for us to speak of children as being loveable at all times, but anyone who has raised one knows that the times we find our children most "loveable" are when they are completely passive, when we can hold them in our arms if we want to and put them down if we don't, when we can caress them when we feel like it and leave them alone when we don't — in other words, when the child is not engaging their own physical strength and will.<sup>[5]</sup> The moment the child starts demonstrating their own body's strength and will — when they refuse to be held when we want to hold them, when they try to wriggle out of our embracing arms, or when they demand nursing, a diaper change, or other care at a time when we are fatigued, otherwise indisposed, or just hoping for some sleep — our body enters a disconcerting state of being in confrontation with the child's.

This state that arises with the confrontation of the caregiver's body and the child is terrifically symbolized in Feathers on lips (2020), which features a physical battle between the bodies of two opposing performers. The state of being unable to escape painful confrontation even as our hair and clothes are disheveled, blood rushes to our face, and sweat trickles down our forehead; the disconcerting sensation of two opposing bodies moving in a direction neither of them intended; the image of two exhausted bodies resting on each other as cushions to momentarily catch their breath — these physical states are completely different from a self-sufficiently moving body, and so they can never be "performed" or "embodied." Human beings don't spring up like mushrooms (2021) shows multiple bodies resting against each other as

[5] The children's rights activist Jeonghwan Bang's "Hymn to the Child," in which he saw in the child the "face of God" and "sheer truth, sheer kindness, and sheer beauty," was written as he observed a child "lying comfortably and napping before my knees." When he referred to "all that is tranquil in this world seeming to emanate from [the child's] face and all that is peaceful in the world radiating from that face," it was because the child was "comfortably sleeping and thinly snoring" at the time.

they move. These bodies use themselves to support one another, and though they push and pull against each other as they strain to move in one direction or the other, they finally tumble down and are eliminated. What operates between the bodies is a different physical and psychological dynamic from two bodies in opposition. Through these performances, Cho is experimenting with the various relationships that human bodies form and the different states that they encounter as a result.

In our lives, we may try on our own to perform or imitate a different body, to become that body. In some cases, we end up in confrontation with another body, while in others we become one of several bodies resting against one another as they progress toward something. While Youngjoo Cho has not addressed this yet in her performances, there are times when we must fight a lone battle against multiple bodies attacking us, or when we must strain to fight off other bodies in order to attain something. If our life is something that must necessarily be achieved through the body,<sup>[6]</sup> then experimentation with what bodies do and the situations they encounter may ultimately be a matter of addressing the issues of our lives.

(2023)

[6] From the earliest stages of culture, humankind has imagined life "without a body." The reincarnation beliefs of ancient Greece and India saw the most fundamental life as that of the disembodied soul before it is born onto Earth with a body. But even if most of the human body and its organs were replaced with machinery or artificial organs, the "states of the body" encountered over the course of life would not go away.

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are between women, both in the competitions and massages, and some of the female performers possess a masculine or non-binary quality, so that the coordinates end up being situated somewhere outside the heterosexual grid.) Where Cho's previous work depicted women as a minority presence retaining some autonomy and individuality even amid the pressures of social structures, these works show them as beings who are more relational than independent; as beings who exist through dependence on others or as passive, heteronomous presences who are obliged to care for others; and as "bodies" who are forced to inflict violence on one another in the process.

Bodies are ever-present in Youngjoo Cho's images. Yellow, spreading splotches like the marks of excretions (*True stories 1*, 2013) and skirts painted red as if stained with blood (*True stories 2*, 2012) attest to the fact that the body was there. The reality of the body leaps out of her image. In the crude gestures of the "DMZ goddesses" and their deviation from the proficient and perfected, in the women's awkwardly wavering gazes, in the characteristic flesh of older women visible on their shoulders, in the sign reading "land mines" that suddenly appears behind them as they walk along in their wedding dresses — finite bodies and/or the finitude of bodies intrudes as a kind of imperfection that pokes holes in the sleek, polished surfaces of discourse. The temporal nature of the media of performance and photography form mirror images around their point of intersection: finitude. Where photography seeks to hold on to "living" moments that will never come again, performance looks to latch on to irretrievable moments and bring them back to life in a new way every time. But choreographic philosophy does not understand the body. Fundamentally, choreography is a method for commanding other bodies to move — a system of linguistic representation or "writing." Choreography only understands movements that are neither more nor less, perfect gestures without elements of chance or failure. As representations of the body, however, these movements cannot represent the body. The body-images that submit to choreographic philosophy are sleek and pleasant, for there is no death present there. When the body does not know death, it is not alive; ultimately, it is not a body.

In spite of this, the body is always there. During the performances (I do not call them "live" performances because there is no such thing as a performance that isn't "live"), there is necessarily an audience present. The presence of viewers is temporality itself. It is a necessarily random incident, uncontrollable and unpredictable, so that each performance unfolds differently from

the last one. *Com pani*, the video version of *Human beings don't spring up like mushrooms*, shows an audience observing the performance, although they are actually being cast in the role of viewers for the video. In a word, these "audience" members are not so much representing viewers as they are representing the artist's consciousness of viewers as a presence. In her recent simultaneous broadcast performances, Cho seems to be addressing issues related to the dual structure in which the viewer's gaze (watching the performance unfolding in front of them) coexists with the gaze of the artist/camera (standing in for the viewers, while also "watching them watch"). *Discrete bodies reunite* (2022) takes place simultaneously in two separate locations. The large screens on the two sides of the performance enable each side to broadcast in real-time what is happening on the other. It is not possible to view the entire performance: someone present on one side can only see the other side from the camera's perspective there, and vice versa. Seeing is a fragmentation of the world. The sum of the many different fragments produced by the camera and the eyes of the individual viewer will always be more or less than the whole. Our knowledge of the world and its reality will always be misaligned. If it is impossible to depict a single image of the world, then the "I" presumed to exist at its vanishing point also becomes impossible. Having started from the impossibility of her own being, Cho's thematic approach seems to have eventually returned to its origins. But by ascending in a spiral and observing the vertical surface rather than the horizontal one, she may find herself in a different place from before. The artist's search for her own place has expanded into an examination of the places occupied by different women (aunties and sisters) and by "others," while questions about the body as her own locus of existence have shifted (after her experience of becoming a mother) into questions about the body as a locus where contact occurs. And questions about the body as a presence in the world, something plunged into relationship with others, have opened up into questions about a world of countless bodies and about the possibilities and finitude of our knowledge of the world.

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Minjoo Lee

## Facing Bodies: Collaboration and the Physicality of Youngjoo Cho's Performances

A performance is a collaborative activity. It weaves different bodies into a single movement, and it is also the setting for an event where different bodies come into intense collision. In her work, Youngjoo Cho has proactively adopted performance as an artistic form. The important thing for her is less performance as a genre than the physical experience and the images projected onto the body — with a particular focus on the experiences of female bodies. Here, the body in Cho's work does not so much represent biologically assigned corporeal substance as it does a body that is socially assigned. As an "acquired" body shaped within the realm of community, it does not belong to any one individual.<sup>[1]</sup>

Youngjoo Cho has explored the experiences associated with physical changes to women's bodies (including marriage, childbirth, and child-raising) and the suspense experienced by the social body through an approach that applies the context of "labor" to acts of care, including child-raising and convalescent treatment. Because she has focused on themes of child-raising (which is often dismissed as "women's labor") and the childbirth that is permitted to female bodies, her performances have typically been approached in a feminist context. But in her work, "womanhood" is just one of numerous aspects associated with earthly bodies. If one's worldview on her body of work is constructed around the theme of "womanhood," this raises the possibility of overlooking the clashing and conflict that arises among the colliding bodies in her recent performances, and the different aspects of the body that these performances reference. To underscore a different aspect of Cho's body images, I want to focus in this text on the "collisions" among individual entities, while keeping the "feminine" aspect as a parenthetical.

Cho's performances show the scenes that emerge

[1] Walter Benjamin drew a distinction between the "body" and "corporeal substance," where the former indicated the historical/social body associated with humanity in a communal sense, in a way that differed from the "human body" in a biological sense. See Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften Band*, Rolf Tiedemann & Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Hrsg.), Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985, pp. 80–81, and *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, vol. 1*, Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (eds.), Belknap Harvard Press: Cambridge, 1996, pp. 393–401. Also see Kang Sumi, "Anthropological Materialism and Production & Reception of Art - Focusing on Walter Benjamin's 'Surrealism,'" *Mihak-The Korean Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 52, 2007, pp. 31–70.

when different bodies collide in the realm of the visual arts. Those moments of collision can be found in the relationships among the performers on the exhibition "stage," as well as in the experience of the performers coming together with the audience. They are also visible in the encounter between the artist and choreographer in the process of creating the performance. In short, this essay applies the perspective of "collaboration" to the images realized through the different bodies in Cho's performances. To this end, I intend to refer to recent examples of her performances while focusing on the structures of collaboration surrounding them. To consider the physicality shown in Cho's performances, I will first look at her approach of addressing the body in different ways where the realms of the fine arts and performing arts intersect.

### Different bodies

The visual arts and the performing arts — these two realms of contemporary art both come together and deviate in the word "performance." How do they come together, and where do they deviate? As more and more cases arise of collaboration between the fine and performing arts, it is no longer unusual to encounter choreography in an art museum. On stage or in an exhibition setting, the artist and choreographer meet with bodies that are trained in different ways. What we should take note of, however, is the fact that as these different bodies assemble in a single realm, their different attitudes toward the body are accentuated.

The word "performance" encompasses events that are created by the human being's living body and its movements. For that reason, it is sometimes used in art as a catch-all term loosely lumping together a variety of movements. To understand how the body differs in the context of the fine arts and that of the performing arts, however, we need to grasp concrete examples of how the "The form of the 'performance'" is understood in each realm. In the traditional performing arts, the body was a symbol performing an assigned role in the scope of theater, as well as something that shows spirituality. But as avant-garde dancers began shifting from the spiritual to the material body, their bodies were increasingly understood to operate at a more subjective level than that of simply embodying a given character or presenting movements, like puppets to the choreographer. In other words, where the body in past performances was a symbolic entity representing the dancer's spirituality, the avant-garde dancers focused on it less as a symbol than as an object with materiality, as well as a medium ensuring the dancer's artistic subjectivity. Today's theatrically

**Divided Desire. Notes on Youngjoo Cho's Full time-double, Writing my body, and Three breaths**

you have built your house  
 you have feathered your birds  
 you have beaten against the wind  
 with your own bones  
 you have finished on your own  
 what no one ever started  
 (Alejandra Pizarnik, *Diana's Tree*, #16, 1962)

In dialogue with the many feminist struggles and theoretical debates surrounding them, Youngjoo Cho's work has often been discussed with regards to her exploration of what Julia Kristeva has characterised as the '*signifying space*' — one that is 'a both corporeal and desiring mental space' — articulated by feminism. Carved as a third way between the tension of, on one side, 'insertion into history' and, on the other, 'the radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time', such signifying spaces posit the aesthetic, poetic — and, for Kristeva, the psychoanalytic — as modes of invention able to draw from the material realities of women's lives.<sup>[1]</sup> A major issue begged by Cho's work is the relationship entertained between her work and its inscription amongst feminist struggles — beyond the sphere contemporary are more broadly and within the context of feminisms in South Korea more specifically. Although the way they relate to one another is far from being unequivocal, the patriarchal edifice South Korean feminists are confronted to is one deeply entrenched within Confucianist values and ideology.

In the latter part of the 1980s, the landscape of feminist art in Korea experienced a local emergence, characterised by a militant cohort of women practitioners. These artists were deeply moved and influenced by their own life experiences, social theories, and literary realism. Their creative endeavours coalesced into what came to be known as *minjung misul* (art of the people) and they actively participated in the progressive feminist movement that bore the imprints of Marxist feminism. As noted by art historian Hyeonjoo Kim, a wave of feminism that would inform feminist art practice developed in the 1980s out of the various anti-

authoritarian, movements opposing Chun Doo-hwan's military dictatorship. These movements combined the notions of *minju* (democracy), *minjok* (nation) and *minjung* (people). The emergence of *minjung* art as the accompanying development in the field of art of this social phenomena saw the development of practices using a range of media and strategies — from oil painting and graphic prints, to agitprop and figurative narration — to signal a form of material translation of a mode of practice opened onto the social field.<sup>[2]</sup> *Minjung misul* was a spectrum of post-media practices with explicit political intent with, as central to its ideology, a sharp critique of the trifecta of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy — paralleled within the art sphere by its opposition to *Dansaekhwa*, Korean monochrome painting and the local iteration of autonomous art. *Minjung misul* recognised the forces of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy as the primary culprits behind the perpetuation of social and structural discrimination against women. The Women's Art Research Society (*Yeosung Misul Yeonguhoe*), a pivotal embodiment of 1980s feminism, served as a significant driving force for social transformation. Championing the cause of women, they tirelessly worked towards raising awareness about discrimination faced by women, while simultaneously lending their support to class-based, popular, and broader social struggles through activism. What set these artists apart was their willingness to stand firm against the uncritical assimilation of Western culture that was prevalent at the time among radicals and leftists. Instead, they nurtured a unique artistic practice called *Yeosung Misul* or 'women's art,' which laid the very foundations for the burgeoning feminist activist art movement in Korea.

Cho can be seen as expanding and complicating these relationships between post- or intermedia practices and feminist analytics of women's status. In several of her projects, the material realities she explores and takes as subject matter, is an issue that in itself complexifies that of women's labour, namely childcare and motherhood. Be it in the form of moving image, installation or performance, women's parenting is indeed a central them in several of Cho's projects. Encountering Cho's work or the artist herself is an encounter with a sense of agency probably only found in artist-mothers such as herself. Although the addressee of the Alejandra Pizarnik's poem in the epigraph is not specified it is not difficult to imagine — and here I declare taking it upon myself to make this free association — that this could be her, or a mother.

[1] Julia Kristeva, *Women's Time* [extract], in Margaret Iversen, Douglas Crimp, Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), Mary Kelly, London, Phaidon, 1997, pp. 102–05.

[2] Hyeonjoo Kim, 'Ip Gim: Feminist Art and Activism in South Korea', *Afterall*, Issue 52, Autumn/Winter 2021, pp.134–45.

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To be sure, what can be said, is that in six free verses, Pizarnik's dense and precise poem combines effects of strong individuality with a symbolism that speaks of creation, nurturing, resilience and accomplishment. The repetition of 'you/you/you' followed by the variation on the mutable 'your' and then another 'you' contrasts the mother's positionality, as desiring subject acting towards 'what no one ever started'.

From all of the above, a fundamental question arises. To what extent can we draw a connection between motherhood — its difficulties but also its agency — and the possibility of producing new signifying spaces? In a text of psychoanalytic clinical orientation, Jacques-Alain Miller reminds us that 'the mother is only good enough by not being too much the mother, and provided that the care she lavishes on the child does not turn her away from desiring as woman'<sup>[3]</sup>. In fact, the mother-child relationship holds by virtue of this division of desire between that of the mother and that of the woman; in this configuration in which desire goes beyond the child, a mother avoids fulfilling the maternal fantasy of being all for the child, while at the same time, women can also endorse the function of the Name-of-the-Father.

Such a division of desire — this is the hypothesis I would like to suggest here — finds in Cho's practice a form of resolution and founds the basis for aesthetic and poetic invention. This is observable through processes of translation between various levels of experiences and registers of the sensible — at work in three pieces, Full time-double (2019), Writing my body (2019), and Three breaths (2020) — and taking place between the three works themselves. Indeed, all stem from a 'parenting journal' kept by the artist between 2016–19. Over an extended period of time, after the birth of her child, Cho took notes on graph paper of both her labour as a mother and of her daughter's activity. Establishing a system of visual inscriptions, Cho recorded 'the child's bowel movement, breastfeeding and sleep'<sup>[4]</sup>. The original drawings [which can be seen in Cho's recent artist publication *A Screamer* (2023)], consists essentially in a daily journal, with lines of varying length representing the duration of an activity, the latter being indicated by different symbols. At this level, Cho's approach can be brought close to Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document (1973–79), her seminal six-part installation charting the development of her son and of their interactions in

which she used some of her child's artefacts, layered with text. The obvious shared concern for motherhood and maternal labour, as well as the diaristic approach and the look at the infant's development place the two artists in correspondence. Of course, the case of Kelly's Post-Partum Document is one engaging with the feminist and artistic debates of its time and geography, its use of indexical signs, 'gestural marks, found objects, imprints traces, moulds'<sup>[5]</sup>, giving its mode of existence within the moment of conceptual art, as a specific attempt to address the crisis of the real and reweave and rethink the relationship between thing and sign. But in Cho's work, this relationship, between thing and sign, life and its representation, an event and its archive, etc. becomes more complicated.

Indeed, Cho's diary of maternal labour can be said to be further abstracted and remediated. Full time-double, for instance, constitutes a graphic rendering of the diary. Reorganised and retyped using a dedicated font and replaced from single pages of graph paper to a paper scroll of 10 metres long, what pertained to the realm of daily life and affective labour becomes translated through printed matter and shifts into the domain of visual poetry or concrete poetry. By the same token, the private becomes public, Cho's experience with her daughter entering the domain of the exhibitionary which mediates it between the art institution, the public and other objects. Moreover, the postpartum journal also serves as the basis of the score for Three breaths, an intermedia work which brings together installation, dance and musical performance. As its title indicates, Three breaths refers to three types of breaths (the baby's and the mother's breaths before, the third occurring the caring relationship between care-giver and receiver, or during a possible incident happening between them), these three parts being used by Eunji Lee to write her score.<sup>[6]</sup> In an exhibition hall, long segments of duct pipes are laid across. The use of industrial material is interesting in that if, at first sight, it might speak the language of Minimalist sculpture — reminiscing of Charlotte Posenenske's work for instance — and its distancing from the human hand in favour of reproducible manufactured products, in Three breaths it takes on a more organic and anthropomorphic dimension, the pipes referencing both the umbilical cord

[5] Margaret Iversen, 'Visualizing the Unconscious: Mary Kelly's Installations,' in Margaret Iversen, Douglas Crimp, Homi K. Bhabha, *Mary Kelly*, p. 41.

[6] The process of turning the postpartum diary into a musical score is beautifully recounted by composer Eunji Anna Lee in Three breaths in Youngjoo Cho, *A Screamer*, Seoul. Gyeongbokgung Collabo, 2023, p. 26.

[3] Jacques-Alain Miler, 'The child and the object' (trans. B. Wolf), *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* no. 28, London, 2014, p. 12.

[4] 'Full time-double', Youngjoo Cho [website], <http://youngjoocho.com/works/full-time-double-풀-타임-더블/>

**The Tricks of Competing and Negotiating Collaboration: The Work of Youngjoo Cho**

1

Carpets woven from wool yarn are placed on the walls and floor of a gallery filled with bleached-out light. The first thing one notices is the orange stain on the carpet that sits on the gallery floor. Softening into yellow shades away from its center, the stain calls to mind shameful and disgusting things like excretions that we are not supposed to reveal to the outside world, or menstrual blood, a substance treated as abject. In early 2023, Youngjoo Cho joined Ahnlee Lee for the two-person exhibition Orange Sleep at ONE AND J Gallery (January 5 to February 12). Drawing inspiration from the exhibition’s title, the orange stain may be representing the “world of sleep” as an endodermal world, the back of our consciousness, which is revealed by leaving at the front something that would need to be erased or concealed in our reality of hygienic norms. Bearing the title True story: Cold, the work connects with one titled True story: Warm. In a small photograph affixed to the wall, the artist sits holding a smaller figure (which appears to be female) side-by-side with another slightly larger one, to whom she offers her shoulder. Taken while the artist was sitting naked on the stained carpet, it seems to support the menstrual blood interpretation. In addition to the stain sullyng the carpet, the photograph evokes the process of childbirth, motherhood, and childcare with the image of the adult woman sitting side-by-side with a child. In a different carpet-based work, placed on the opposite wall under the title Full time-double: October 9, she visualizes the scenario as a musical score. Across the carpet’s center is a score representing quantities for a given day, broken down into one-hour units. In the score, she uses symbols to represent the time spent putting the child to bed, nursing, and helping with urination and defecation. Distinguishing the endless responsibilities of childcare and child-raising into individual acts and organizing them into an order, the score is akin to a sort of DNA map representing mutual entanglement and caregiving through the code of the abject body.

Let us draw another connection among the three artworks. The stain of menstrual blood is not reducible to a mark of changes arising in a woman’s body; it manifests through a refusal to be fully enlisted as an institutional tool for reproduction. The marks of shame and raggedness include a process in which a score of negotiation and cooperation between two entities is being rewritten,

coordinating a rhythm from the tensions and discordances that arise between consciousness and physical change, between normalized hygiene and excretion, between the self and the other. This is the flash point that sets the score in motion, it is also the stain of the body, explained anew through the score; more precisely, it is a rhythm that emerges with regular temporality. It is a visual abstraction of the body’s moments that cannot be fully controlled, while the use of carpet affords a tactile sense of a visual experience rendered in abstract terms.

Perhaps the complementary relationship among the menstrual blood, the nude photograph, and the score are allusions to the work that Youngjoo Cho has been creating over the years. Her attempt to examine not simply the meanings distinguished on her body but also its irreversible changes is premised on an attempt to coordinate with her grammar as she follows the rhythms that arise among the “other,” societal norms, and the body. Such coordination also occurs in her artistic process: as with her process of sharing roles in collaborations, it is the context and background for artwork focusing on the tensions and discord between the artist’s public activities and daily life, and it is an artistic theme in its own right.

In this text, I examine what kind of relationship to the object the artist employs to assume the initiative; what it is she is trying to direct; why she keeps trying to assume initiative, what is intervening when she is unable to do so; what methodologies she devises to regain initiative in spite of that; and how this assumes a different form from the previous initiative. This is a more relationship-oriented approach than the modern “independent subject,” a process akin to recognizing limits while working to renew their forms. Much like a wrestling match, it calls to mind a situation of one force pitted against another. What we should observe here is that even though it seems like the artist will never loosen her grip on her opponent, this does not appear to be an attempt to defeat anyone.

2 Gaining an advantage through the recording and staging of “sliding”

In her early work, Cho appeared to be focusing on how randomness and incompleteness are brought to bear between individuals and between the transmission and receipt of a message. This work is similar to sketching the trajectory of a relationship, using a sliding, misaligned form as an outline.

During the mid-’00s, the artist undertook a few experiments. She sent letters to people in Moldova asking them to send their love letters; in the process, some of the letters were returned due to faulty addresses (perhaps

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intentionally). The postmarks on the envelopes provide an indication of the exact pathways behind these failures. In I want to get a lot of love letters (2006), the recipient’s address is listed, but the recipient is not. What the viewer sees is how a signal of love toward another has made a circuit through an incorrectly entered region. If there is a significance here, it is that by creating an order recursively incorporating even the faulty entry or omission of an address, she is demonstrating an omniscient subjectivity that envisions a methodology of error.

The question, then, is whether complete communication can be achieved when a face-to-face encounter is possible. A year before sending the letters, Cho attempted a different format for observing the elements of randomness, error, transformation, and slipping that intervened in the process. In A little night music (2005), the artist had people in a single setting dance along with a choreographer to the Mozart serenade of the title, after which she asked the participants to review the dance and music as they remembered it. Each of them obviously recalled the dancing and music differently. In this case, there was a process of repeating the “meeting” as an event while relying on subjective memory. This was the result of not wholly remembering the elements at the scene, and of not wholly conveying them or acquiring them. What does appear whole is the re-editing of the result into a video, like the staging through which the returned love letters were displayed. Perhaps it can be more accurately described not so much as “wholeness” as an example of treating even errors as random elements in the editing. Obviously, achieving this means having to put up with a separation and temporal lag between the edited product and an actual environment where any kind of situation might happen.

Cho traces the formation of relationships in her early work, but the relationships take forms in which communication is strained, sliding, or misaligned. This could be a factor of the limits of memory, of physical distance, or of disparities in the status and positions of the people communicating. To represent this lag or gap, the artist draws on the symbolic space and agency of the exhibition/performance. In other words, the artist is reorganizing relationships in accord with her own grammar after assuming supremacy by twisting the systems of relationships in which failure is inevitable. Her focus at this stage is on which contexts are intersecting in the relationships and on what hierarchies and differences they possess. The artist herself is no exception: she is conscious of how she has been subordinated and how her identity has varied as an immigrant, as a married Asian woman, and as a mother. This has led her to recognize

a hierarchy of relationships in which the parties easily end up in “dominant” and “submissive” roles, where her artistic motif becomes a process of establishing her own negotiating ability. This is to say that Cho recognizes how she has been implicated in the systems of conventional, skewed relationships, while focusing deliberately on the sliding and variations — which she sometimes involves herself in and designs. Perhaps these experiments with sliding, transformation, and failure can be approached as art defined by agrammatical grammar and non-masculine relationships.

An example of this is the artwork in which the artist borrowed a T-shirt from a man she happened to run into at a street, party, and a coffeehouse during her time overseas. After sleeping in the shirt, she laundered and returned it. What the viewer of One night with someone’s t-shirt in my bed (2006–2007) sees are photographs recording the artist wearing the T-shirt herself in the same compositions. This may be considered as a form of “mirroring” of flirting and the sexual objectification of Asian women in Western society — getting a woman’s number and encouraging her to “do something later.” The artist appears to have the upper hand in the negotiation, but what appears on display is the artist’s body with the man’s T-shirt draped over it. Has the mirroring been fully achieved? Cho also remarks on how her relationship stock as a sexual object and Asian woman fell when she revealed she was married. Her status as a married woman is brought to bear on the skewed relationship between the white male and Asian immigrant female, and for the artist it is also a barrier to approaching men and a fence that reminds her of where she belongs. In other words, there are several obstacles that must be taken into account when assessing her as having assumed the initiative. To begin with, her work necessarily relies on the generosity of the men with whom she is flirting. Perhaps she is acting out an impossible female desire that is dependent on male desire. This reminds us that the artist’s personal battle is one that does not allow for any complete reversal, and that her actions are dependent on a particular order.

3 Shifting the stage to “women” and “community”

In showing the insurmountable temporal gap and separation in communication created by the omissions and sliding that occur, the artist has observed how the meta-level omnipotence of the artist can negotiate and compete with her hierarchical status as a married East Asian immigrant woman. She approaches a different relationship structure with her work after 2014 focusing on groups of middle-aged women. One might expect

seems to presume some form of interdependence and mutual care among damaged bodies. But as the bodies fall and are eliminated, there is just one survivor left when the mission is complete. This suggests that without institutional, structural changes on the part of the state, individuals cannot survive through independent acts of care alone.

Perhaps the most curious presence here is that of the audience. The viewers remain where they are while the performers are moving busily about. In the performance as designed by the artist, the viewers are the most random aspect; though they exist in the same place, they are not fully counted, which only makes them stick out more. They maintain the most distance from the events as they observe them, but they face a different form of vulnerability, in that they can only observe the situation that is unfolding. Com pani (2021), which edits this into video form, questions whether it is possible to observe with even more distance. What occupies that distance? Is it the viewers as passive observers? Are they merely left blinking helplessly? As they simply watch without intervening, this creates a situation with a dual nature, where observers can maintain objective distance but are unable to take action. They encounter a dual distance, where the physical distance is bridged yet they are unable to take part. Are they powerless (or cynical) observers, or ones who capture and attest to what is happening? Or do they represent both these things: omnipotence and helplessness at the same time?

A performance on stage inevitably posits something that exists beyond the closed and complete frame of that stage. Even when there is ongoing negotiation between an artist and her collaborators under a system of cooperation, what the viewer encounters is a finished performance. The situation of the audience standing by as observers conversely leads us to reconsider the closed structure of the work. In that sense, the viewers occupy the most traumatic position. Even as the characters speak to their mutual entanglement and their incomplete bodies assist one another in performing their mission, the viewer exists outside the given conditions on the stage. In this traumatic position, the audience denotes a different absence. In the case of the prepared work on stage, the focus appears to be on the battle among the individual performers. How are the state and society positioned in this individual battle? Invoked as presences beyond the stage the audience members seem to reflect the societal role that is omitted in the performance itself. After all, the figures on stage express their inability to stand alone, yet they present themselves as being necessarily left behind and isolated. The question might also be rephrased

as this: how are other mechanisms of control and support arranged in the position of the powerless viewers? What sort of involvement is necessary for all of them to survive?

## 5 Conclusion

Youngjoo Cho has continued to create artwork in which she builds partnerships, as her negotiations and competitions take on different forms. These negotiations and competitions are not limited to the performers entangled on stage with their heads pressed together; they encompass the relations that may arise between the artist and her collaborators through the process of planning, production, and execution. Her continued attempts to discover an autonomous position for herself as an artist presume from the outset that in the process of collaboration, there will be mutual intrusions and entanglements in unwanted areas. In her recent work, Youngjoo Cho has repeatedly enlisted others to find her own independent place; she has requested collaboration and unity, yet the result depicts a process of negotiation and battling for supremacy.

In the case of her recent work Discrete bodies reunite (2022), she appears to be intensifying her expression rather than attempting to fill the space where context and content have been deliberately removed. If anything, the content is even more difficult to grasp. The figures are placed in an unexplained situation, calling out as they pull forcefully at something. (We have no way of knowing what they are calling out for.) Exhibiting explosive affect, the women appear to be in a trancelike state where they do not refer to their context or describe it directly; instead, we are asked to read their attitude from the powerful repetition of a particular action, which may be pulling or gripping and slamming. This effect, in which only one visual form of the body can be seen even at a close distance, presumes a kind of representational distance.

The emotional effect is heightened by combining the media used. The stage is divided by screens, with previously recorded movements shown on screens on either side. Above them, the figures on the opposite side are stacked up on a single screen. Chroma keying has been used to erase the background, capturing the performers' movements in a chaotic jumble.

While Cho's past work kept the performances separate from their recorded and edited videos, she is here placing the recorded footage side-by-side on the stage, capturing the onstage performance on the screen. This uniting of separate spaces into a single video juxtaposes the temporal gap and physical distance, while recognizing the separateness between the record and the screening,

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the stage and the screen. At the same time, the intense movements of the figures powerfully underscore the interconnectedness amid the separation. The longing for the "other" is predicated on separation, and while we cannot be one with the other, we cannot stand alone either. This shows the disorder that is necessarily associated with care, and it also allows an interpretative encounter with peripheral presences that have previously been depicted as dependent and marginal — with feminine presences, or rather with a non-male order and a powerful linkage of empty signifiers. Increasing their amplitude within an empty context, the actions show the body itself as an empty signifier, heightening a critical point of tension between different levels of time and space.

As the director, the artist controls the participants and manages the randomness, while also gaining the advantage once again through her compilation of this into a video. Early on in her career, Cho devised a critical methodology grounded in the social hierarchy and status in which she was situated as an individual; here, she is shifting her focus to others, entering their realm to engage in collaboration. Where the roles of model/artist and subject/object was once relatively clear, her work has now shifted those relationships to an internal, abstract level amid the changes in her situation, with her pregnancy and childcare responsibilities. Rather than intervening in the situation itself, she conceives of movements and develops performances inspired by desires and dreams that have been ruled out or reduced to lower-priority status within the reality associated with that situation. The explicit contexts of region, ethnicity, and group are rewritten through the expressions of the body. Within that, Cho re-envisions the battle for bargaining power as an artistic form. This process of adjusting dominance even from a position of being vulnerable to chance and possessing a peripheral identity presumes an after-the-fact effort to use the video record and editing devices to prune away the noise and deviations, producing something sleek or assigning different weights from what occurred in the moment. In effect, a complete dual perspective on the artist's part assumes omniscient recording and editing authority beyond the perspective of the incomplete subjects in reality and on the stage. Perhaps the competition lies not only in the artist's collaboration with others, but also between her differing perspectives on the artistic process.

In this text, I have proposed a "wrestling match" analogy to refer to an artistic process that involves collaborating and sharing in everyday experience while also diversifying representational distance. This may evoke images of wrestlers grappling and trying to pin

one another, but it also delimits a closed space in which that grappling occurs (a sand pit, ring, or other arena and a performance stage). Youngjoo Cho's work provides no answers as to what factors lie behind the impatience and tension that drive her figures, the elements driving up the emotional amplitude. In the case of Orange Sleep, at least, we may be able to tie them to childcare and the interruption of women's careers for motherhood, the connections and separation between mother and child, and the attitude of disgust and control over women's bleeding bodies. If her past artwork has been about adjusting the tempo of dominance, how might it be possible to bring contexts beyond the artwork to bear on the thoroughly orchestrated performance within it? Perhaps this can be another form of renewal to achieve critical supremacy.

## Addendum

Youngjoo Cho's ONE AND J Gallery work also showed up in a different context. Ahnlee Lee, the other artist taking part in that exhibition, has produced artwork using Cho's Humangarten (2021) as his material, re-envisioning objects that served as backdrops and devices for Cho's performance into sculptures with their own individual presence. The garden items captured a human dynamism that was not mentioned in the movements; for them to stand alone, the artist must concede a certain intentionality and aesthetic command. In Clockwork Orange 1, 2, 3, Black Venus, and Archaic Fruit, Youngjoo Cho's name recedes to a reference in the captions, to the background — to a world of sleep. In fact, the material cannot fully stand on its own. It is rearranged by Lee, with holes made in it to mix it with other items; dried and rotting oranges are placed on top. If background material is called upon to serve a necessary role, can it yield itself willingly? Perhaps another way to achieve dominance, ironically enough, is to be unassertive about achieving dominance — to march to others' rhythm and to be willing to accept one's name being used as a material. To put it in wrestling terms, we might describe this as exposing one's own weaknesses and openings — one's artwork and body — in order to put one's techniques to work.

(2023)

(Lee: Moonjung Lee, Cho: Youngjoo Cho)

Lee: The way the body has consistently represented such an important part of your work is fascinating in itself. It can't be interpreted along feminist lines alone, but your work does allow for feminist interpretations.

Cho: Looking back on my activities, I think my interest in the body has been there for a long time. In high school, I was part of a folk arts group that did madanggeuk (outdoor dance theater) and mask dances, and in university I was part of a theater group. I got out of the whole "college entrance arts" thing after entering university, and I also found my theater activities more fascinating than art sometimes because the art I was studying then was still academic. While I was in France, I took part in a weekly dance workshop for about three years. That was when I first became aware of contemporary dance, and I loved it. That's the backdrop that my work came out of. I also recognize the inevitability that my work will be interpreted along feminist lines. But when I started out, I didn't have "feminism" or "women" in mind. I just tended to put a lot of my own story as a woman into my work in a candid and direct way, and that's how it has progressed.

Lee: Let's start with One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed (2006–2007). There's something both intimate and bizarre about how you borrow a strange man's clothing, spend the night in it, and record yourself the following morning. The experience is similar to a kind of physical contact.

Cho: I got married before going overseas, and in France married women are called "madame." I hated that so much. Here I was in an environment that was supposed to be freer than Korea, and it was like the fact that I was a married Asian woman put me into a prescribed space. I'm a sociable, extroverted person, and since I was young back then, I wanted to experience a lot of new things. But to hear myself being called "madame," I felt like I was being constrained, not just by myself but

[1] This interview is based on content from the following sources: "ON-THE-SCENE: Artist Youngjoo Cho," Leepoétique website (<http://www.leepoetique.com>), last accessed Feb. 7, 2023; interview with the artist, Nov. 17, 2022.

by others too. I was already an Asian woman who didn't speak the language fluently yet, and there was something very alienating about being defined as "madame." It was tough for me to deal with those sorts of feelings of alienation. So my husband ended up going back to Korea ahead of me, while I stayed behind alone in Paris. I was still a married woman, but I'd been given a certain amount of freedom, and the first work I did was One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed. That was a kind of a tightrope walk where I was subverting the sort of interest, attention, and harassment that Asian women encounter from Western men, while also pondering my own emotions and norms as a Korean. At the time, it was supposed to be a work that made you think about the moral boundaries surrounding married people. Those kinds of considerations would continue in my later work too.

Lee: Did any of the men refuse to take their shirt off for you?

Cho: Every man I approached took it off and put on a new t-shirt that I'd brought along. For the several months that I was working on that work, I had fresh t-shirts in my bag wherever I went. In the work, you only see the photograph of me wearing the shirt that the man took off for me, but the entire process was recorded. It was really a delicate tightrope walk up until he agreed to take his shirt off. I'm this young Asian woman, and I go up to a man, I express my favorable impression of him, and I explain to him that this is my art project. Then I ask him if he'll lend me his t-shirt for the night. I think what made that possible was the fact that I'd had enough of a conversation (communication) with the man for him to feel comfortable taking his shirt off for me. You would expect some of them would have said no. The fact that none of them refused may have just been a coincidence.

Lee: What were your standards for choosing which men you'd ask to take off their shirts?

Cho: I wasn't trying to meet a certain criterion. You can think of it as a similar process to flirting. I chose people that I had a positive impression of or that I thought might do it. I needed to have that feeling that he was interested in me for me to continue talking and ask him to take off his shirt.

Lee: After getting the shirt, you put it on, spent the night in it, washed it, and gave it back. Did you have a reason for washing it before returning it?

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With the title and everything, it seems like this would be a situation with a subtle kind of rapport to it, but when you wash the shirt, it feels like all of that goes away and the connection is completely severed.

Cho: One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed was a work that wasn't about an exchange — I was the one controlling the entire process. I borrowed the shirt for the night, and that was it. From beginning to end, I executed everything according to my plan, taking what I wanted and that was the end of it. If I were to give it back without washing it, I'd be sharing my scent, and I thought that would carry the implication of leading to something else. Not only was it never part of the equation for me to commit to anything more, but that would have been problematic for me morally as a married woman.

Lee: Talking about this work, you said you wanted it to "play a part in subverting common preconceptions about Asian women in Western societies." Could you explain a bit more about that? It seems like you were attempting a symbolic reversal of the situation where such women are regarded as passive objects of desire.

Cho: I think you could read it along those lines. I'm stepping outside the stereotype in those types of relationships to become the "controller" of the situation. It's been so long that I can't remember that well, but I do think I felt a kind of thrill from it.

Lee: You've said that some of the men got angry when you gave their t-shirt back the next day and ended it there.

Cho: One man got really angry. I think he was anticipating it might develop into a relationship. There's one story that I remember from this project, where one of the participants took off his shirt for me and then immediately left for another country, so I couldn't give it back to him. I just kept it for a while. A few years later, I was in Germany and I happened to run into him on a street in Berlin. That night, we had something like an "event" at a party at our house, at which I gave the shirt back and took a souvenir photo.

Lee: The act of exchanging t-shirts also appears in another work of yours, which is titled Exchanging t-shirts (2008). It feels like the act of exchanging t-shirts is like a symbol for stepping outside your identity and permeating someone else's. I think that's a marvelous approach: it's concise, yet it

generates a lot of different meanings. What first gave you the idea of exchanging t-shirts as an approach?

Cho: The t-shirt work started after my husband left to go back to Korea, and I was alone in France. I was missing my husband when I discovered his t-shirt in the closet. It's a commonplace experience, but I felt that the clothing someone had worn was like a trace, a "third skin" or shell that could convey something powerful.

Exchanging t-shirts (2007, 2008) came immediately after One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed. I did a few of them, starting at Ssamzie in 2007. At the time, I was doing work with a group called Global Alien, and Exchanging t-shirts was done as part of a group-level project, based on interesting aspects I discovered in One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed. It started when I relocated from Paris to Berlin. This was in the middle of the era of globalization, at a time when multiculturalism was being problematized. In Germany, things like cultural fusion with migrants, hierarchies within fusion, and linguistic power were all major issues. Global Alien adopted the tagline "people crossing boundaries" and was exploring related themes. While that was happening, I had the idea, "What if I took my own experience of wearing someone else's clothing and made that happen for the audience?" Exchanging t-shirts involves a different sort of exchange from One night with someone's t-shirt in my bed. Instead of swapping directly face-to-face with someone else, people were picking out a t-shirt from a bunch left by different people, without knowing whose it was. You could say it shows a certain open-mindedness and boldness — a willingness to accept things — for someone to put on an item of clothing worn by someone else without washing it. When I was living in Paris and Berlin, I was also a minority who was intimately acquainted with issues of ethnicity. That was the context behind the work.

Lee: It seems like people would have a tough time putting on someone else's clothing without washing it first. What was the level of engagement at the time?

Cho: By and large, Koreans view clothing as their own possession. In Berlin, people seemed to regard clothing more as a kind of consumable item used to used to cover/protect their body. Their attitude toward clothing is different. In Korea, people at the time were not favorable toward buying someone

appear in the performance yourself. I know that when I go to see a Youngjoo Cho performance, I expect to see the artist.

Cho: In Discrete bodies reunite and other recent performances of mine, everything has been planned and there is almost no element of improvisation. I collaborate with a choreographer, and once the final choreography is decided, the performers execute it precisely. It's orchestrated down to how many footsteps they take when they move, and they rehearse performing that. Even the things that might look improvisational are choreography. The only things left over are the ways the technique and expressions might change in very minute ways when a dancer performs the same choreography many times — differences an audience member is not likely to notice. In cases that don't necessarily require the identity or body of "Youngjoo Cho," I tend to focus more on generally directing the performance.

Lee: One thing I've sensed since your earliest performances is that collaborations with choreographers seem to be an important component.

Cho: Very much so. With Discrete bodies reunite, I wanted to do something based on the images of people embracing, weeping, and raging that I'd seen in footage related to separated North and South Korean family member reunions, the Sampoong Department Store collapse, and the Sewol ferry sinking. That work also incorporated actions from how I remembered my own mother's bitterness when she would sink to the ground and weep. I shared these kinds of aims and content with a choreographer, they would make other suggestions to me, I would offer new ideas, and that's how it developed. Collaborating with a choreographer is essential to enable the human body to really achieve the kinds of actions and situations that I want to depict. In every work, the collaboration process and its outcome are different. My recent performances have been based on very close collaboration from the beginning stages to the end result.

Lee: Was there a reason you only had female performers appearing in Discrete bodies reunite?

Cho: That's a work that has a definite theme about how images of women's bodies appear in the media and how we learn from that and reproduce and represent it. There are also male family members appearing in the separated family reunion and

Sewol tragedy footage, but I focused on the women. I happened to see a BBC news story on the Sewol tragedy, and it was a very different sort of mood from what I saw in Korean reporting. The Korean footage showed unfiltered images of the family members wailing. But while you could hear the sound of family members crying in the BBC footage, they focused more on showing the police officers' faces, and you could see them wiping tears away. That single image was able to convey a lot of different thoughts and feelings. That was the starting point for Discrete bodies reunite.

Lee: In my previous question, I said that Discrete bodies reunite was like a dance performance. Your response has made me wonder about something else. What do you see as the difference between a performance presented by the artist Youngjoo Cho and a dance performance or a performance presented by a dancer?

Cho: That's something I've come to ask myself while collaborating with choreographers, and it's a question I'm still grappling with. I can't really give a clear answer at this point, but while it isn't anything definite, there is one thing I can offer. To me, the body is just one of many different materials (media), and I also have the option of choosing other ones, such as paints, brushes, stone, metal, objects, or sounds. There isn't any particular medium that gets prioritized or placed in the central role. In the case of dance, I think the body gets prioritized. For a dancer, the body is the most important material, and other materials exist to serve that main one. In contrast, an artist can use all sorts of materials however they see fit to realize their ideas. The important thing is realizing the concept you've developed and having a mechanism that allows for some creation (operation) of meaning within that. That mechanism can be created with anything you want — not just the body.

Lee: I'm curious how you go about coordinating ideas when you're composing the music.

Cho: That part is really tough. For Three breaths, I met with the composer once every two weeks for about ten full months. It took so much time for me to convey my ideas and for me to understand the composer's. I don't understand music as well as I do art, so I enlisted the composer's help to express and bring across what I wanted. I'd learn about the characteristics of instruments and the methods of performance, and then we'd talk about what I

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wanted from among them. With a choreographer, there are aspects where you can work together on staging something, so it takes less time than collaborating with a musical composer. You might watch the finished performance and decide to change the instrument or make revisions then and there, but music is difficult to revise once it's been composed, so we needed to spend a lot of time working on that together before the composition.

Lee: Some artists will stage a performance privately and only share the filmed version, and some artists will only present live performances. Many of your performances do both of these things at the same time. I'm curious how you settle on a direction when you're first planning a performance. With Discrete bodies reunite, viewers even get to see footage of the filming at the actual performance.

Cho: A filmed record of a performance will never be the same as a performance that is being presented for a video work. To put things in more concrete terms, there are completely different relationships at play between the viewer and a live performance, a live video, and a recorded video. In my case, I make distinctions by assigning my work different titles. An example of that is Colere, which was based on video footage of the filming of my performance Cohabiting with yellow Benjamin. They are both obviously independent works. Early on, my performances were intended for video works. With my recent performances, I've planned the filming for the video work at the same time as the performance planning. This change in approach was directly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. It became more difficult to stage performances, and you couldn't invite viewers to watch live. Artists, including me, began presenting live broadcasts of performances and watching different performances online. As this happened more and more, I started thinking about how even a real-time live broadcast feels different from watching in person, and about the dissatisfaction that arises from not being able to watch directly.

Lee: Once again, the physical structures that appear in the performance could function as independent artworks themselves.

Cho: The installation work first appeared at my 2013 solo exhibition Mild depressive episode, as one of the performance components. One of the gallery walls was made of transparent glass, so you could also see inside through it. So I pasted a text on the glass and filled the gallery with drawings, a

carpet, and installation work, creating something that would be both a performance stage and an artwork. Later on, I did Human beings don't spring up like mushrooms (2021), which focused on the theme of "care," and the installation work, live performance, and performance video work were all produced separately. They're closely connected, but each of them is an independent work. Humangarten (2021), an installation work that appears in Human beings don't spring up like mushrooms, re-appears in the performance Cohabiting with yellow Benjamin (2022). Humangarten is also an independent installation work, and during the exhibition Museum Access: Through the Eco-Corridor (2022), people could sit or lie down on it.

Lee: Both Cohabiting with yellow Benjamin and Colere evoke the image of someone receiving a massage or physical therapy. It could be because of the experience where the pandemic left us avoiding physical contact, but there is a different sense to the act of treatment/healing involving contact between two people's skin (bodies). You can perceive both tension and peace.

Cho: Both those works started from the central concept of "care." Care is a concept you can see not only in my solo exhibition Cotton Era but also in Happy holiday, which involves caring for plants. We normally think of care as being between human beings, like a mother caring for her child or a therapist caring for a patient, but you can also extend that to caring toward non-human things like plants and animals. You also have Cohabiting with yellow Benjamin and Colere, which show situations where people who have spent their lives giving care are the ones receiving it. Throughout their lives, people are constantly caring for people and things, and what I focused on in particular was the fact that people who give care are always perceived as active subjects, while the people receiving care are seen as passive objects. I wanted to capture how there is a mutual exchange rather than that sort of one-sided relationship, and I felt that the act of massaging offered a good illustration of that.

Lee: You talked a bit about the pandemic. I imagine you had a pretty difficult time in particular with presenting performances and planning related exhibitions. I wanted to ask about the situation when you presented Feathers on lips at the gallery where Balance & Tension (2021) was held.

Cho: The curator for the exhibition, Yoonjeong Koh, suggested presenting a live performance of Feathers on lips, a video work that had been shown for Cotton Era. There was something quite appealing about a live restaging of a video work where we'd filmed a performance before. Obviously, it wasn't simple. There were many variables we had to consider when making decisions about things like whether the performers would be wearing masks or whether to limit the number of people watching the performance in the gallery. We did several performances with physical contact, and I heard reviews that it was quite impressive for the situation being what it was.

Lee: Performances occupy a very important place in your work. If anything, that place seems to be growing. What are the things you want to capture or show?

Cho: One can't really define my past performances in terms of any one thing. But recently, I've been doing quite a lot of live performances, and I've been experimenting with approaches to "liveness" by filming performances in progress, as with Discrete bodies reunite. For Discrete bodies reunite, there was one venue but two performances going on at some distance from each other, where the real-time footage of one performance became the background for the other. As the performances intersected in real time, that allowed for the coexistence of times and places that were the same yet different. When a person watching the performance in one location traveled to the other, they would experience a temporal difference, no matter how fast they moved. That could be another answer to the question before about the difference between my performances and a dance performance: there are intrusions by the audience, since the performance is happening in a gallery rather than on a performance stage.

If you ask me whether the importance of performances will continue to grow, or if my work is going to expand more in the direction of performances, my answer is "Maybe not." In terms of my body of work as a whole, performances don't hold a position of greater importance. I've been doing performances since I was a university student, so it's a key medium for me, but it's also just one of the media I use. I am someone who tends to mix media a lot, and I think performances are a good fit for me because they're a comprehensive artistic genre that also has

a powerful artistic (visual) quality. (2023)

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Artist CV

Youngjoo Cho  
b.1978

Education

- 2007 MA, École nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris Cergy, Cergy, France
- 2005 BA, École nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris Cergy, Cergy, France
- 2004 Studies in BA, École Municipale Supérieure d'Arts de Rueil-Malmaison, Rueil-Malmaison, France
- 2003-5 Studies in Master of Fine Arts, University Paris8, Paris, France
- 2001 BFA, Sungkyunkwan University, Departments of Art Education, Seoul, Korea

Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 Cadenza, SONGEUN, Seoul, Korea
- 2021 And another witness, Online Exhibition
- 2020 Cotton Era, Alternative Space Loop, Seoul, Korea
- Five Seasons, Seoulllo Media Canvas, Seoul, Korea
- 2019 Mrs. Jellyby's magnifying glass, Place Mak Laser, Seoul, Korea
- SoonSoon ManMan, House of Memory, Suncheon, Korea
- 2018 Miss Lee and Mrs. Kim, Art Space No, Seoul, Korea
- 2016 Watery Madames, Korean Cultural Centre India, New Delhi, India
- 2014 Our little gender stories, Space Mass, Seoul, Korea
- 2013 Mild depressive episode, Corner Art Space, Seoul, Korea
- My public affairs, Space Mass, Seoul, Korea

Duo Exhibitions

- 2023 Orange Sleep, ONE AND J. Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2022 Sticky Floor, Space Heem, Busan, Korea
- 2013 Good job Good place Good time, Osan Museum of Art, Osan, Korea

Group Exhibitions

- 2023 Videocity x Dresden 2023: Utopia Today, Motorenhalle, Dresden, germany
- Videocity x St. Pölten 2023: Utopia Today, Festspielhaus St. Pölten, St. Pölten, Austria
- Videocity x Tübingen 2023: Flower Power, various locations across Tübingen, Tübingen, germany
- Videocity x South Korea 2023: Flower Power, SONGEUN, Seoul, Korea
- Videocity x Art Busan 2023: Flower Power,

- BEXCO, Busan, Korea
- ACC Interactive Art Lab Showcase Interactive Art Lab: Remembering / Sensing-Community of Experience, Asia Culture Center, Gwangju, Korea
- The 12th Seoul Mediacity Biennale: THIS TOO, IS A MAP, Public program Demilitarized goddesses, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 2023 Contemporary Art Exhibition: Madang, Embracing You, Suwon Museum of Art, Suwon, Korea
- Beyond Gender, AP23, Seoul, Korea
- H-Art Lab Exhibition Part 2: Voices from the Walls, Art Space Hohwa, Seoul, Korea
- 2022 The 1st Arts & Tech Festival Seoul: Unfold X 2022
- Shaping the future, S-Factory, Seoul, Korea
- Merry Mix: The More, The Better, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Gwacheon, Gwacheon, Korea
- Museum Access: Through the Eco-Corridor, Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan, Korea
- On my way to the Museum, Busan Museum of Art, Busan, Korea
- Sticky Floor, Space HEEM, Busan, Korea
- DMZ ART PROJECT: Peaceful Coexistence Zone, Imjingak, Paju, Korea
- The sight To come, Factory of Contemporary Art in palbok & The Obaekjanggun gallery, Jeonju, Jeju, Korea
- 2021 From Matter to Life, MMCA Residency Changdong, Seoul, Korea
- Caring Society, Gyeongnam Art Museum, Changwon, Korea
- Signaling Perimeters, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- Goam's Dance: Peace Coexistence Harmony, House of Lee Ung No, Hongseong, Korea
- HA-HA-HA HAUS, Suwon Museum of Art Art Space Gwanggyo, Suwon, Korea
- Traveling without Moving, MMCA Residency Changdong, Seoul, Korea
- MMCA Residency Banner Project, MMCA Residency Changdong, Seoul, Korea
- Balance & Tension, Space Type, Seoul, Korea
- Knocking the door, Art Space I:SAEK, Seoul, Korea
- 2020 The 20th SongEun ArtAward Exhibition, SongEun Art Space, Seoul, Korea
- 16 Pillars-Roofless Gallery PS333, Art Space Geumcheon, Seoul, Korea
- People who don't make money, SeMA Storage, Seoul, Korea

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Choreographies of Healing: Ajanma and Nation

Repetitive Miracles in Life States

Encountered by the Body: The Meditative Performances of Youngjoo Cho

From the "Body in the World" to a World of Bodies

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Spring Up Beyond the Gardener

Control The Tricks of Competing and Negotiating Collaboration: The Work of Youngjoo Cho

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Credit

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- Busan Biennale Related Archive Exhibition, Moka X Busan X Biennale, Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, Busan, Korea
- We are Linked: Stereo Vision, Seosomun Shrine History Museum, Seoul, Korea
- Safe House, Maryland Art Place, Baltimore, USA
- Look with Inward Eyes, Cheongju Museum of Art, Cheongju, Korea
- Happiness Finds Me, Sejong Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 2019 Carpenter's scene, Insa Art Space, Seoul, Korea
- Promenade Run, Art Space EMU, Seoul, Korea
- Focus On X OVNI: Objectif Video Nice, Nice, France
- Marginalized Histories of Korean Women, University of Mary Washington Phyllis Ridderhof Martin Gallery, Virginia, USA
- Un-wall, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany
- Seoul Dance Center Webzine Choom:in, THE STREAM screening program: Video/Spectrum/ Dance, elephant space, Seoul, Korea
- NaNA Land: It's My World, Savina Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea
- Running Back & Forth, space gongzone, Seoul, Korea
- 2018 CODE STITCH, Lotte Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- GYEONGGI MILLENNIUM DOCUFESTA: GYEONGGIARCHIVE NOW, Gyeonggi Sangsang Campus, Suwon, Korea
- OVNI: Objectif Video Nice, Nice, France
- Re: International Exchange Exhibition of Cultural Spaces using Abandoned Industrial Properties, F1963, Busan, Korea
- A Circle Missing Piece, Asia Publication Culture & Information Center, Paju, Korea
- Who framed her?, Seoul Art Space Seogyo, Seoul, Korea
- The Arrival of New Women, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea
- Soft Power, Cheongju Museum of Art, Cheongju, Korea
- EMAP : Ewha Media Art Presentation, Ewha Women University, Seoul, Korea
- Media Media, Seoul Canvas, Seoul, Korea
- Blank Residency, Seongbuk Art Space, Seoul, Korea
- Night and day of memory, Seongbuk Dowon, Seoul, Korea
- 2017 Video Portrait, Total Museum of Contemporary

- Art, Seoul, Korea
- The City of Homeless, Yunseul Museum, Gimhae Arts Center, Gimhae, Korea
- SeMA Artist Guild- Specimen Storage, SeMA Storage, Seoul, Korea
- Miss Lee and Mrs. Kim: The Story of Youngsook Lee and Sookja Kim, Incheon Art Platform, Incheon, Korea
- The essay on visits of Museums by an X-parisienne Artists' Lunchbox Highlights, featuring works from the Collection of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- #14 SCREENING / TALK :YOUNGJOO CHO, The Stream, Seoul, Korea
- 2016 The City of Homeless, Organized by Arts Council Korea, Arko Art Center, Seoul, Korea
- DMG, Art Space NO, Seoul, Korea
- Silsin Project Nam.Yang.Gwang.Ha Archiving exhibition, G-Art Platform, Suwon, Korea
- 2015 Real DMZ, Art Sonje Center, Seoul, Korea
- Silsin Project Nam.Yang.Gwang.Ha, G-Art Platform, Suwon, Korea
- Save the planet with Global Alien, Galerie im Turm, Berlin, Germany
- Unbalanced balance, Artist Residency TEMI, Daejeon, Korea
- A moist Lunch by the Watery Madames Artist's Lunch Box, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- Exchange Exhibition Temi Artist Residency and Kwangju Media Art Residency: A beautiful match made in heaven, Artist Residency TEMI, Daejeon, Korea
- A Picnic in the Museum Artists' Lunch Box, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- Preview, Artist Residency TEMI, Daejeon, Korea
- Busan, Asan, Osan, Woolsan, Iksan; 5 San's people, Osan Museum of Art, Osan, Korea
- 2014 Chez Madame. Cho Artist's Lunch Box, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- Please respond artists in Seoul, curated by Dong-yeon Koh, Space O'NewWall, Seoul, Korea
- Jungle city and sound of life, APIC GALLERY, Daejeon, Korea
- Jungche Upneun Jenche, RoundAbout, Seoul, Korea
- When Cattitudes Become Form, Galerie de l'Angle, Paris, France
- When Cattitudes Become Form, 3Some, Cergy, France
- Hong-ti YeonHoui, Hong-ti Art Center, Busan,

### Adeena Mey

Adeena Mey is Managing Editor of *Afterall Journal* and a Research Fellow at the Afterall Research Centre, Central St Martins, University of the Arts London. His writing, editorial and curatorial projects explore artists' moving image, exhibition studies, contemporary art in East and Southeast Asia, cybernetics, decolonial and cosmotechnical thought. As Principal Investigator of the digital research project 'Black Atlantic Museum' (Paul Mellon Centre, 2021–22) and co-initiator of the workshop series 'Writing and Publishing Art in Southeast Asia' (British Academy 2021 and 2023–24), he has been exploring sustainable infrastructures for new modes of writing, publishing and thinking about contemporary art based on non-Western epistemologies and thoughts. He is also a lecturer in Contemporary Art History and Theory at ECAL/Lausanne University of Art and Design, Switzerland.

### Claudia Mattos

Claudia Mattos (she/her) is a curator, writer, and researcher whose interests include the intersections of art, global politics, and emergent technologies; art as a tool of critical pedagogy; global histories of new media art and performance; and global contemporary art with a particular interest in Latin America, the Caribbean, Southwest Asia, North Africa, and their diasporas.

### Dongyeon Koh

Dongyeon Koh, Ph. D. is an art critic and art historian, who has served as a mentor or committee for art residencies and art and film festivals in South Korea for the last two decades. Her recent books include *From Soft Power to Goods: East Asian Contemporary Art and Art Popularization Strategies since the 1990s* (2018) and *The Korean War and Post-memory Generation: The Arts and Films in South Korea Generation: Korean Contemporary Art and Film* (London, Rutledge, 2021). She is co-writing a book *Modern and Contemporary Korean Art in Context* (1950-Now) (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024) with Professor Jeongsil Lee, and currently an adjunct Professor at Ewha Womans University.

### Hwajeong Kim-Yoo

Hwajeong has an academic interest in sexuality, family and relationships, intimacy and queer theories and is currently working on Korean different-sex and same-sex cohabiting couples' sexuality and their family practices.

### Jo-Lene Ong

Jo-Lene Ong is a curator working from The Netherlands and Malaysia. She was program advisor for the 12th Seoul Mediacity Biennale. Jo-Lene teaches at Gerrit Rietveld Academie, co-curates Canal++ film club in Amsterdam and co-founded CounterArchive a new annual event in Kuala Lumpur. Her practice engages with imperial histories of Asia and countercolonial ways of knowing, organising, and envisioning the future. She is pursuing a long-term research on reimagining and remaking infrastructure through contemporary art.

### Minjoo Lee

Majoring in Studio Art and Art Theory, Minjoo Lee writes for publications and organizes curatorial projects. She co-curated Animality in the Loop (GONG-WON, 2019), which explored the relationship between performance and performance documentation, and curated Non-caption Interview (Gallery OOOJH, 2021), which highlighted the aesthetics and political nature of documentary images. Recently, in #2 (Doosan Gallery, 2023, co-curated), an exploration was undertaken to capture the eventful nature of an exhibition from the text of theatrical plays. She contemplates what critical writing is, focusing on the events and performativity created by and the nature of images.

### Moonjung Lee

Moonjung Lee earned her master's and doctoral degrees in Visual Art Studies at Ewha Womans University. In 2011, Lee began her career as an art critic. She is currently the director of Leepoétique, a research institute on contemporary Korean art. Leepoétique publishes *Critique & Colloquy*, a publication covering the work of Korean artists, and is in the process of archiving articles, essays, critiques and interviews on the institute's website.

Lee has written numerous critiques, including "Osang Gwon's Sculptures and Polyphony" (2020), "Donghyun Son: The Mysteriousness of Imagination and Transformation" (2021), "The Image Topography of Donggi Lee" (2022), and "Seungcheol Ok: Smooth Surface, Multi-layered World" (2023), and has been contributing regular column Critic Moonjung Lee's The Gallery to *Culture & Business by CNB Journal* since 2017. Her books are *Between Disgust and Fascination-Why Contemporary Art is Drawn to the Uncomfortable* (2018, Dongnyok) and *The World is a Gallery* (2022, Hyeonamsa).

### Namsee Kim

Associate Professor of Art at Ewha Womans University, College of Fine Arts. Through his interest in the relationship between media and perception, he writes art criticism for the work of contemporary artists. His books include *Madness, Art, and Writing* (2016), *Contemporary German Aesthetics: Dialectics of Sensation, Memory, and Thought* (2017), and *Being Seen* (2020), and he has translated u.a. Walter Benjamin's *The Moscow Diaries*, Friedrich Kittler's *Phonograph, Film, and Typewriter*, Boris Groys's *On the New*, and Markus Gabriel's *The Power of Art*.

### Sinae Rha

Sinae Rha is a choreographer, theatre director and researcher in performing arts. She creates movement-based performances and writes on dance, theater and performances art. She has been working as a collective with choreographer Kisub Choi under the name of Project YYIN, whose works include Lovers Swim the Abyss, Quad, and Becoming-dancer.

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### Sunyoung Lee

Sunyoung Lee began her criticism career in the *Chosun Ilbo's* art criticism category in 1994. She has served as an editorial board member for Art and Discourse (1996-2006) and editor-in-chief for Art Critics (2003-2005). The Awards include the 1st annual Kim Bok-jin Art Theory Award (2005) and the first annual Korean Art Critics' Association Award for theory (2009) and AICA Prizes for Young Critics(2014)

### Taehyun Kwon

Taehyun Kwon is a curator and art critic. Even though his practice is rooted in the art scene, he is particularly interested in things that aren't conventionally deemed as art. Taehyun emphasizes the perspective of interpreting the political as issues of the aesthetic and is actively engaged in research in this area.

### Woong Nam

Based in Seoul, he critiques contemporary art and visual culture, and also engages in human rights activism related to LGBT+, HIV/AIDS, and refugees.

### Yoonjeong Koh

Yoonjeong Koh is currently working as an independant curator, and researches performance/interdisciplinary arts and cases that can be used in actual exhibitions, focusing on space, objects, and movement as a way to express the genre characteristics of interdisciplinary art. In addition, she engages in a variety of activities related to exhibition planning, such as creating art books, research, special lectures, and consulting. She is currently conducting research to pursue projects related to the marine ecosystem in the near future.

**Cho 0 Joo**  
**2022-2023 Youngjoo Cho's**  
**Artist-Research-Critique**

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 Yoonjeong Koh

**Artist**  
 Youngjoo Cho

**Archivist/Researcher**  
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 53 Kyung Roh  
 54 Pop con  
 58 Jungho Jung  
 61 Junho Jang  
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Supplement

Score

# Three Breaths

Eun-Ji Anna LEE

♩ = c. 52-60

## I

\* 배관에 대고 3-4초의 air sound를 < > 로 반복하여 연주한다.  
 \* 배관에서 시작해서 제자리로 돌아간다.

Bass Clarinet

Alto Sax

Tuba

Percussion

B. Cl.

A. Sx.

Tuba

Perc.

©Eun-Ji Anna LEE

Yoonjung Koh

Mijoo Lee

Dongwon Koh

Namsu Kim

Hwajung Yoo

Chulsu Min

Ju-Lee Ong

Sunyoung Lee

Namsu Kim

Sinau Ra

Mijoo Lee

Adrian Mey

Taehun Kwon

Wonyoung Nam

Moonyoung Lee

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2

B. Cl.

A. Sx.

Tuba

Perc.

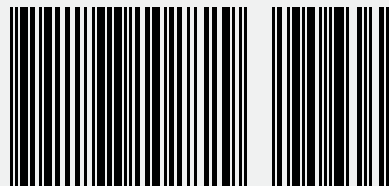
B. Cl.

A. Sx.

Tuba

Perc.

3
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