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SMK National Gallery of Denmark
5 March - 31 July 2022



INTRODUCTION

'*Double Soul* is about the possible projection of oneself onto another being, life, thing or phenomenon, whether through supernatural power, human imagination, telepathy and empathy, or whatever. The fundamental idea here is one's will or aspiration to refer to the other, whether it is another human, soul, animal, nature or something else.'

Haegue Yang

Double Soul, the title of Haegue Yang's exhibition at SMK, could serve as a headline for her oeuvre in general. Yang's titles – of exhibitions and of individual works – often incorporate concepts related to a duality of mirrored oppositions or the idea of 'one and the rest': 'doubles and couples', 'doubles and halves', 'siblings and twins', 'double life'. In corresponding fashion, Yang's works frequently appear in pairs or interconnected groups, considering dualities in their echoes, reflections, parallels and repetitions, in which the individual parts govern each other, making them inextricably linked.

Such dualities also mark Yang's biography. Korea was colonised by Japanese imperialists until the end of World War II and was divided into North and South Korea following the three-year Korean War; the division was made permanent in 1954. Born in Seoul, 1971, Yang grew up against the backdrop of a harsh military dictatorship and a non-democratic political environment. In 1994, as a young art student, Yang moved from Asia to Europe to study in Germany, a country that was also divided ideologically, though is now reunified. Since the mid-1990s, she has been actively living and working between Germany and Korea. One could speculate that this personal background of geopolitical divisions and continuous historical ruptures, embedded with transnational experience, shaped the foundation of Yang's thinking and art.

Yang's works encompass a variety of media and sensorial elements: installation, sculpture, text, graphic, speech, performative gestures, sound and video combined with an activation of the senses and sensations, such as touch, smell, sound, heat and humidity. Her art frequently brings together opposite poles: at once abstract and figurative, machine-like and human. She mixes organic and industrially manufactured materials and uses plain commodities such as blinds and drying racks, merging them with ancient craft traditions such as straw braiding and weaving.

Exile, immigration and transnationality are preoccupations of the artist. Her exploration of these concepts is often accompanied by a critical contemplation on the conventional ideas of both folk tradition and identity politics among others. Domesticity, another of Yang's concerns, examines practices rooted to the home – a personal and private sphere where deeper reflection and radical

personal change can develop. A counterpoint to the great life-changing consequences of exile, globalisation, excessive digitisation and consequential alienation, this down-to-earth, sober yet disobedient dimension of the domestic sphere offers a politics of quotidian intimacy – including the one between people and things.

Many of her works contain narratives based on the lives and works of historical figures. A prominent example is the set of textual pieces, which intertwine the biographies of the French author Marguerite Duras and the South Korean composer Isang Yun, as well as the English author George Orwell and Duras – in a reading that reveals parallels and echoes. In recent years, Yang has also created sculptural ensembles that serve as subjective portraits of historical figures. For SMK, Yang has conceived a duo of sculptures as a simultaneously analytical and subjective response to two artists, Pia Arke (Greenland/Denmark) and Sonja Ferlov Mancoba (Denmark), from Danish art history – and from the SMK collection. Like many of the other historical figures Yang has taken as her starting point, the lives of both these artists are characterised by transculturalism. These two pioneering artists were anchored in and affiliated with multiple places and cultures in the world, in a nomadic (self-) exile that Yang engages with.

Yang is concerned with the inevitable necessity of navigating from an outsider position, and her works express an affinity with those figures that also do not belong anywhere but with each other. Eventually, Yang aspires to inhabit a less tangible yet more inclusive community, in which she sees herself reflected in these historical figures and, at the same time, lets them mirror each other. This generative perspective stems from her deep interest in the anachronic and transcontinental mode whereby ideas, subjects or crafts also exist concurrently in different cultures or are transferred and translated from one era or culture to another.

The concept of a ‘double soul’ appears in a number of different spiritual orientations, such as shamanistic traditions. A common trait of these otherwise dissimilar religions is the idea that humans (and other beings) can be overlapped by others. A key role of the shaman is to act as a medium to guide individuals on earth by mediating with divine spirits. This act of overlaying another soul onto one’s own facilitates the transition between life and the afterlife. In Korea, shamanism has thrived for thousands of years, sustained in narratives, songs and rituals, which are performed not least by women. For Yang, shamanism is an exemplary resilient practice that has survived in diverse cultures, mediating and safeguarding exchanges between the spiritual and the sublunary. As is typical in Yang’s works, unexpected modern materials, such as common metal bells with their rattle, successfully translate this empowering civilizational practice.

Preoccupied with countering reductive categorisations, Yang actively introduces the entangled relations between folklore and contemporary culture, industrial manufacturing and craft, the factual and the imaginary, the quotidian and the exceptional as well as vulnerability and confidence among other seemingly oppositional and disparate ideas. Yang also resists the notion of an authentic monoculture and the fantasy of a singular belonging. Impelled by curiosity, she playfully insists that encounters and translations between several different contexts and systems can give rise to new and alternative spaces and possibilities in which we can see ourselves reflected.

Marianne Torp
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Note

In the entire exhibition of *Double Soul*, there are cross-cultural moments, originating from genuine curiosity, concerns and respect of the artist. Figures, events, artefacts, mythologies as well as religious objects are mobilised to act in the context of artistic and subjective viewpoints, rather than out of an academic or anthropological approach. We thank all the institutions and individuals that have generously shared their expertise in guiding the artist and the museum team for their advice in dealing with the material with caution and care. If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact SMK at smk@smk.dk.





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- 1b Sonic Intermediate - Six-Fingered Wayfarer after Arke

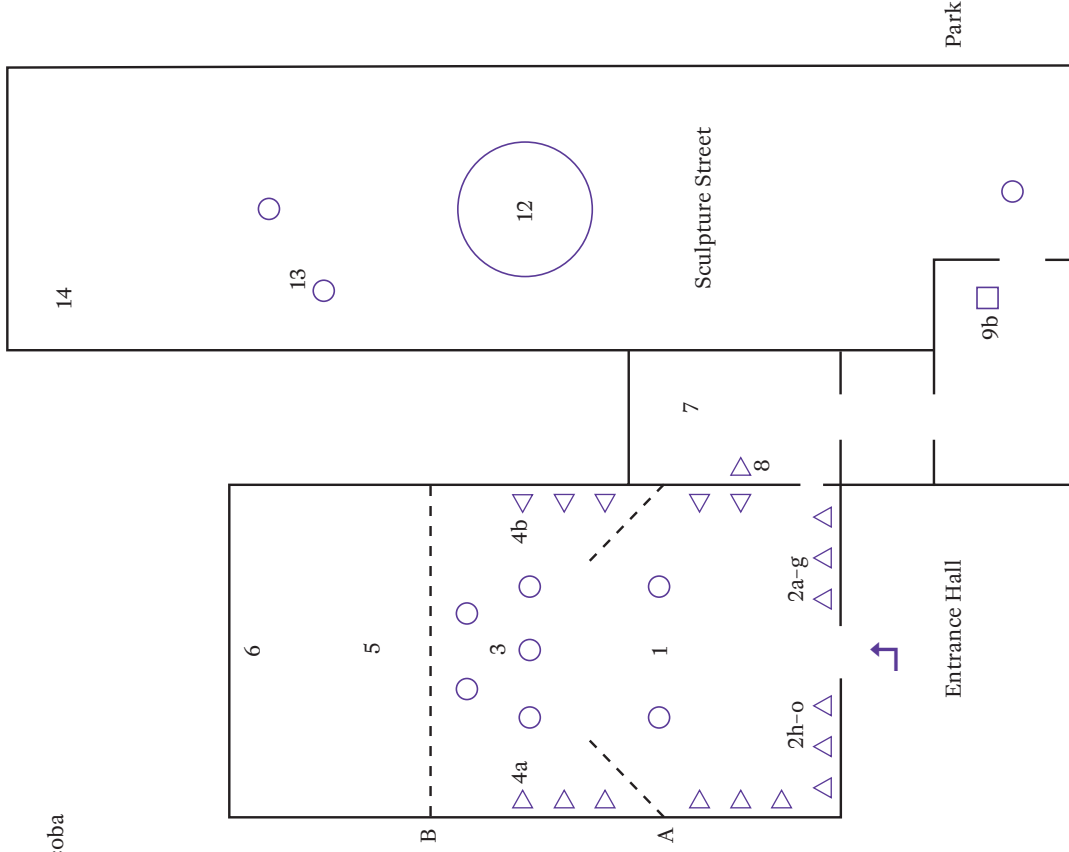
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Architectural Elements

A Haptic Verticals

B Shaped Wall

- Architectural Elements
A Haptic Verticals
B Shaped Wall



1 Sonic Intermediates – Double Soul

Sonic Intermediates – Double Soul, 2021

Powder-coated steel frame, mesh and handles, ball bearings, casters, stainless steel bells, PVD-coated stainless steel bells, powder-coated stainless steel bells, black brass-plated bells, split rings, plastic twine, artificial plants, turbine vents

SMK National Gallery of Denmark, gift from the New Carlsberg Foundation

1a *Sonic Intermediate – Tripodal Shapeshifter after Ferlov Mancoba*

191 × 147 × 212 cm

1b *Sonic Intermediate – Six-Fingered Wayfarer after Arke*

210 × 100 × 104 cm

Yang has subjectively portrayed figures from cultural history in several of her works as an act of countering the given history. With this new, two-part sculpture, she brings together two significant artists with ‘Danish’ affiliations. *Sonic Intermediates – Double Soul*, the double sculpture speaks of Yang’s interests and method of ‘portraying’ both the figures and her reading. In this duo, she forges a link to historical figures across time, emphasising rather disparate yet common relations among cultures, arts, crafts and objects of use.

During a visit to Copenhagen in the early summer of 2021, Yang deepened her fascination with the artist Sonja Ferlov Mancoba (1911–1984), especially her many ‘multi-legged’ sculptures and their distinctive asymmetry. Ferlov Mancoba was a pioneer of Danish abstract sculpture. In the 1930s, she was part of the artists’ group Linien, a Danish articulation of the international Surrealist movement, pursuing the ‘truthful’ notions of art, everyday life and society by liberating humanity’s mental, sexual, animal and not least creative impulses. The juxtapositions of found objects, organic forms and ‘beings’ characteristic of these artists also resonate in Yang’s works, as she draws on elements from cultures and history other than her own. Ferlov Mancoba’s penchant for masks and her idea of sculpture as a ‘being’ or ‘creature’ are traits also found in Yang’s sculptural works. However, in contrast to artists such as Ferlov Mancoba, Yang is not only preoccupied with authentic, artisanal traditions, but also engages with industrial mass production and its contemporary societal conditions. For example, the plastic plants poking out of her sculpture are replicas ordered online of plants native to South Africa, in recognition of the country where Ferlov Mancoba’s husband, the artist Ernest Mancoba, came from.

Yang’s interest in the works of the late Greenlandic-Danish artist, Pia Arke (1958–2007) lies in Arke’s biographically driven studies of the asymmetrical power relations between Greenland and Denmark in the wake of colonisation, from which profound and complex issues concerning identity and culture

have risen. Both artists participated in the 2019 Istanbul Biennale, where Yang's curiosity in Arke was first piqued. Here, Yang encountered Arke's important work *Legend I-V*, 1999, which consists of collages of family photos on scientific maps of Eastern Greenland published in the 1970s. Across the collages, Arke sprinkled rice, sugar and other colonial goods introduced in Greenland as evidence of Danish colonisation. As a nod to Arke's map of Greenland, the huge hands in Yang's sculpture carry a stylised globe with the usual colours indicating the land and the ocean reversed, paving the way for a different geographical outlook on the world. Yang also experiences a deeper cultural connection to Arke through a notion of the Arctic, which encompasses time and geography, by being fundamentally transcontinental and easily reaching a prehistoric dimension. Shamanism is found in many regions across the world, for example, the Arctic, and in Central and East Asian as well as Amazonian cultures, an enduring indigenous trait that Yang considers as a lingering resistance to Modernistic narratives of urbanisation, centralisation, hierarchisation and institutionalisation.

Inspired by shamanic rituals that amplify certain body parts by means of costumes, masks, headgear and props, Yang focuses on the big hands as a powerful symbol of protection against physical and psychological dangers, threats and illnesses. In the sculpture dedicated to Arke, a total of five huge hands, two of them at the top and three of them forming the standing structure at the bottom, are joined by a kind of hairy body in the middle. Each of the two uppermost hands have thumbs on both sides, making six fingers in all. These extra thumbs are evidently inspired by the sealskin mittens with two thumbs that the artist encountered at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen during a site visit. Found in its Arctic Collection, which is itself part of colonial history, such mittens were commonly used by Inuit communities when hunting in kayaks: when one side got wet, the mitten could be easily turned around and continued to be used. The refined solution of these two-thumbed mittens to a practical shortcoming immediately spoke to Yang who possesses a keen sensibility for everyday objects. The two upper hands hold a globe with two maps; one depicts a hypothetical scenario of continental drift whereas the other is based on a 17th century circular Korean world map, *Cheonbado* 天下圖, known as the *Complete Atlas of All beneath the Heavens*. The *Cheonbado* is famous for reflecting the new geographic knowledge from Europe as well as referencing a Taoist worldview and the rich compilation of mystic geography found in the ancient Chinese book, called *Shan Hai Jing*, known also as the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* 山海經.

It is of no coincidence that Yang specifically connects with two fellow women artists from history as her predecessors Arke and Ferlov Mancoba, with whom she seems to share a dual or multicultural background. Yang was born and raised in South Korea, yet started her artistic career in the mid-1990s in Europe. Currently living and working in both Seoul and Berlin, she resides in a state

that the artist describes as ‘becoming diaspora’. Arke had a Greenlandic mother and a Danish father and spent her brief life in Greenland and later in Denmark. Ferlov Mancoba was born and trained in Denmark, but lived most of her life in France with her South African husband, the artist Ernest Mancoba. The diasporic experience of living outside one’s ‘homeland’ and the complex transcultural kinship seem central to Yang and her duo sculpture in its deliberate manifestation of mixed aesthetics, materials and references. Reflecting the way Yang renders both Arke and Ferlov Mancoba as ‘double souls’, the sculptures on bright red steel frames, in part, focus on their hybridity as complexity, how they echo each other’s souls – and perhaps her own.

Please note that a presentation of works by Sonja Ferlov Mancoba as well as Pia Arke is on display in the permanent collection, New Wing, level 2.



2 Lacquer Paintings

2a *Blade Notations – Fission Path*, 2019

Chipboard, wood varnish, blades, dust, insect, hair
35 × 25 cm

2b *Blade Notations – Splinter and Float II*, 2019

Chipboard, wood varnish, blades, seeds, dust, hair
35 × 25 cm

2c *Steely Starburst*, 2018

Chipboard, wood varnish, blades, dust, hair
70 × 50 cm

2d *The Days of Being Wild*, 2015–2017

Chipboard, wood varnish, leaves, insects
75 × 55 cm

2e *One Fine Spring Day*, 2015–2017

Chipboard, wood varnish, graph paper, leaf, hair, insects, soil dust
125 × 75 cm

2f *A Baggy Pair in Rain – German Zucchini, 500 g and Dutch Red Onions, 1 kg*, 2018

Chipboard, wood varnish, found plants, seeds, mesh produce bags, dust, hair
50 × 35 cm

2g *Cosmic Stretch on Ring – Limes, 250 g*, 2018

Chipboard, wood varnish, seeds, graph paper, mesh produce bag, dust, hair
50 × 35 cm

2h *Untitled*, 2000

Chipboard, wood varnish, quad paper
27 × 18 cm

2i *Airy Creases*, 2016

Chipboard, wood varnish, framed
72 × 62 cm

2j *Rainy Chili*, 2011

Chipboard, wood varnish, chilis
60 × 45 cm

2k *Rainy Dirty*, 2012

Chipboard, wood varnish, soil dust
47 × 30 cm

2l *Messy and Drifty Message*, 2016

Chipboard, wood varnish, dust, hair, envelope, graph paper, rubber band
125 × 90 cm



2m *Thick Dirt*, 2016

Chipboard, wood varnish, knitting yarn, rubber band

125 × 90 cm

2n *Expandable Escape – Lemons*, 250 g, 2018

Chipboard, wood varnish, mesh produce bag, dust

25 × 18 cm

2o *Frazzled in Brief – Organic Spanish Oranges*, 1 kg, 2018

Chipboard, wood varnish, seeds, mesh produce bag, dust

25 × 35 cm

The *Lacquer Paintings* are varnished collages made of organic materials such as seeds and leaves combined with scraps and leftovers, including used knife blades, discarded packaging materials and paper cut-offs, from the artist's workspace. These unassuming everyday materials are fixed onto chipboard in floating compositions and sealed in place with thick layers of the most common household lacquer product. Yang began the series of lacquer paintings back in her art school days in the mid-1990s and continues to extend the series with new approaches.

Lacquerware is a more than 2000-year-old Asian craft tradition that holds an important place in Korean culture, where the technique reached a particularly high level of refinement. Traditionally, the lacquer was extracted from wood and applied in many layers on decorated surfaces, especially on wooden boxes with intricate mother-of-pearl ornamentation. In Yang's version, the exquisite and precious traditional materials were replaced with standard or scrap ones, and the compositions are casual and accidental. As the most inexpensive wooden varnish deliberately employed gives off a noxious smell, the *Lacquer Paintings* are left for weeks or months outdoors to dry. During this drying process, unintentional elements such as insects, dust and hair become stuck on the surface and occasional raindrops additionally leave their imprints on it. Taking her point of departure from an ancient craft tradition steeped in culture is emblematic of Yang. Her recent lacquer works also point towards her own time: here, everyday materials, random events, direct evidence of the daily production process and the setting in which it took place all become important and visible parts of these painterly panels.



3 Non-Indépliables, nues

Non-Indépliables, nues, 2010/2020

Drying racks, light bulbs, cable, zip ties, terminal strips

3a *Non-Indépliable, nue – Crowny Figure in Crossed Leg*

183 × 105 × 78 cm

3b *Non-Indépliable, nue – Three Hearts Lifts a Sprout*

198 × 144 × 62 cm

3c *Non-Indépliable, nue – Sandwich Swing Squeezed between Buildings*

129 × 156 × 108 cm

3d *Non-Indépliable, nue – Lifting Up*

191 × 140 × 75 cm

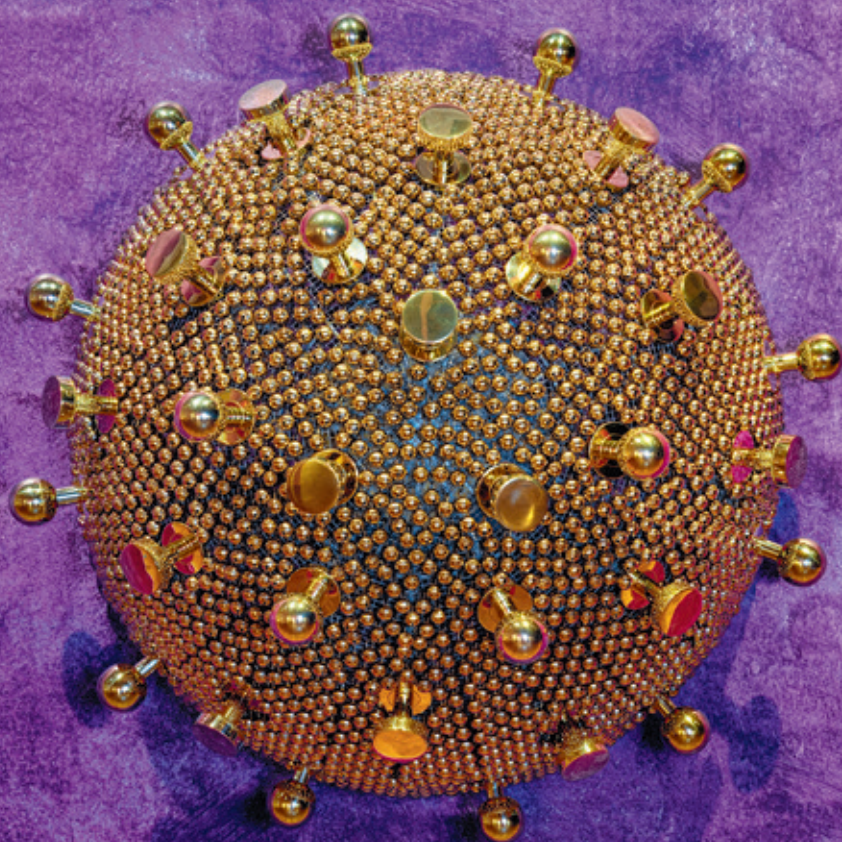
3e *Non-Indépliable, nue – Three Times on Shoulder*

264 × 188 × 62 cm

For Yang, the drying rack is a metaphor encapsulating life as it unfolds in our day-to-day existence involving the basic activities associated with ordinary household chores: cooking, cleaning and doing laundry. Seemingly mundane objects and common appliances in our homes become expressions of complex processes that shape our lives. Many of Yang's works focus on domestic spaces, such as the kitchen and bathroom, as well as appliances like radiators, gas stoves and laundry machines, addressing the practicalities and rituals involved in making and keeping a home.

The drying rack is a practical device that is usually folded up and stored away when not in use. In setting up the drying racks, Yang transforms the humble objects into expressive figures in their own right. Many of them are pieced together to constitute distinctive poses: of piggybacking, acrobatic balancing or supporting, etc. Even though the racks look fragile and bare, they nevertheless refuse their original minor status of being folded away (the French title of the works translates to 'non-foldable, nude'). Instead, they are now part of a sculptural alliance with luminous light bulbs mounted on long cables.

The light bulb and the electric cable often appear in the so-called *Light Sculptures*, as evidence of the invisible flow of energy many devices are connected to. However, illumination also becomes a crucial symbol of communication and interrelations between these unremarkable objects and the larger contexts that surround them.



4 Sonic Rotating Whatever Openings

Sonic Rotating Whatever Openings on Hemisphere, 2021

Powder-coated aluminium frame and mesh, ball bearings, PVD-coated stainless steel bells, split rings, door knobs

4a *Sonic Rotating Whatever Openings on Hemisphere* #7

82 × 72 × 44 cm

4b *Sonic Rotating Whatever Openings on Hemisphere* #3

81 × 81 × 38 cm

Next to venetian blinds, metallic bells are one of the materials that Yang chooses to work with the most. Densely studded with bells in different metallic tones, her *Sonic Sculptures* are an orchestration of sounds on a metal mesh frame. Often, the *Sonic Sculptures* are adorned with different ‘foreign’ yet common materials, such as artificial plants, decoration materials and turbine vents on top. The metal bell is an important shamanic tool in Korean folk tradition and also appears in European pagan cultures in various regions, such as Sardinia and the Black Forest region in southwest Germany. The jingling sounds that accompany the shaman’s various rituals mediate between humans and the other, be it ghosts, souls or natural phenomena. The non-melodic rattling sound generated by these sculptures can be understood as a nod to the often rhythmic, monotone sound and repetitive modes of musical elements in shamanistic rituals. Bells and sensorial inputs produced by other ordinary objects thus allow Yang to access shared aspects of different cultures.

Sonic Rotating Whatever Openings demonstrate how Yang’s sculptures often reference each other. In this case, the composition of bells on spheres, combined with door knobs, reflect the circular and tangential motifs that recur in many of Yang’s works. Mediating different dimensions, handles are practical devices that one operates to push/pull or open/close. They also symbolise an interface of access and approach. Here, the door handles and knobs are mostly defunctionalised. Rather than reducing themselves to a mere function, they insist on themselves as significant beings and encourage a contemplation on the metaphors that lie beneath.

When *Sonic Rotating Whatever Openings* is set in motion by hand, all the bells slide around in their respective modules within the mesh. With a rotational movement, the bells bounce clockwise and counterclockwise while their rattling gradually fades.



5 Lethal Love

Lethal Love, 2008/2018

Aluminium venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminium hanging structure, steel wire, free-standing mirror wall, moving spotlights, scent emitters (Flower and gunpowder)
282 × 653 × 614 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin

Lethal Love is a seminal piece of how Yang incorporates historical events and biographical details directly or indirectly in an abstract interpretation. This work explores the fatal story of Petra Kelly, a German activist, pacifist and founder of the German Green Party (Die Grünen) and the former general Gert Bastian.

Kelly and Bastian seemed an unlikely pair, him being twenty-five years her senior and with a military career and a background in the Wehrmacht, the armed forces of Nazi Germany. Despite extensive public and media attention on their partnership and political engagement, they became increasingly isolated with Kelly growing disconcertingly dependent on Bastian. In 1992, the story of this German power couple came to an abrupt end with two gunshots. The police found Kelly and Bastian killed in their home, and the investigation indicated that in all likelihood, Bastian had first shot the sleeping Kelly and then himself. The 'double death' of Kelly and Bastian was commemorated by the Green Party, ignoring the possibility of Bastian being a murderer. Accompanied by the unusual pairing of their glamorous public careers and extreme isolation, their deaths caused not only public bewilderment, but also their subsequent fall into oblivion.

Inside the darkened installation *Lethal Love*, where scent dispensers fill the air with flower and gunpowder, one is repeatedly hit by bright and moving spotlights, which are only partially screened out by the venetian blinds. The installation thus establishes a physical situation that refers to the couple's juggling of their prominent public image and their private and dark secret leading to their deaths.



6 Multiple Mourning Room

Multiple Mourning Room, 2012

In collaboration with Manuel Raeder

Digital colour print (detail)

Dimensions variable, at SMK: 440 × 1350 cm

Courtesy of the artists and Greene Naftali, New York

This large digital collage, *Multiple Mourning Room*, appears twice; firstly, on a built-in partition wall based on a modular pattern and secondly, on the end wall of the exhibition space. *Multiple Mourning Room* suggests a mode of both space and time characterised by great mobility and fluid identities. The title is inspired by the multi-faith prayer rooms found in hospitals and airports, which can be used by everyone regardless of faith. In these anonymous, autonomous, illogical and indefinable spaces between illnesses and borders, Yang has found a potential for counter-gravitational spaces.

Since 2012, the design of *Multiple Mourning Room* has developed and adapted to different exhibition contexts. The panoramic urban landscape that dominates the wallpaper is based on a digitally manipulated photo of Hiroshima, which becomes an image of a universal grief about the never-fully-ended Cold War and missing peace in the Asia-Pacific region. On top of this, various objects float: bonsai trees, Japanese tombstones, Korean figures in volcanic fertility stones from Jeju Island, pieces of driftwood, *shide* (zigzag paper streamers used in Shinto rituals) and depictions of some of Yang's collages and sculptures. In the collapsed space of the wallpaper, a subjective and more fluid connection arises between these disparate and seemingly unrelated objects, places and their significance. To Yang, such compilations testify to her belief in the existence of cross-cultural and transnational connections and similarities that transcend geopolitical segregations. From this perspective, her works materialise the importance and urgency of seeking out such relations in a time that seems to be increasingly defined by divisions.

Every time Yang exhibits this wallpaper, new, local elements sneak into the work. At SMK, the wallpaper is not only fitted to the proportions of the museum's wall; the imagery has also been supplemented with sealskin mittens (with two thumbs), a historic, Greenlandic children's anorak densely studded with more than 80 protective amulets, wooden snow goggles and a whaling suit. These images are of objects from the Arctic Collection at the National Museum of Denmark, which is in itself part of the complex web of colonisation. The updated demography of the wallpaper thus introduces objects, including utensils and garments, in Inuit culture that convey a spiritual vocation and cope with practical challenges, reflecting Yang's interest in such sophisticated and functional solutions to basic concerns.



7 Formative Works

7a *Anatomy of the Pasta*, 1995/2017

Pencil on plaster, cooked and dried pasta, masking tape

47 × 71 × 6 cm

7b *Tray with Landscape*, 1995/2017

Plaster

47 × 72 × 7 cm

7c *Bottle with Pasta above the Door*, 1995/2017

Milk bottle, polished bottle top, pasta, photocopy, text on foil, fabric, wood

100 × 16 × 20 cm

7d *Family Tree*, 1995/2018

Metal rod, cotton thread, wire, plant pot, plaster

133 × 29 × 20 cm

7e *Anthology of Haegue Archives*, 1998/2020

Glass showcase, objects, labels,

225 × 210 × 35 cm

Consists of:

3 Precious Things, 1995/2017

Blond Hair / Black Hair (Dyed), 1995/2017

Fishing, 1995*

Hand-Made, 1995/ 2018

IKEA Cup as a Self-Portrait, 1995/2018

Long Life / Bad Life, 1995/2017

Macaroni, 1995/2017

Macaroni (Metal), 1995/2017

Menu, 1995

Practicing Baking, 1995/2017

The Art and Craft of the Menu, 1995, Collection of Barbara Wien, Berlin

The Transformation from Fish to Leaf, 1994, Private Collection, Lingen

*Not originally part of *Anthology of Haegue Archives*, where *Thread with Fishbook*, 1995–1996 was included instead.

7f *Sink with Wire*, 1995/2017

Plaster, wood, steel wire, text on foils

57 × 73 × 49 cm

7g *Rod with Wire*, 1994/2017

Metal rod, steel wire

9 × 9 × 84 cm

7h *Dining Table*, 1995/2017

3 milk bottles, polished bottle top, cooked and dried pasta, masking tape, paper, glass bowl, photographs, text on foil, dust, chipboard, wood, paint, lid, metal, plaster, cable

91 × 103 × 50 cm

This installation addresses the period when Yang, as a newly arrived student, struggled to familiarise herself with European society and posit her own artistic production within that context. Many of those early object-based pieces incorporate a variety of materiality and narrate that period, which is marked by Yang's language difficulties, a non-existent understanding of her cultural heritage and her encounter with unfamiliar environments. As many of Yang's early works were disposed of or lost, most of the objects in this room and *Anthology of Hague Archives* were reconstructed between 2017 and 2020, enabling her own rediscovery of her nascent practice.

For this presentation, comprised of some early object-based works and *Anthology of Hague Archives*, Yang has arranged a selection of objects that appear to be experiments, tentative efforts at artworks and commonplace objects from the workshop. The *Anthology of Hague Archives*' pseudo-scholarly presentation of objects in vitrines accompanied by labels mimics the convention of displaying objects in ethnographic or science museums. It is as if Yang is cataloguing, archiving and researching her own art. In a way, she is. From the 1960s, many artists were preoccupied with the concept of the 'archive' and the entire idea of being able to distil phenomena and ideas, pulling them into a rational, neutral space. Typically for Yang, she mobilises self-irony to puncture the (self-) aggrandising, almost 'pathetic' – according to her own evaluation – aspects of the archive format by compiling her own works as an 'Anthology'.



8 Bathroom Contemplation

Bathroom Contemplation, 2000

15 sheets: text on paper (laser print), written by Haegue Yang and Misoon Kim

Each 42 × 29.7 cm

‘Only when I take a bath does the world seem to become right.’

Yang has continually produced text-based pieces; on occasion, these were scripts for audio works or video essays. During her formative period, text served as a space for her personal, even confessional voice and an exit from the conceptual tendencies of her sculptural works.

In this text piece we hear alternating voices of two protagonists – a mother and a daughter. Each voice of *Bathroom Contemplation* is printed on a separate sheet and glued up on the wall, a direct and humble form of presentation devoid of unnecessary effects. Here, the bathroom embodies a space where two voices meet to recapitulate a situation of great embarrassment and alienation during a long-awaited time together after being separated due to Yang’s departure to Germany in 1994. The mother-daughter relationship is described here as a subject experiencing pain and agony from the daughter’s immigration.

Yang suggested to her mother, who is a writer and activist, to write a kind of double-diary about their time spent together during her mother’s visit in Germany, with an assumption that their writing would eventually deal with an indelible incident in the bathroom. Based on a simple yet crucial difference of there being no drain in the floor in German bathrooms, a ‘crisis’ was caused – when the mother accidentally flooded the daughter’s bathroom during a caring attempt to clean it. Around this event, tension between two beloved people builds and reaches a climax. It is a story about the shifts a person experiences depending on whether one is foreign or familiar with a society, between dependence or independence, being free or trapped and falling from ignorance or rising from knowledge. The text piece also conveys the frustrations of one arriving in a new country without speaking the language or understanding the cultural codes, hampered in the simplest daily activities to become like a helpless child again.

9 Chronologies of Conflated Dispersion



9a *A Chronology of Conflated Dispersion – Duras and Yun*, 2018

Digital print on self-adhesive vinyl

Translation into Danish: Dennis Meyhoff Brink

9b *A Chronology of Conflated Dispersion – Duras and Orwell*, 2021

Digital print on self-adhesive vinyl

Translation into Danish: Dennis Meyhoff Brink

Yang's two text-based works *A Chronology of Conflated Dispersion – Duras and Yun* and *A Chronology of Conflated Dispersion – Duras and Orwell* bring together three figures from history: the French author Marguerite Duras (1914–1996), the South Korean composer Isang Yun (1917–1995) and the English author George Orwell (1903–1950). The text works unfold as chronological examinations of incidents in the lives of the three persons entangled/intertwined with the colonisation of Asian countries and the Cold War, among other historic events. The two works offer an opportunity to enter and connect the complex and compelling lives of these historic persons that, at the same time, reflect on Yang and her complex ties to Asia and Europe alike.

Duras grew up in Vietnam (then part of the French colony of Indochina), where her parents worked as teachers for the French colonial authorities. Her father died when Duras was still very young, and the family subsequently lived in poverty, occupying an outsider position – both in relation to the colonial authorities and the colonised. For most of her adult life, Duras lived in France, but often wrote about her childhood in Vietnam and issues of belonging/not belonging.

Yun was born in present-day South Korea, which was colonised by Japan until 1945. He studied in Korea and Japan before moving to Europe at the age of 39 to study music. He later became a German citizen, and his dual national affiliations had a major impact on his compositions, which are a fusion of traditional Korean and Western avant-garde music.

Orwell was born into a colonial family in Myanmar (the then British colony of Burma), where his father was employed in the opium department of the British Empire. As a young man, Orwell himself served as an officer in the Indian Imperial Police before deciding to become a writer, adopting a very critical stance on imperialism.

At SMK, the text is exhibited on the floor in Danish. You can access the text in Danish as well as English using this QR code.

10 Genuine Cloning

Genuine Cloning, 2020

Digital sound file, speakers, 65:01 min., loop

The live broadcast recording made at the Inter-Korean Summit in the Korean Demilitarised Zone on April 27, 2018 is included by permission of the Presidential Office of the Republic of Korea.

‘Typhoons know no borders. But the countries surrounding the Pacific Ocean give typhoons names in their own languages. It’s absurd from the typhoons’ perspective,’ states the voice-over in the audio piece *Genuine Cloning*, which is based on a script written by Yang.

The protagonist is a cloned artificial voice of the artist, speaking English with her own pronunciation and accent. In one chapter, the protagonist wonders what it means to be without a body, existing only as a voice. It muses on the subject of learning other languages and imitating other identities by mastering someone’s dialect or accent. In another chapter, the voice recites all the names given to typhoons in the region of the Pacific Ocean and then goes on to contemplate human beings’ ‘strange’ habit of naming everything, even non-human things. Another sardonic comment relates to the order of nation /state in the human world and how it should not play a role in meteorological phenomena, such as typhoons. Occasionally, the protagonist’s train of thought is interrupted by an ambient sound recording of birdsong.

Played from what Yang calls ‘Sound Fruits’, clusters of speakers hanging from the ceiling, the ruminations by the protagonist of *Genuine Cloning* is interlaced with the recording of the historic Inter-Korean Summit in 2018 when the leaders of the two Koreas met in the demilitarised zone in the middle of the Korean Peninsula. At one point during the meeting – a major political event that was broadcast live worldwide – the two leaders conversed as they strolled on the zone’s pedestrian bridge alone. All that the assembled world press and viewers could hear was the chirping of birds, occasionally supplemented by distant, incomprehensible voices and the photographers’ snapping cameras.



11 Sonic Celestial Ropes

Sonic Celestial Ropes, 2021

PVD-coated stainless steel bells, stainless steel chains, quick links, split rings
Each 1630 × 11 × 11 cm

11a *Sonic Celestial Rope – Iridescent Dodecagon Loose Curl*

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

11b *Sonic Celestial Rope – Iridescent Dodecagon Straight Weave*

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin

11c *Sonic Celestial Rope – Iridescent Dodecagon Tight Curl*

Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

Many of Yang's *Sonic Sculptures* in various modalities can be regarded as performative pieces, evoking change and instability. Most of them are not stationary and can be set in motion, made to oscillate and turned upside down – all of which introduce elements of concrete, palpable change and, most importantly, are accompanied by sonic resonance. The sound, the metallic rattle and jingling, is an equally significant dimension of the *Sonic Sculptures*. Seeking to expand our experience of sculpture, Yang often activates senses other than just the sense of sight in her works – smell, touch or as here, hearing.

Stretched between the ground and the 20-metre-high ceiling, *Sonic Celestial Ropes* are made solely of bells connected with rings, hanging like sci-fi lianas in space. Their strong vertical axes draw one's eye to automatically follow the ropes all the way up to the ceiling. When the ropes are shaken or hit manually, the activated sound and curves rise, as if something is ascending.

The inspirational story behind these unusual rope sculptures is a Korean folk tale about two siblings escaping a wild tiger by climbing a rope appearing from the sky. Safe in heaven, they become the Sun and the Moon. A rope or sometimes a ladder is a recurring feature in many folk tales and mythologies as a means of connection and communication between the sky and earth. Yang's keen interest in various references about mystic leaps thus informs *Sonic Celestial Ropes* as well.

Sonic Celestial Ropes will be activated by a museum staff member, on behalf of visitors. Please speak with a staff member or guard for more information.



12 Silo of Silence – Clicked Core

Silo of Silence – Clicked Core, 2017

Aluminium venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminium and steel hanging structure, steel wire rope, motor, LED tubes, cable
1654 × 780 × 780 cm

Comprising 154 venetian blinds, *Silo of Silence – Clicked Core* is 16 metres in height. The suspended cylinder-shaped sculpture has two layers – the outer is made of black blinds, while the inner ‘core’ is constructed out of cobalt blue blinds with lighting tubes. Rotating at a speed that corresponds to a walking pace, the inner core does not appear to move when the spectator is walking in the same direction as the rotation. Inside the silo, the hypnotising rotational movement generates an imagery of kaleidoscopic geometry.

Yang has used industrially manufactured, aluminium venetian blinds in her works for the past fifteen years. Easily purchased in the nearest curtain shop or hardware store, blinds are by no means exclusive items and as such, exemplify Yang’s interest in ordinary domestic objects, similar to her frequent use of drying racks. The venetian blinds speak to our memories of densely inhabited urban areas, in which curtains or blinds are used to protect our privacy and mark the border between the outside and the inside while regulating the penetration and covering of views and lights.

Yang has spoken about her ‘problem of choosing colour’, a situation often circumnavigated by leaving room for a colour to emerge by itself. For instance, the blinds’ cobalt blue colour in this installation is rooted in the long conception period in 3D computer simulation. When a graphic element is clicked, it turns blue, indicating that it is activated and can be moved, modified or deleted. In *Silo of Silence – Clicked Core*, the blue colour thus directly references its own digital conception process. Our digital everyday life, with an infinite number of blue hyperlinks that prompt us to further action on-screen are, in fact, imbued with this particular colour. In this work, the blue (core) thus forms the active part.



13 Furniture Sculptures

13a *Vita Cushion* – *Yielding S*, 2020

Clear-coated plywood, adjustable feet, screws, pegs, chip foam, canvas, wool yarn, cotton yarn, jute yarn

145 × 191 × 324 cm

13b *Mundus Cushion* – *Yielding X*, 2020

Clear-coated plywood, adjustable feet, screws, pegs, chip foam, canvas, wool yarn, cotton yarn, jute yarn

182 × 311 × 309 cm

Cushions on furniture-like modular displays constitute Yang's contemplation on what she found during her site visit to Cornwall in South West England. Yang visited the Church of St Senara in 2019 and was deeply moved by the scenes in the church and the breathtaking coastal landscape. St Senara is equipped with pews that display numerous kneelers – small cushions to kneel on during prayer. Against the backdrop of a majestic ocean, Yang's focus was particularly directed to the cross-stitched motifs on the top of the kneelers, while the pews appeared as display stands for them. The cushions were neatly embroidered, based on centuries-old handicraft traditions. While the embroidery on pew cushions normally depict solemn religious symbols, Yang found modest yet impassioned expressions on cushions made and donated by local churchgoers. The variety of embroidered depictions included their own house, livestock, pets and natural wonders like an eclipse, somewhat grounded motifs instead of overtly religious ones. They all tellingly described the relationship between people and the rough life next to the coastal landscape.

Arranged to form an X and an S when seen from above, Yang's sculptures' plywood structures are made by chopping the lengths and varying their heights such that the kneelers go up and down like a musical score. Abstracted from the church benches, the modular display is now dedicated to deliver the emancipated messages of the kneelers, assigned to 'world' and 'life'.

Mundus Cushion refers to 'eclipse', 'tempest' and 'climate' and *Vita Cushion* includes 'arson', 'man-made', 'inferno', 'food', 'digestion', 'comber' and 'rhizome'. Suggestive of a communal reflection on the shared concerns of our time, such as the planet's future and our newfound awareness of astronomy and meteorology, these cushions also evoke the immediacy of the humble anxieties and joys of a sailor's family.



14 Drunken Speech

Drunken Speech, 2007

Digital sound file, speakers, TV set, cable box, TV broadcast/signal, sleeping bag, approx. 16 min., loop, voice-over: Helen Cho (English)

The audio piece, *Drunken Speech*, is played through headphones and can be listened to while seated on a sleeping bag positioned in front of a monitor playing free-to-air TV. Placed on the floor in a corner of the gallery, this voice-dominant work offers the mood and atmosphere of Yang's intimate inner voice, which is both confessional and self-reflexive.

The headphones let visitors listen to a prolonged 'drunken speech' in a husky voice about love, obsessive dedication to work and loneliness, based on the actual notes written by the artist while intoxicated and gathered over several years. *Drunken Speech* was recorded by the artist's friend, who is also an artist of similar age, but grew up in Canada, as a possible alter ego. The work expresses the thoughts of one selflessly devoted to work and, in the middle of restless travel, also contemplates the notion of love. Is it even possible to have it all? In the case of this narrator, it would seem not.

The non-synchronised pairing in *Drunken Speech* between the visual and audio seems to be a typical setting of what Yang often attempts to achieve. The nondescript TV set shows mundane programmes, broadcast via satellite or cable, and today, digitally. Yang sets our eyes on local communities by including channels in foreign languages intended for immigrants, as is often the case in her previous exhibitions. But we hear deeply personal doubts, cries, agonies, and bursts – what the artist depicts as 'pathetic whining'. The disparity between the images of the TV programme and the sound, combined with two ordinary objects of the TV set and the crumpled sleeping bag, provide a rare arena for an artistic personal voice and her fixation on marginalised status. *Drunken Speech* is about homelessness – partly the (drunk) artist's homeless love, and partly the reality of concrete, universal homelessness.





15 Umbra Creatures by Rockhole

15 *Umbra Creatures by Rockhole*, 2017–2018

Powder-coated steel frames, mesh and stainless steel hanging structure, steel wire rope, casters, powder-coated turbine vents, brass-plated bells, split rings, plastic twine, jute twine, nylon cord, artificial straw, artificial plants, clippings from electronics market catalogues on chromolux paper, mounted on alu-dibond, self-adhesive holographic vinyl film, acrylic glass, Bupo

Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York

15a *Sonic Rampant Obscure Turbine Vents, Double Decker – Brass Green*

167 × 118 × 188 cm

15b *The Intermediate – Hairy Tele Digi-Big-Bang Fanned Out*

214 × 130 × 130 cm

15c *The Intermediate – Head Carrying Woman*

234 × 108 × 110 cm

15d *The Intermediate – Tinted Asymmetric UHHHHH Creature W*

349 × 430 × 25 cm

15e *The Intermediate – Tinted Bushy Bald-Headed Bumpy Walks*

180 × 110 × 110 cm

15f *The Intermediate – Tinted Multi-Tentacled Serpent*

390 × 390 × 300 cm

15g *The Intermediate – Tinted UHHHHH Creature Inverted V*

360 × 400 × 180 cm

The sculptural installation *Umbra Creatures by Rockhole* consists of seven sculptures, including six entitled 'Intermediate' and followed by individual subtitles. In this large sculptural ensemble, a range of cultural traditions and techniques, imaginative and fantastic figurations, modern synthetic materials and objects are combined to form a hybrid totality. Residing in both Korea and Germany since the mid-1990s, Yang's life seems to traverse cultures, and she considers her works as nothing but vital manifestations of today's complex and compelling cross-cultural experiences. While the early *Intermediate* series are made of natural-looking artificial straw on basic geometric frames in an obvious reference to traditional straw weaving, the *Umbra Creatures* employ black synthetic cords with a fetish-like shine, freeing the material from its folk connotations, and are adorned with eccentric features. This shift in method and material is characteristic of Yang's work and acts as a way to unlearn a self-established rule.

The *Umbra Creatures* collectively allude to the shadow creatures poised between the alienating and the familiar. Some, like many of Yang's sculptures, are on casters, while others hang from the ceiling like a giant serpent or extend their tentacles and reach out like a sea animal. A figurative body features artificial plants, while another hairy body is crowned with a double-sided screen of collages in a kaleidoscopic composition with electronic store catalogue clippings as well as holographic vinyl film. The last metallic work, a *Sonic Sculpture*, is (hysterically) covered by golden bells and turbine vents, as an ivy grows.

The word 'intermediate' incubates the idea of 'medium', implying a connection of separate parts, times or dimensions. Considering the artist's interest in shamanism, the idea of 'intermediate' is significant, since it reflects how a shaman mediates between different worlds, things and minds. It can also be applied to the sculptures' materiality of products and commodities in need of further processing. Both associations underscore Yang's fascination with processes of mediation, translation, adoption and exchange.



16 The Story of a Bear-Lady in a Sand Cave

The Story of a Bear-Lady in a Sand Cave, 2009/2011

Digital sound file, speakers on tripods, 20:30 min., loop, voice-over: Tsukasa Yamamoto (English)

One of the many doubles or pairs in this exhibition involves an animal-like woman – a bear-lady whom Yang made up by weaving two stories together. One part of the character hails from the novel *The Woman in the Dunes* by the Japanese author Kōbō Abe. In the novel, a young widow lives in a wooden house at the bottom of a sand pit, where she has to ceaselessly shovel sand out of the house to prevent it from being engulfed. The other is inspired by a mythical figure – a bear – who, according to Korean folklore, had to endure a long stay in a cave with a tiger and only with garlic and mugwort to eat. Only the one who could endure the hardship the longest would become human. The tiger gave up after twenty days, while the bear persevered and was transformed into the woman who later became the mother of Korea's first human king, Dangun.

In this audio work, the two women merge into a single character in a new story where this bear-lady lives in a dark cave with a tiger whom she does not know or have any contact with – yet still nurtures feelings for in her loneliness. She spends all day shovelling sand out of the cave to prevent it from being swallowed up by the dunes. The story becomes a kind of allegory of Sisyphean tasks in general, of trivial domestic repetitions and perhaps even of the working life of an artist. Despite little understanding from the community outside the cave, Yang's bear-lady remains dedicated to her task, steadfastly struggling with the sand and ends up composing mesmerising sand waves as aesthetic signals right outside the cave.



17 The Intermediates

17a *The Intermediate – Ceremonial Pom-Pom Ball*, 2015

Artificial straw, powder-coated steel frame and mesh, casters, plastic raffia string, brass-, nickel-, and copper-plated bells

120 × 120 × 120 cm

17b *The Intermediate – Ceremonial Peacock Ball*, 2015

Artificial straw, powder-coated steel frame and mesh, casters, Indian bells, Korean bridal crowns, artificial feathers

116 × 128 × 130 cm

MN Collection, Aalborg, long-term loan SMK

17c *The Intermediate – Psychic Turbine Vents Ball*, 2017

Artificial straw, powder-coated stainless steel frame, ball casters, turbine vents

92 × 120 × 120 cm

Reminiscent of haystacks in a traditional rural rice field as well as Korean harvesting rituals, the three spherical sculptures fitted with various objects and placed on casters are part of the *Intermediate* series, which Yang began in 2015. One is adorned with artificial peacock feathers, Indian bells and traditional Korean bridal crowns; another sculpture has mass-produced aluminium turbine vents poking out on all sides; while the third is decorated with nylon pom-poms and balls of bells.

It is typical of Yang to juxtapose – and align – objects with religious, ornamental or practical functions. The *Intermediate* sculptures incorporate traditional Korean weaving patterns, including *youngmareum*, the straw-weaving methods used by Korean peasants to make baskets, shoes and other items, and most prominently, roofs for farmers' housing, as well as a method of twining called *dunggumi*. Yang and her team in Korea learnt the craft techniques from artisanal weavers, and she soon realised that similar weaving can be found in various other cultures. Techniques that take native plants or unassuming crop leftovers from farming – such as palm leaves, banana leaves, reeds or straw – to repurpose by weaving captures Yang's attention. She keenly studied how weaving creates decorative yet sturdy surfaces, which can in turn be shaped into three-dimensional objects with ornamentation. The techniques as well as the objects produced are inherited and renegotiated over generations without authoritative bodies or safeguards.

ABOUT HAEGUE YANG

Haegue Yang has been dividing her time between Germany and Korea since the mid-1990s. These two countries are also home to her two studios, where she works on a myriad of projects. In 2019 – before the pandemic hit – she had fifteen exhibitions on four continents in just one year.

Born in 1971 in Seoul, South Korea, Yang grew up with twin brothers and, alternately, with her mother and father. Given her politically committed parents as well as her brothers' engagement in politics, her decision to study sculpture at Seoul National University, enrolling in 1990, made her an exception within her family. Upon her arrival in Germany in 1994, she embarked on her art education at the renowned Städelsschule in Frankfurt with limited knowledge of German language and society – a lack that Yang set about to overcome, often through artistic projects. Over time, she developed her own original practice, indeed informed by a transcultural identity and history.

After Yang graduated from the Städelsschule in 1999, she started to participate in a range of smaller shows and presented projects that were on a modest scale. In 2006, *Sadong 30* was staged in her grandmother's house, which had been abandoned for eight years, in Incheon, a suburb of Seoul. Today, this self-initiated exhibition, which did not garner international recognition, is regarded as her breakthrough. Amidst tattered wallpaper, glassless windows and crumbling bricks, Yang inserted origami objects, mirrors, wrapped drying racks, light bulbs on intravenous stands and a series of smaller objects. The show marked the beginning of an enduring artistic focus on the notion of 'home' and 'homelessness', which deal with the activities involved in managing a household and also the sensation of deliberately leaving one's home. Since then, domestic everyday objects have appeared in her oeuvre to convey the elusive understanding about the public and the private as well as the humble yet vital activities that organise our daily lives. Throughout her practice, Yang seeks and pursues her own way to convey a sense of her experience of the diaspora while living in and out of her country of birth.

At the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, Yang received international attention with her extensive presentation, both at the Korean Pavilion as well as in the Arsenale. Ever since, her work has been featured at a number of international exhibitions, including the Istanbul Biennale (2019), the Sydney Biennale (2018), the Sharjah Biennale (2015) and DOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel (2012). Recent solo projects and exhibitions include: Tate St Ives (*Strange Attractors*, 2020); Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (*Emergence*, 2020); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (*O2 & H2O*, 2020) and MoMA, New York (*Handles*, 2019). In 2018, her first European retrospective, *ETA 1994-2018*, was hosted at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne alongside the publication of her second catalogue raisonné of the same title. She received the Wolfgang Hahn Prize in the same year. Since 2017, Yang has been engaged at her alma mater, the Städelsschule, as a professor.

Sources:

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PROGRAMME

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Every Wednesday, we expand our usual programme to offer guided tours and surprising art experiences exploring this spring's major exhibition *Haegue Yang: Double Soul* from new angles. Highlights include concerts, artist talks, lectures and creative workshops.

Wednesdays 9 March – 15 June 2022

16.30–20.00

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