

TINA KIM GALLERY



Chung Seoyoung: *Ability vs. Invisibility*

March 2 – April 15, 2017

Opening Reception:

Thursday, March 2, 2017 | 6PM – 8PM

Tina Kim Gallery is delighted to present *Ability vs. Invisibility*, the first solo exhibition in the United States by South Korean artist Chung Seoyoung. Following her first group show in New York, *Two Hours* (2016)—also presented by Tina Kim Gallery—Chung will present a range of works from 2007 to the present in the upcoming exhibition, on view from March 2 to April 15, 2017. Throughout her career, Chung has rigorously worked with a precise sculptural language, carefully manipulating everyday objects and materials, and intervening into the spaces with which her works engage. Since the early 2000s, her work has expanded to include video, performance and sound, with many of her recent exhibitions in Seoul taking the form of sculptural interventions into existing spaces, including an abandoned model house (*Apple vs. Banana*, 2011) and a pavilion in Deoksu Palace (*Deoksugung Project*, 2012). Part of a generation of artists who contributed significantly to the development of contemporary art in Seoul in the 1990s, Chung continues to develop idiosyncratic work that delights viewers.

Chung received her M.F.A. in Sculpture from Seoul National University in 1989, when the Korean art scene was still largely dominated by the opposition between modern abstract painting (a legacy of the country's Dansaekhwa movement of the 1970s) and the populist Minjung art movement. Soon afterwards, she began studying at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart, Germany, where she lived for several years while seeking out a mode of sculpture that would move beyond this opposition. By the time Chung returned to Seoul in 1996, international art biennales had begun to proliferate widely, serving as platforms for more experimental practices. However, given the lack of domestic institutional support at the time, South Korean artists and their artworks were often cast as simple manifestations of Korean-ness on these global platforms. Chung's work, however, did not indulge the desire for easily legible cultural symbols or narratives. She instead focused on transposing her perception of industrialism and domestic, urban environments into the vernacular of her sculpture, which often operated through a logic of denial and reduction. Drawings reduced objects to their most basic representations, performers sat impassively in front of the audience, and language became uncanny, at odds with objects and sometimes behaving as an object itself.

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Nobody Notices It (2012-2016)—part of Tina Kim Galley’s upcoming exhibition—continues this strategy of refusal and denial on a visual level in order to emphasize its non-visual components. The work consists of three pieces: a set of headphones whose wires disappear into a folded fabric bag that resembles brown paper, a circular pad on which the listener/viewer can sit, and a vaguely anthropomorphic sculpture made of rough concrete. The sculptural elements of the piece are static and concealed: the source of the audio is deliberately obscured, and the concrete sculpture looks like a form that either has been plastered over or is still being carved out. On the other hand, the audio playing through the headphones—the sounds of people walking through a public space—suggests gradual, continuous motion. Chung developed these tracks from a version of Swiss composer Manfred Werder’s conceptual score *2005/1*, which consists of only three words: "ort, zeit, (klänge)" ("place, time, (sounds)"). This version adopted in *Nobody Notices It* uses recordings taken from the same location in Zurich Central Station every day over the course of a month. Some sounds are quiet and subdued, while in others we hear echoing footsteps, laughter, and the sounds of what may be traffic. Implying movement through space and time, these sounds heighten our awareness of the concrete sculpture as an immobile object.

A similar opposition of static and dynamic elements is at work in *The Adventure of Mr. Kim and Mr. Lee* (2010-2012), a three-channel video made from the footage of a performance at LIG Art Hall, Seoul in 2010. For this performance, nine performers and one dog were situated throughout the stage, the dressing room, and the hallways of LIG Art Hall. All performers, except for a man smoking and walking the dog, sit impassively. Many are dressed in ways that destabilize their identity: a young girl is dressed as an old woman, one woman has a grey mustache, and one man has the ear of a monster. In their silence, though, the performers contribute nothing to our assessment of their state. The identities of Mr. Kim and Mr. Lee are never made clear, and the story of their adventure is never revealed. Instead, the viewer, who moves through the different spaces to construct the narrative, becomes the most dynamic element of the piece.

These multi-media installations, with their emphasis on inert objects or people, highlight Chung’s indebtedness to sculpture and the careful consideration of objects. Recently, however, language has emerged as an equally strong element of her work, such as in her text-based work *A tiger only in half, a palm tree upside down, FAST!* (2012), and excerpts from her drawing series *Monster Map 15 Min.* (2008), which combines written words with pared-down drawings and diagrams. Even when Chung’s works do not represent language directly, their titles inevitably give them a linguistic dimension. Chung explains, “The titles I choose are another type of work in themselves, using language to shape the lineaments of a

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piece, or gesture beyond the boundaries of that piece to where it might lead.”¹ In some instances, Chung uses her works’ titles as direct, literal signifiers to refer to things that are either out-of-place or made unusable. For instance, *Table* (2007) is a table that is missing a significant portion of the surface and has half of a leg, while *Curb* (2013) is cast from the form of a street curb, but is placed indoors with no street or sidewalk to bridge. In both cases, the signifier or the title of the work belies the signified or the object that has been made strange. Yet at the other end of the spectrum, some of Chung’s titles bear no semblance to their objects and instead add a completely new set of implications or poetic sentiments. *A didn’t know B would do that* (2016) is a set of two pigment prints showing photographs of a hand clutching pens in different configurations in a green space. The title implies a set of characters in a particular psychological state (one in a state of unknowing, one in a state of action), but this does not easily map onto what is shown in the photographs. Like in *The Adventure of Mr. Kim and Mr. Lee*, it is left up to the viewer to bridge the gap between the title and the narrative of the piece. Chung’s ability to activate this space of subjectivity – whether working with wood, metal, or sound – is a consistent strength of her work.

ABOUT CHUNG SEOYOUNG

Chung Seoyoung was born in Seoul in 1964, where she currently lives and works. After studying at Seoul National University and the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart, she held residencies with the SSamzie Space Studio Program and the Changdong Art Studio, both in Seoul. Her latest solo exhibitions include the Audio Visual Pavilion (2016), the Ilmin Museum of Art (2013), and Kim Kim Gallery (2011), all in Seoul. Her work has recently been included in group shows at Art Sonje Center in Seoul (2016) and SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul (2014), and has been shown in galleries and museums in Frankfurt, Bonn, Copenhagen, Sydney, and Tokyo. She also exhibited at the Korean Pavilion of the 50th Venice Biennale (2003) and at the Gwangju Biennale (1997, 2002, and 2008).

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Founded in New York in 2001 and located in Chelsea, Tina Kim Gallery is celebrated for its unique programming that emphasizes international contemporary artists, historical overviews, and independently curated shows. Tina Kim Gallery is open Tuesday – Saturday, 10 AM – 6 PM

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Image caption: Chung Seoyoung, *Evidence*, 2014, Printing technique, 23.62 x 33.46 inches (60 x 85 cm), Courtesy of the Artist and Tina Kim Gallery.

¹ Interview with the artist, *(Im)Possible Landscape*, p. 113, PLATEAU 2012