

# TINA KIM GALLERY



**Tina Kim Gallery presents**

## **TWO HOURS**

Bahc Yiso  
Chung Seoyoung  
Kim Beom

Curated by Hyunjin Kim

September 22 – October 29, 2016

**Opening Reception**  
September 22, 6PM – 8PM

*Two Hours* focuses on works by three artists--Yiso Bahc, Seoyoung Chung, and Beom Kim--created and exhibited over roughly a decade from the late 1990s through the 2000s. Concentrating on pieces from these years, during which the three artists shared a similar sensitivity and congenial collegueship, this exhibition introduces artworks that provide an inevitable basis for understanding the emergence of the notion of contemporary art in South Korea.

The title of this exhibition, “Two Hours” is taken from a 2002 work by Yiso Bahc. This video work, a recording of the sun’s movement over some span of two hours, appears to take place in the early evening judging from the everyday sound of the Korean TV program in the background. It appears that the artist is holding his gaze at a time that is at the edge of the day, but not quite night when most people are wrapping up their day. While the subject of the work may seem vague, it demonstrates the concreteness of experiencing a certain time in flux while mysteriously condensing the artist’s gaze or pausing with his imperative idleness. This moment of persistently delving into monstrous uncertainty relates to the three artists’ struggles with various facets of the art world and society of Korea from the 90s to the early 2000s. These incisive speculation and relentless encounter with the ruthless reality of time forms the backbone of the early works of Bahc, Chung, and Kim.

After graduating from university in Korea in the 1980s, Bahc and Kim went to the United States, Chung to Germany, to continue studying and working. In the mid-1990s, all returned to Seoul at a similar time. In this way, they were able to experience the development of art in Europe and America and thereby were able to obtain a simultaneous understanding of certain artistic practices happening in the Western art world at the time. After returning to Korea, these three never simply delivered the mainstream Western styles people would consider as superior, as their works are made with a question to what is relevant for the place they belonged. It is always important for them to recognize and transform the particularity as

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well as the complexity of the society into each individual languages of art. Bahc focused on work related to his own status as a minority within American society during his time in New York. After returning to Seoul and until his death in 2004, he developed this into works that satire industrial and commodified society with a nihilistic sense of humor, while revealing the poetic ephemerality and ontological fragility of those on the margins of such a society. In his active participation in contemporary criticism, he also keenly addressed and wrote about the discrepancy between Korea's deep fascination with the Western discourse of postmodernism in the 1990s and Korea's different historical condition of locally adopted modernism. In his transcript drawing series like *Art Drawing* (1997) and *Beginnings* (2000) or the works like *Avant-garde* (1997) and *World Chair* (2001), we see him interrogate fundamental concepts such as the notion of 'art' and reflect one's vain desire or inability to become a capital of 'Art History' or 'internationalism.' Overall, Bahc, Chung, and Kim share in common an interest in the signs of their local society, which they show through their particular and rigorous material choices and insightful transformation of their everyday struggles in society. Treating the superficiality and materiality of the objects and buildings commonly found in the urban construction sites and other manufacturing settings of late-1990s Korea (at the time a rapidly-growing manufacturing country) as their own aesthetic idiosyncrasy, these artists do not adhere to a one-note stylization of one genre or medium of modern art but experimented across sculpture, objects, installation, two-dimensional drawings, and videos with their careful understanding of material implements.

Kim combines his process of creation and choice of humble materials with an ingenuity rooted in his characteristic anti-monumental attitude and black humor. More than anything, his minimal and orderly choices come from finely measured artistic consideration, completed by an extremely careful process. In Chung's case, found sculptures like *TV* (1996), *The Sculpted Bride* (1997), and *Ghost will be better* (2000-2005), the artist's excellent perceptiveness for precisely combining particular cheap, Korean-made construction materials from the country's 1990s manufacturing boom—styrofoam, linoleum, lumber, and plywood—with the abstractness and object hood of the words of her stimulating titles, forming an unmatched sculptural vernacularism. Clearly maintaining their distance from the hierarchy of material spectacles, monumental sculpture, and labor-intensive artistic processes of production, these three artists' reflective artistic engagement and demeanor are inherent in their material choices and processes of production and installation. Their choices and uses of materials function as signs exposing intrinsic relationships to the irony and absurdity of the society these artists have scrutinized. The works show a sharply articulated awareness of authoritarian society, and those detail-oriented works become painstakingly calculated form of politic.

These artists' works also come together through their witty sense of humor. Expressed through material choices and the artists' discernment for the structures of the society they inhabit, the humor within these works satirizes society's focus on grand narratives and contains a certain performativity that challenges the dominant modes of irrationality and unethicity that they had endured in their everyday experiences as artists. Bahc probes the linguistic literality of sentences and the manifestation of their futile humor, while Kim commands an imaginative sense of humor that is both subversive and ruthless. One can see Kim's particular wit in three of his works—*The Tree that Became Man and Found its own Picture in its Dream* (a 1998 installation), *The Art of Transformation* (1996), and *Good Samaritan* (1995)—in which text stimulates a performance that evokes the interesting world of animism. Chung discerns allegories from the sculptural situations and abstract language created by the physical surfaces and material nuances

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in her works. Her carbon paper drawing series (1996-2000), now shown on a wall of the exhibition, present functionalist objects and buildings discovered scattered throughout cities in South Korea, comprising a keenly-observed list compiled from the artist's odd and particular edited images made based on the modality of an urban environment in a culture of rapid manufacturing.

These artists can be understood as not only showing significant symptoms of contemporary art within South Korea but also possess a complex understanding of contemporaneity in a relation to a global scope; having introduced an artistic practice fundamentally different from modern art. The significance of these early works nonetheless existed adrift and delayed, those works living in a gap where they were neglected by majority but gained a great respect from small numbers in the art community, Seoul. Starting in the mid-to-late 1990s when these three artists and Korean art as a whole were at a significant crossroads, the exhibition "Two Hours" ultimately suggests a method for substantially rethinking the contemporary of one place in a way that connotes antinomy, discord, delay, and a discrepancy in time.

## About the Curator:

Hyunjin Kim is a curator, writer and researcher, based in Seoul. She was the co-curator of 7th Gwangju Biennale, *Annual Report* (2008), and recently worked as the Director for Arko Art Center, Seoul (2014-2015). Since 2001, Kim has worked for institutions including Ilmin Museum of Art (2013), Vanabbemuseum, Eindhoven (2005-2006), Artsonje Center, Seoul (2001-2003) and Ssamzie Space, Seoul (2000). She curated a number of exhibitions and projects such as *Two Hours*, Tina Kim Gallery (New York, 2016); *Nina Canell\_Satin Ion*, Hwayeon Nam\_*Time-Mechanics*, and *Tradition (Un)Realized*, Arko Art Center (Seoul, 2014-2015); *Seoyoung Chung\_The Speed of the Large, the Small, and the Wide* (2013), *The Brilliant Collaborator*, Ilmin Museum of Art (Seoul, 2013); *Play Time: The Waiting Room of Episteme*, Culture Station Seoul 284, (Seoul, 2012); *Perspective Strikes Back*, Doosan Gallery, (Seoul, 2009); *L'appartement22* (Rabat, 2010); *Movement, Contingency and Community*, Jewyo Rhii\_*Ten Years, Please*, Gallery27, (Uiwang, 2007), *Gallery27*, (Uiwang, 2007); *Haegue Yang\_Sadong 30*, (Inchon, 2006); *Plug-In#3-Undeclared Crowd*, Vanabbemuseum, (Eindhoven, 2006) and so on. Since 2009, Kim has initiated and closely collaborated to produce some of contemporary artists' performance pieces like *In the Room 3* by Sung Hwan Kim, Performa (New York, 2009); *Off-Stage /Masterclass* by siren eun young jung, Culture Station Seoul 284 (Seoul, 2012) and Festival BO:M (Seoul, 2013); *Ten Years* by Jewyo Rhii, Mullaefactory (Seoul, 2016) and Namsan Art Center (Seoul, 2017). Her catalogues and edited publications include: *Satin Ion-Nina Canell*, Arko Art Center and BomDia (2015); *The Speed of the Large, the Small, and the Wide-* Seoyoung Chung, Hyunsil Books, Seoul (2012); *Inter-views*, BigakuShuppan, Tokyo (2011); *The Other There-Gao Shiqiang*, Timezone8 (Beijing, 2009); *Jewyo Rhii*, Samuso, (Seoul, 2008); *Sadong 30*, Wien Verlag(Berlin, 2007); *Dolores Zinny and Juan Maidagan*, Sala Rekalde (Bilbao, 2007). She also has contributed to art magazines and journals such as *Wolganmisool*, *Articulture*, *Yishu*, *Art Asia Pacific*, *Art Review* among others. Kim is currently an advisory member of Haus der Kunst der Welt, Berlin and Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong.

## About Tina Kim Gallery:

Founded in New York in 2001 and located in Chelsea, Tina Kim Gallery is celebrated for its eclectic programming focused on international contemporary art. Closely affiliated with Kukje Gallery in Seoul, Tina Kim regularly collaborates on organizing exhibitions that feature emerging and internationally renowned Korean artists.

Image: Seoyoung Chung. *The Sculpted Bride*, 1997 Sponge, wood, and plaster 59.06 x 82.68 x 39.37 inches (150 x 210 x 100 cm)