

**Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork**

Selected press

# ARTFORUM

## REVIEWS

### INCHEON, SOUTH KOREA

## Seulgi Lee

### INCHEON ART PLATFORM

Viewed from its entrance, the main space housing Seulgi Lee’s exhibition “Slow Water” appeared to be almost entirely empty. The only visible object was a disk made of a thin lattice of raw wood about thirty-six feet in diameter, hanging by wires from the high ceiling. It looked like a utilitarian object that had perhaps served as a canopy for an earlier installation. Lights threw shadowy grids onto the white walls and bare floor. As you moved under it, though, sides of the wood that had not initially been visible came into view, and these were painted in alluring colors, such as pale rose, mint, and royal blue. A radiant abstract painting revealed itself step by step. You could take in the whole work from above, via a second-floor walkway that runs around the former warehouse. The piece had a fainter but no less beguiling glow at that remove.

This was the 2021 work from which the show (curated by Hyunjin Kim and Oh Hyemi) took its title, and it served as an ideal introduction to Lee’s methods. The Seoul-born, Paris-based artist conjures incredible sumptuousness (visual and symbolic) via astonishing restraint—producing a free-ranging post-Minimalism born of collaborations with traditional Korean artisans and spiked with mischievous enigmas. *Slow Water* involved a specialist in *moonsal* (the latticework on traditional Korean houses) and one in *dancheong*, the ornate painting that adorns Korean temples and artifacts, alighting here just as blocks of color. Lee’s art is richly allusive, and a curatorial text cited as inspirations for her grid the aqueous frescoes of the ancient Roman Villa of Livia and the history of the Incheon Art Platform area, which was underwater until a port was built more than a century ago. Landing on these references independently would be impossible, but Lee’s visions were so precisely realized that suspending disbelief and following her veiled language was a pleasure in itself.

On plinths lay five *nubi* blankets sewn by Sung-yeon Cho in 2020 in Tongyeong—ostensibly hard-edge geometric abstractions in blazing colors—signifying various idiomatic Korean proverbs. A bulbous blue shape, its title revealed, stood for *Drunk like a whale = Too inebriated*, while the curving triangles perched atop a circle represented the *Cat washing its face = To rush job*. The atmosphere became especially topsy-turvy when a short recording of swirling high-pitched voices accompanied by spare percussion emanated from a hallway alongside the main gallery. The singer was Park Minhee, a venturesome specialist in the rarefied *gagok* form, offering a contemporary interpretation of a ribald folk song once sung by Incheon laborers amid repetitious activities such as netting fish or rowing a boat. That song plays on the word *gong-al* (loosely “ball” and slang for “clitoris”) as it lists cherries,

green onions, and other kinds of *gong-al*. Its presence brought a certain erotic undercurrent—a charged fecundity—to the (notably labor-intensive) craftwork on view.

Five small holes were cut low in the drywall of that hallway (*Hole*, 2021) so that one could spy on that luminous wood grid, listening to a lewd work song while viewing the abstracted water. Amid the greenery in a nearby courtyard, five steel circles, each a different color and size, leaned against a sizable pole, comprising an arrangement that Lee likens to vulvic *sheela-na-gig* fertility symbols. Window vitrines on the street contained still more colorful lattices, these dyed onto white *sochang*, a textile long produced by women in the region, the patterning apparently determined by Lee’s observation of shadows in the space.

Using materials with deep histories and made with a multitude of women’s hands (she listed more than a dozen collaborators in an accompanying pamphlet), “Slow Water” seemed to be both a compendium of cultural knowledge and an expansive portrait of Incheon. Still, mysteries lurked. A slab of marble was affixed to a wall, near the floor, in the main gallery, engraved with Peter’s question to the risen Jesus: QVO VADIS (“Where are you marching?”). Lee invites her audience to go to places that are fleeting or are already vanished, but that she is working to keep alive.

—Andrew Russeth

### HONG KONG

## Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork

### EMPTY GALLERY

Twenty-four hypersensitive condenser and contact microphones, twelve strategically placed speakers, one Mac mini, six needle-felted wool sculptures, a carpet of weathered pebbles, and two fuzzy outsize sound blankets. At Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork’s recent solo exhibition “Olistostrome,” the stage was set. The only missing element? Its protagonist: the viewer.

The orchestration of sonic space undergirds the practice of Kiyomi Gork, whose background includes studies in computer music and archaeo-acoustics and a stint in the San Francisco noise-music scene. Created in the mode of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela’s *Dream House*, 1969, their installations approximate itinerant recording studios, anechoic chambers in laboratories and military compounds, and clamoring concert halls. In each work, the artist captures noise, controls its release—via directional speakers, subwoofers, air-blower pumps—and engineers its absorption with muffling quilts, modular sculptures of wool and foam, and synthetic and human hair. Indelible and ephemeral, Kiyomi Gork’s works mine our emotional attachments to sound. Like a song once heard on the radio, an impromptu concert by a long-forgotten band, or music playing in the background of a dream, the artist’s sounds, with their links to the domestic and the body, become moments visitors find themselves wanting to grasp again and again.

Reminiscent of a Greco-Roman sculpture garden, “Olistostrome” featured six sculptures of colored wool, polystyrene foam, and steel atop a carpet of loose pebbles in a darkened room. Underneath those pebbles, microphones picked up one’s movements; the noise was then fed through signal-processing software and sent back into the environment. Collectively titled *Solutions to Common Noise Problems* (all works 2021), the sound installation morphed according to its audience. If one person inhabited the space, the feedback was isolated, crunchy, watery. However, if a crowd had gathered, as during the opening, the feedback began to layer, contributing to a thicker, more gravelly reification of sound. When this occurred, the positive-gain loop between microphone and speaker would glitch, triggering an overdrive distortion—at

Seulgi Lee, *Slow Water*, 2021, paint, wood, 18 × 18’.



dangerously high decibel levels—before the circuit stabilized and another cycle began.

The exhibition's title—a reference to the geological phenomenon of semifluid sediments sliding and accumulating, and the resulting instability—loosely anchored the pieces on view. At the entrance were *Sound Blanket No. 5* and *Sound Blanket No. 6*: giant kimono-shaped wall sculptures of wool, denim, and satin. If these works allude to Kiyomi Gork's diasporic identity as a fourth-generation American descendant of Japanese Okinawan and Eastern European heritage, they also underscore the shifting weight of that inheritance, both via the outfits' absurd scale—think of a kid trying on a parent's suit jacket—and in their conflation of nonfunctional ornament with private memory. A similar synthesis occurs in the "Attenuator" series. Referring to the classical statues Kiyomi Gork saw on a recent trip to Europe, these freestanding felted-wool works cleverly act as sound baffles. Arranged in a Stonehenge-esque circle, they also presented a liminal state between mythology and realism, and between ancient and contemporary. The peaty fibers and stratifications of rust and stone colors evoked the earth—Upper Paleolithic Venus statuettes, a mountain gorge—yet in the murky almost-light, the sculptures mutated from those almost-familiar forms to fuzzier, nongendered, nonhuman, and perhaps nonearthly ambiguations.



View of "Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork," 2021.  
Photo: Michael Yu.

Kiyomi Gork encourages sensitivity to other sensory engagements. Like a ball pit, the sonic landscape was liquid with visitors' movements; one's own flesh responded in tandem with the quivering tamped-down fibers of the sculptures when the feedback went into the red zone. One began to feel molecular, like a protein migrating through the space, before eventually being soothed back into the collective streams of footsteps. Even long after one had left the exhibition, the sensation—like an earworm—followed.

—Ysabelle Cheung

## SYDNEY

### Yona Lee

#### FINE ARTS

Since 2016, South Korean-born, Auckland-based artist Yona Lee has become known for her installations with titles that include the phrase "In Transit." They are constructed of polished stainless-steel tubing—cut and welded to form running lines, bends, and knots—that is screwed to walls, floors, and ceilings. The quotidian references of these



Yona Lee, *Kit-set In-transit*, 2020, stainless steel, objects.  
Installation view.

mazelike environments range from public-transport transit maps and industrial plumbing to those ubiquitous handrails, bollards, and barriers that everywhere assist or impede our movement in public spaces. Just as ardently ordinary are the everyday consumer objects with which Lee punctuates her steel matrices. Mass-produced household goods in the IKEA mold, they have included lampshades, umbrellas, shower curtains, chairs, tables, beds, coat hangers, and mopheads, but also things less redolent of the domestic sphere, such as transport grab handles and stop buttons. These items sparsely populate the steel sculptures as though sprouting from their metastatic impetus.

Past "In Transit" works have responded directly to specific spaces, with Lee using computer-generated drawings to plot the architecture and her intervention within it. For instance, her contribution to the Fifteenth Biennale de Lyon, *In Transit (Highway)*, 2019, exploited the dizzying height of the exhibition venue, a former washing-machine factory. Assisted by local manufacturers, Lee constructed one of her tubular environments and a walkway perched on an existing overhead gantry. A spiral staircase enabled visitors to access the overhead structure and view other works from some twenty-six feet above the ground. For those inclined to linger in this lofty space—or perhaps to recover from the experience—the artist incorporated bunk beds, generic café furniture, and a couple of potted plants.

Lee's latest installation was not so overtly site-specific. As the title *Kit-set In-transit*, 2020, implies, it can be transported in pieces with instructions (like DIY furniture) to be fabricated anywhere. Assembled in the white-cube space at Fine Arts, Sydney, the sculpture included a centrally placed, cage-like scaffold of pipes enclosing bunk beds with pristine-white sheeting. A red umbrella arced above this arrangement, while one vertical tendril of pipe topped with a faux-Victorian lamp read as a full stop to the sense of mobility imparted by the steel labyrinth. Extending from the central matrix were more sparing lines of pipe traveling over four walls and across high windows, supporting a shower curtain, and zipping to ground level to secure a café setting for two. Continuing Lee's normcore aesthetic and its push and pull between egress and blockage, the work staged a tensile dichotomy where the abstract order of the arrangement conflicted with the implicit invitation to interact. Additionally, fixtures hinting at participation or utility were rendered dysfunctional or inaccessible: A transport grab handle hung from a pipe way out of reach, and a generic empire lampshade glowed upside down at the long end of a knotted pipe.

Viewing Lee's show when it had reopened this past October after the nearly four-month Covid lockdown that interrupted it, I couldn't help but discern a metaphor of our current situation. While her sculptures speak to the modern, technologically enabled obsession with free movement across time and space, she also inscribes points of resistance that undermine fantasies of infinite transit.

—Toni Ross





Peggy Ahwesh  
Tolia Astakhishvili  
Elene Chantladze  
Chen Ching-Yuan  
Yu Nishimura  
Rose Salane  
Kandis Williams

Fall 2021  
Issue 77

## Setting the Stage: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork Lumi Tan

For artists who center sound within their practice, sharing sonic space and attention within institutional environments is a familiar struggle: how to create a focused audience without merely encasing them in soundproof walls or imposing isolating headphones upon them. Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork has attuned her sound work to be fully integrated within group exhibitions, art fairs, and outdoor settings. Pointedly, they consider themselves a listener, not a composer—in a sense, aligned with the individual visitor and the collective audience rather than with the maker.

Coming to the noise music scene in San Francisco after attending the San Francisco Art Institute and studying with interactive electronic composer Laetitia Sonami in the early 2000s, Gork was frustrated by the standard formats of and behavior engendered by experimental music shows. Sound dominated those spaces without consideration for other aspects of perception, which gave way to often futile attempts to control an audience assumed to be monolithic. Their installations, which combine sound, sculpture, and performance, instead embrace the embodied knowledge of each visitor and make room for a spectrum of interpretations and movements through every space.

Their most recent and large-scale example of this approach, *the input of this machine is the power an output contains* (2020) at *Made in L.A. 2020: a version*, was positioned within the Hammer Museum's enclosed terrace, with floor-to-ceiling windows on both sides. Gork utilized the potential of this space to be seen as transitional, a passageway from one legible white-walled gallery to another. Simultaneously, it became a site for intent listening, as a work that contained and directed its performers and audiences while permitting individual agency to transcend these spaces through movement, tone, and interpretation. Using their signature materials, such as felt, synthetic hair, wool, fiberglass, and vinyl—each of which directs or absorbs sound while providing visceral associative textures—Gork created two sound-resistant rooms that mimicked the light and transparency of the surrounding architecture. Each of the four performers delivered an improvised speech from an AI-generated script based on forms of public address such as TED talks and campaign stump speeches as they weaved in and out of the installation. The performers were trained to use familiar gestures of this oratorical style—the open arms, the power stance, and dramatic cadences—while the artist's sound interventions obscured the clarity of the message. Statements delivered with a deliberately coercive tone—such as “Well, how do we make the mind open and the brain shut? I mean if you think about it, there are three methods of this. The first method is to shut down the mind and to open up the brain and mind. I have already spoken before and I just want to tell you, first of all, what I mean. I mean, if we had all our minds open, and we could have all our brains open, people who are not open would be just as good”—are only understood as nonsensical through a type of close listening that few visitors have the attention or even the desire to discern. Gork understands that language is as unruly as what we categorize as

abstract sound—that we tend to absorb a sense of emotional authenticity rather than the meaning of language itself.

When these interpretive elements move out of the control of their maker, Gork believes that the environment absorbs much of that fractious energy. In *Olistostrome*, their current solo show at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, the floor of the gallery's black box space has been covered with five tons of rock over a wooden platform. The artist has hidden twelve condenser microphones, twelve contact microphones, and twelve speakers around the space to create a sound work that begins once a visitor steps into the installation. The exhibition extends a technique that Gork previously employed for Empty Gallery's booth at Frieze New York in 2018, where the ambient noise of the fair and the din of visitors were all calibrated into a dense soundscape; the steady hum was interrupted by feedback only when a loud noise, such as a helicopter whirring above the tent, disrupted the polite retail routine. In Hong Kong, an individual awareness of one's body is immediately heightened as one steps into the room, with each crunching, vibrating footstep fed into Gork's composition. The performative aspects of spectatorship are bolstered by theatrically spotlit, laboriously hand-felted sculptures from a series entitled *Attenuators* (2021), inspired by Gork's observation of classical Greek and Roman statues during research in Europe. Their iterations offer just enough information to create an impression of a figure that is neither masculine nor feminine, extending the familiar gestures of contrapposto into undulating, increasingly abstract surfaces indicative of their material transference; from the marble and stone of the original statues, Gork rendered the forms in rudimentary clay, then as digital models to direct their shape in foam. Finally, Gork covered them with hand-felted wool in a palette that returns each sculpture into a “natural” landscape inspired by stones they found during hikes in Los Angeles. The exhibition's title, *Olistostrome*—a geological term for a rock mass made from gravitational sliding of mud and blocks—underscores the instability of the materials and their infinite potential for remaking and new relationalities. Playing with the idea of field recordings and their indexical fidelity, this is a human-made environment that reflects its manipulated and processed sonic surroundings.

They repeatedly call upon applications of architecture beyond site specificity; hand-sewn, felted garments and blankets, which refer to exterior and interior bodily protection while providing acoustic baffling, have long been part of her practice. Set apart from the main installation at Empty Gallery are a series of wall-displayed kimonos that are emphatically oversized to take on the scale of a room rather than a body, enveloping the collective audience rather than an individual—like all of their sculptural garments, they are ultimately unwearable. Gork's formation of what constitutes the private and public boundaries of listening, and how our bodily awareness expands beside these porous barriers, extends the isolationist traditions of sound art.

219 Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Attenuator No. 6*, 2021. Courtesy: the artist; Empty Gallery, Hong Kong; François Ghebaly, Los Angeles / New York. Photo: Michael Yu

220 221 Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Olistostrome* installation view at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, 2021. Courtesy: the artist and Empty Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo: Michael Yu

222 223 Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *the input of this machine is the power an output contains*, 2020, *Made in L.A. 2020: a version* installation views at Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2021. © Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork.

Courtesy: the artist; Empty Gallery, Hong Kong; François Ghebaly, Los Angeles / New York. Photo: Joshua White / JWPictures.com



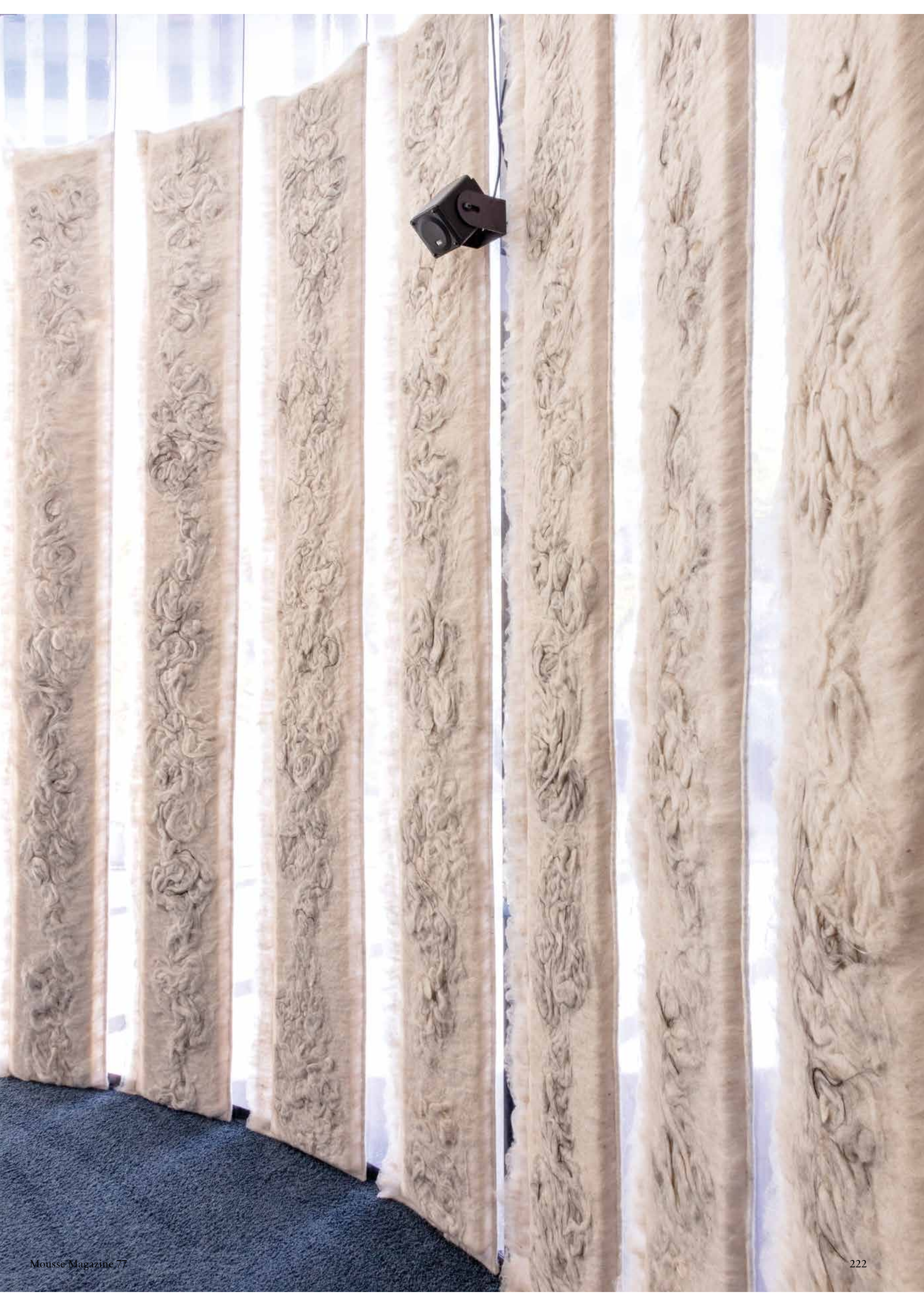




















Frieze New York has returned for its seventh edition, bringing around 190 galleries from 30 countries to its customary venue at Randall's Island Park. The fair has a new layout thanks to London-based Universal Design Studio—which has also been behind the design of Frieze London for the past four years—replacing its previous format of one massive white tent with five smaller adjacent structures, totaling 28,000 square meters, in an effort to make the large exhibition space feel more intimate.

In addition to the redesign, Frieze New York introduced new programming this year. English artist and curator Matthew Higgs helmed the first-ever themed section, "For Your Infotainment," which celebrates the legacy of the deceased New York and Chicago art dealer Hudson and his gallery, Feature Inc. The fair also has a new "Live" section, focused on performances, installations and interactive art, curated by Adrienne Edwards, curator of performance at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Additionally, the 2018 edition sees the New York launch of the Frieze Artist Award, for a site-specific installation created by an emerging artist and unveiled at the fair. Following an international open call, Paris-based artist Kapwani Kiwanga was selected as this year's winner for her open-air installation *Shady*, featuring porous shade cloths in black, dark green, bright red and sky blue stretched across a black steel frame.

Asian artists were strongly represented at this year's Frieze New York, with a record 28 exhibitors, including galleries from China, Japan, Korea and India. Highlights include early paintings and sculptures by Takashi Murakami at Gagosian's booth in the "For Your Infotainment" section (Murakami had his first New York solo exhibition at Hudson's Feature, Inc.); a solo show of late paintings by Gutai master Atsuko Tanaka at Sakurado Fine Arts in "Spotlight," a section dedicated to 20th-century pioneers; and emerging artist Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon's sound and sculptural installation at Empty Gallery's booth in the "Frame" section, for galleries aged eight years or younger. These and many more are shown below.



Empty Gallery (Hong Kong) presented a sound and sculptural installation by JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON, which incorporated wool, felt, hair, cast cement, paint, speakers and digital elements, and featured her sound pieces *Sound Blanket No. 2*, *Cold World Cycles Warm – Line Array*, *Sound Panel No. 4*, and *Sound Blanket No. 4 – Jacket* (all 2018), among others.



Through Sunday at Frieze New York's impressive white tent on Randall's Island, visitors can snap selfies under a giant table designed by artist Robert Therrien, sip from water bottles ornamented with Laercio Redondo's designs, and watch a feminist parade orchestrated by Lara Schnitger. While pristine design and eye-catching spectacle are integral to any art fair, some of this edition's best and most important works also reside in simpler, easily overlooked corners. Over 190 galleries spanning 30 countries are presenting this year; here, we culled 11 of our favorite booths from the mix. Whether you're looking for fully immersive experiences or subtle portraiture, overlooked talents or contemporary innovators, here's where to start.

## Empty Gallery

Frame Section, Booth FR14

With works by Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon



Installation view of Empty Gallery's booth at Frieze New York, 2018. Photo by Mark Blower. Courtesy of Mark Blower/Frieze.

Walk through a plastic curtain, and you've entered the sonic realm of Los Angeles-based artist Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon. She's mic'd the exterior of the booth to record the sounds of the fair. They pass into a digital program, which alters them and expels the resulting noises through two sculptures (several cast concrete speakers and one that's real, all mounted on painted steel poles). Additional sculptures—priced between \$6,000 and \$9,500—made from wool and other fabrics, resembling blankets and garments, help absorb the noise. Gordon tells Artsy that she was considering the word "absorptive" and all its possible connotations. "What does it mean to be 'absorptive?' To feel 'absorptive?'" she asks. The aurally focused exhibition is on-brand for this Hong Kong gallery, which also runs the Berlin-based vinyl record label Empty Editions.





# THE ART NEWSPAPER

Co-organised by Andrew Bonacina of the Hepworth Wakefield in the UK and Laura McLean-Ferris from the Swiss Institute, New York, the fair's Frame sector gives emerging galleries (eight years or younger) space for solo-artist displays. We asked the artists to describe their work at the fair.



Courtesy of SFMOMA, from the installation *Inside You Is Me*

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, showing with Empty Gallery, Hong Kong. "When asked to create a sound piece for Frieze New York, all I could imagine was how to escape the noise of the fair while still being seen. Everyone told me the only way was with headphones. But we don't just listen with our ears, we listen with our whole bodies. This piece involves large, sound-absorbing materials to soften the noise, and a four-channel sound sculpture that separates and uses the ambient noise of the fair, enabling you to navigate an alternative reality within the existing soundscape. "

# ARTnews



A repeated complaint from everyone at Frieze New York today was that, even inside the fair's tent, on this sunny, 86-degree day, it was hot. And, while it was sweltering just about everywhere in the fair, you could almost be tricked into thinking there was air conditioning at Empty Gallery's booth, where Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon was showing a sound installation that features speakers and other objects covered in the woolly-looking material used for acoustic absorption. (The Hong Kong gallery was invited to participate in the fair's "Frame" section, which is devoted to individual presentations and was this year curated by Andrew Bonacina and Ruba Katrib, who shared the labor of organizing it with Laura McLean-Ferris.)

After entering through a sliced vinyl curtain, whirring noises—ones not unlike those that come out of air vents—could be heard when visitors got up close to various speakers, which jutted out from corners and hung from the ceiling. But moving around the installation revealed what a dense soundscape Kiyomi Gordon had constructed. A repeating chime-like tone could be heard emanating from one squarish speaker, while another four-piece one—it looked like the kind used at big concerts—suspended from above played whooshing sounds.

For Kiyomi Gordon, this is a work about how sound can construct environments—how various tones and noises, though seemingly unimportant to the flow of everyday life, shape our very movements. Kiyomi Gordon has stated in the past that she is interested in "how we are both controlling and controlled by sonic information," and it was interesting to note the ways that the placement of one's body determined what could and couldn't be heard throughout the booth. (Notably absent are any sets of headphones.)

Although the industrial look of the curtain may have signaled an enclosed, cooler space, Empty Gallery's booth was just as hot as the rest of the fair. I certainly didn't cool off when I looked at one of the objects included here, a puffy jacket rendered out of soundproofing material that was hung as though it were part of a Uniqlo display. It was fuzzy and thick, and I thought it might be nice to don Kiyomi Gordon's work at some point during the dead of winter.



# MOUSSE

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Inside the works of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon and C. Spencer Yeh, sound becomes a sculptural material—one that holds no obligation to visual orientations that differentiate front from back. Sound bounces and reflects, in the gallery it wanders into neighboring rooms (if allowed to), it gathers in corners or multiplies itself as it echoes against hard walls and eventually dies away into silence.



Left - Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, *Noise Blanket No.10*, 2017.  
Courtesy: Empty Gallery, Hong Kong  
Opposite - Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, *Noise Blanket No.6*, 2017.  
Courtesy: Empty Gallery, Hong Kong

## THERE IS NO FRONT: SOUND AS SCULPTURAL MATERIAL

JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON, C. SPENCER YEH  
AND CHIARA GIOVANDO IN CONVERSATION

Although sound is not a true physical substance but rather a form of energy that requires air or other matter to carry it, if we consider the sound-activated atmosphere as a sculptural material, there is the potential to begin to see the gallery or place of exhibition in different terms. Sound becomes a material in relation to all other works, objects, and the architecture of the exhibition itself as it inhabits the space. In this way, making a sound work can be seen as a kind of excavation of the gallery. Both Kiyomi Gordon and Yeh's practices deal with the spatialization of sound and involve a dedication to hours of careful listening as they shape space with intangible and invisible stuff.

### CHIARA GIOVANDO

Amazingly, I think I've known both of you for over fifteen years through the U.S. experimental music and noise scene. Jackie I met in the Bay Area in the early 2000s, and Spencer, it must have been on the East Coast during a tour around that same time. Where did the two of you first meet?

### JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON

I want to say we first met in Oakland? Although my memory is really shitty, but did I open a show for your duo with John Weiss where I was playing a giant blanket?

### C. SPENCER YEH

Umm...

### JKG

Like a giant blanket covered in speakers?

### CSY

Yes!

### CG

You both have a practice, to different degrees, that is rooted in music, specifically the experimental improv and noise music scene. Can you briefly share how you came to music?

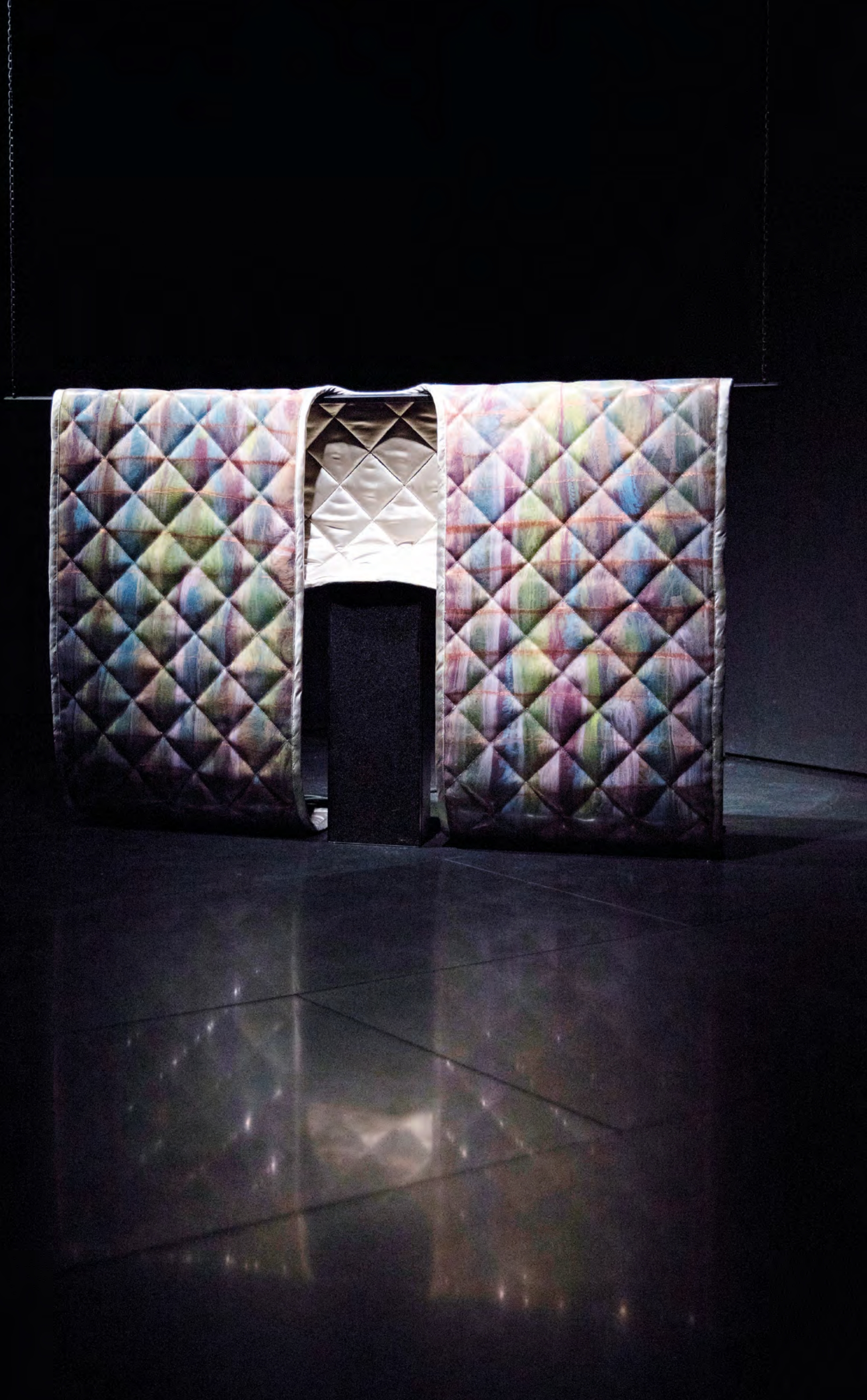
### JKG

I came to music from a visual art background when I was in school at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2000. I studied with Laetitia Sonami, went to shows in San Francisco and Oakland. At the time I was experimenting a lot with photography, painting, and installation, and then started working with sound. To be honest, I didn't really like music until I had found out about noise. I was experimenting with circuit bending and trying to make my own musical textiles. My first large installation was a piece called *Dream Blanket*. I began to perform that work because another artist, Grux, asked me to play it at his weekly series.

### CSY

I arrived late to music as well. My family moved to the U.S. when I was five years old from Taiwan, and when we came to this country, my parents and my older brother were so busy trying to figure out how to be Americans themselves they didn't really act as cultural guides for me at all. I was missing a connection with mainstream youth culture. Very early on I had gotten a sense of experimental music, before I even figured out what it was, through weird encounters with late-night public television.







**CG** Yes, we are also talking about a pre-internet world when one had to seek out cultural spaces in person...

**CSY** That's totally it. I was isolated and having to do research on my own—like you said, pre-internet. Even my experience of listening to a regular rock record was so mysterious. So I would just create and consume in this very isolated and particular way, and that still affects the way I think about sound. I always say that I'm not a musician, but that I am working with music and sound.

**CG** What were the first ways sound began to differentiate itself from music for you?

**CSY** I went to school for film. At that time music was a secondary interest. Eventually I realized, through tools like four-track tape recorders, that what I was trying to do with film and video, I could do with sound as well, perhaps with more immediacy. The act of editing for me was as much based in a sonic universe as a visual one.

**JKG** For me, I was making these large blanket paintings and listening to noise on headphones, and I realized I wanted to be surrounded by sound and thought, "Oh! I can build sound systems—total multichannel environments!" That was a turning point, and also had to do with exposure to spaces like La Monte Young's Dream House or going to my first anechoic chamber and shows at Recombinant Media Labs in San Francisco. Through those experiences, I found that what I really wanted to do was listen. And so I began to make my own spaces to listen in.

**CG** That makes me think about the way your early performance work seems to be less about your body or gesture and more about the object as performer.

**JKG** Yes, it also has to do with audience, and the kind of expectation that is inherent in the space. I think of my sound installations as a type of performance. This is because I don't really make the composition until I'm in the space and the speakers are set. Then I take at least forty-eight hours to compose in the installation—and this becomes a kind of performance that continues for the duration of the exhibition.

**CSY** As a performer, there's this immediate engagement with an audience. Whereas, with installation, that immediate exchange is missing, but instead you have much more control. I think about some of these amazing spaces we've been able to use in Cincinnati—where I lived for many years—I've always said that these spaces are bad for rock bands but are amazing for other things, like environmental compositions, in the way the acoustics affect the ways sound can function in them.

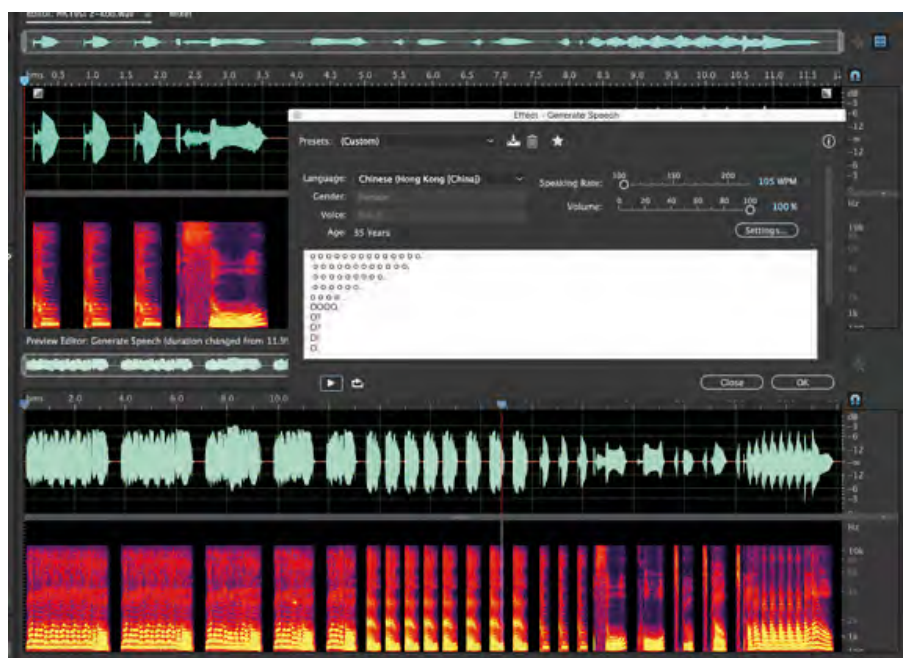
**CG** Sound for me is really a kind of physical material, and a material that is always in relationship, as you're both saying, to the acoustics and architecture of the space.

**CSY** That's also what's so awesome about it. You have something that functions as sculpture but also has all these other possibilities. It's interesting in terms of how a work travels as well. Jacqueline,



C. Spencer Yeh, "Asian Meeting Festival" performance at METRO, Kyoto, 2017. Courtesy: the artist and Asian Music Network. Photo: Yoshikazu Inoue

C. Spencer Yeh, *Mei-Jia & Ting-Ting & Chih-Fu & Sin-Ji* (screenshot), 2018. Courtesy: the artist



C. Spencer Yeh, *Three Waves*, 2017, *Shocking Asia* installation view at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, 2017. Courtesy: the artist and Empty Gallery, Hong Kong



I'm thinking about the work you did with Empty Gallery in Hong Kong that went to 356 Mission Rd.

**JKG**

That's why I like to use the term "site dependent" versus "site specific" in relation to my practice. When that particular piece, titled *Not Exactly B Flat*, went from Empty Gallery to 356 Mission Rd, I re-engineered all of the tracks. I reequalized, respatialized everything, so I kind of remade the piece, and even though I was still using the same concept and objects, the feeling of it reflected the new space it was in.

**CG**

And this is because each environment that you enter has its own acoustics that affect the piece. Both of you are such practiced and particular listeners—can you talk about that?

**CSY**

It's like what you said earlier, Chiara, that sound is the material, and the way I finished that thought in my head was that "music is just one way of working with that material." I also think there are visual ways of listening. Like with records, there is a certain feeling of mystery before you hear anything at all, you are just staring at the cover art and thinking about what this record might sound like... Maybe you know the band and have a certain set of expectations. All that stuff influences your hearing even before you put the record on.

**JKG**

I have a new collaborative project designing multichannel systems for warehouse parties. We are just beginning development, and so it's hard to talk about right now... I can say it is tied to an ongoing

interest that started when I was at Stanford in archaeoacoustics, or the study of archaeological sites based on acoustics. I definitely use this when thinking about listening and temporary spaces.

**CG**

Can you give us an example?

**JKG**

For instance, one of the Stanford research projects focused on a pre-Incan temple that had completely perplexing architecture when considered through a normal physical orientation. There were several small chambers that weren't big enough for humans to walk through, but then they found that it's all because of acoustics. They found if a person played a conch shell in one small chamber, the sound would channel into several other rooms. The architecture itself was creating the illusion of multiple players—splitting the signal into a multichannel environment.

**CSY**

That makes me think about the sound of a hi-hat moving through the room... or how important it is to organize frequencies in a space. It's not just about what sounds you are playing but also about the quality of those sounds and how they will travel and reach the listener... to make spaces geared toward active hearing, which doesn't even have to actually involve hearing sound. It can also be a physical or felt response.

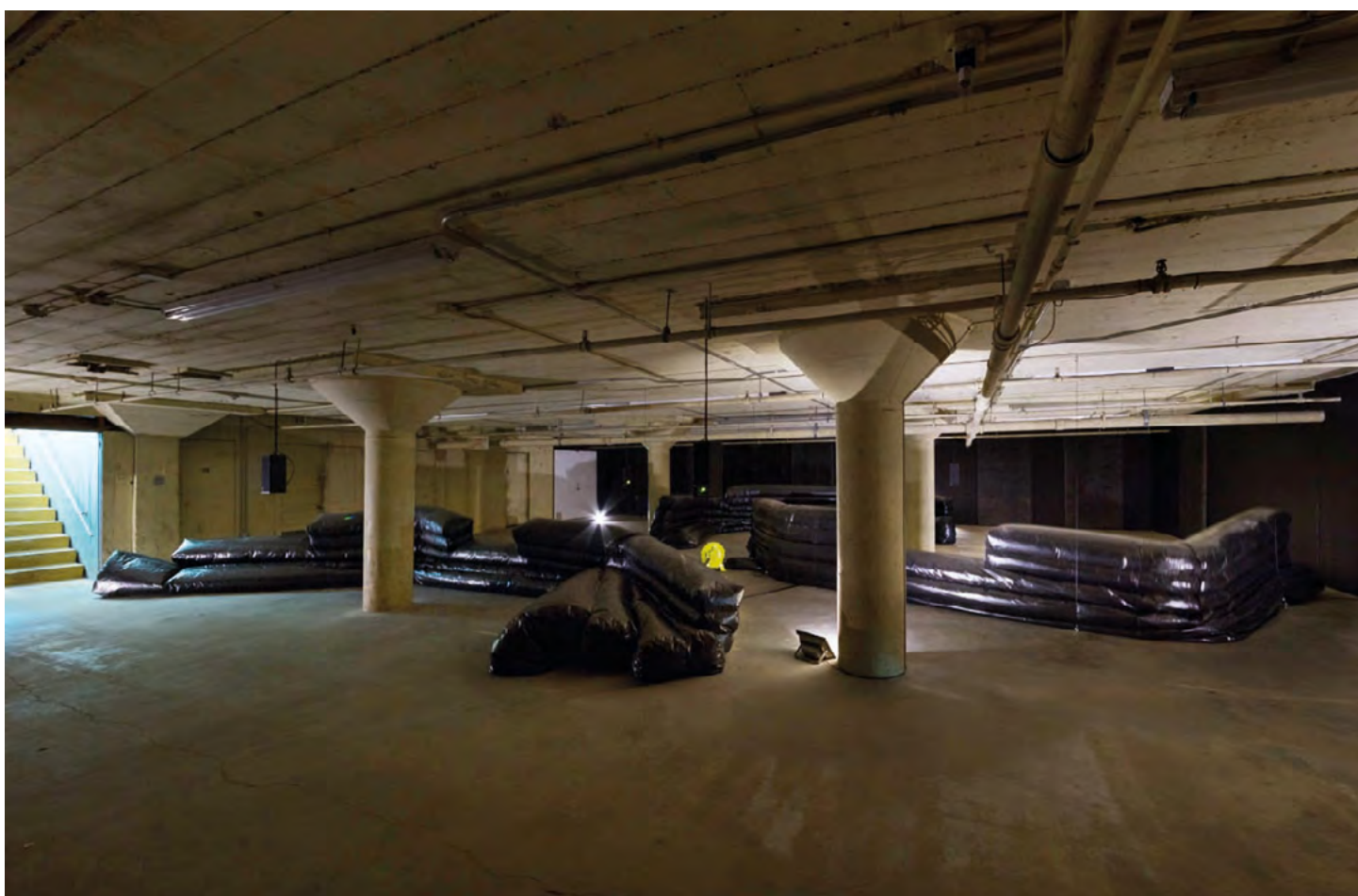
**CG**

Time is also so important. I think sound has the ability to address and insert time into exhibition in a way that challenges the presumption that exhibition is static.





Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, *Our Best Machines Are Made of Sunshine*, 2009, installation view at Queens Nails Projects, San Francisco, 2009. Courtesy: the artist



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, *Not Exactly B Flat*, 2017 installation view at 356 Mission Rd., Los Angeles, 2017. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Brica Wilcox

CSY

Well, we could argue that all artworks, whether there is an element of time or not, do take time. They do take time to be experienced in a particular way. Even the act of looking takes time. You're right, though, there is a presumption that exhibition is static. And in the case of a sound installation, the viewer has to consider something like "how long should I stay in here to get a sense of this work?" I like the idea of applying that same logic to a wall work, or something like a painting. I wish we could tell people, "I want you to spend at least twenty minutes looking at this because you're not going to get it otherwise."

JKG

I believe there are several different scales of time. There is the time we have on our clock, then there is the time that we experience, but I feel like the quality of time is different depending on what sensory mode is dominant to the experience and our memory of it, once you leave the gallery. Maybe somebody only saw something for five seconds, but when they leave, they can recall that image in their head. It's different to recall sound, it doesn't imprint the same way, it's like you have to recall the feeling of it in time.

CG

This brings up a huge challenge for sound art, which is that we are working within a field, and actually a world, that privileges the eyes. Increasingly, institutions are investing in equipment and architectures that are conducive for showing sound work. Still, often artists working in these areas are faced with certain challenges. You've both worked in a spectrum of venues, everywhere from underground warehouses to a new era of black box galleries oriented towards supporting sound to museums. How do each of these spaces affect your practice?

JKG

I was a part of the recent *Soundings* exhibition at SFMOMA. Because it's a brand-new museum, the architecture is finally acknowledging acoustics. A lot is happening with new materials and research into acoustic control. I think this is because the commodification of experience is very important to museums. The museum had a soundproof wall around my piece, but sound still traveled through the air vents... it's great that newer museums are taking more into consideration, but there's still a long way to go. Regarding neutral space, or black box, or white cube, I always think



back to my first shows in apartments and warehouses. Those were spaces that enabled me to develop my own language that I still use. I don't think there's such a thing as neutral space.

**CSY**

Did you feel a certain amount of relief when you were able to finally install in a space that wasn't so much like the warehouse or basement?

**JKG**

Yes, but I was really confused. I painted all of my work white. Everything for my first show in a real gallery was white! All the work matched the walls perfectly. The floor was even painted white.

**CSY**

I did a project for Cleveland MOCA and used their preinstalled speaker system in the stairwell. That work was both inhabiting its own conceptual universe and had to be mixed and made for the conditions of the museum. I've been working on and off with text-to-speech voices. For this piece, I was working with three voices, all for Chinese language. One is to represent Chinese from Taiwan, one from Hong Kong, and one from mainland China. So I was spending time with those voices, writing these text scripts, sort of like concrete poetry to generate these weird glitches or extended vocal techniques from the voices. And then I was sampling those recordings and I brought my own voice in to imitate the Texas speech voice sounds. And I used Chihfu, which is one of my first names. I want to riff on this work more. Use these voices as a frame.

**JKG**

It's an instrument in a way.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, *Dreamblankets*, 2005, A Little Display, San Francisco, 2005. Courtesy: the artist

**Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon** (1982, Long Beach) works with sound, sculpture, and performance and is based in Los Angeles. She received her BFA in photography in 2004 from the San Francisco Art Institute and her MFA in 2011 from Stanford University, where her research focused on the history of communications technology and the physiological and psychophysical effects of music and sound on the body. Recent shows include SFMOMA's *Soundtracks*, VAC's Geometry of Now Festival in Moscow, and solo shows at Empty Gallery in Hong Kong, Human Resources and 356 Mission Rd. in Los Angeles, and the Lab in San Francisco. She is in the music group 0th and the Los Angeles-based video and sound collective DLS, and she has performed with Laetitia Sonami throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

**C. Spencer Yeh** is recognized for his interdisciplinary activities and collaborations as an artist, improviser, and composer, as well as for his music project Burning Star Core. His video works are distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix, and he is a contributing editor to *Triple Canopy* and *BOMB* magazine. Yeh also volunteers as a programmer and trailer editor for Spectacle Theater, a microcinema in Brooklyn. Recent exhibitions include *Shocking Asia* at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong; *Two Workaround Works around Calder* at the Whitney Museum, New York; *Modern Mondays* at MoMA, New York; *Sound Horizon* at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and *Mei-Jia & Ting-Ting & Chih-fu & Sin-Ji* at MOCA Cleveland. International presentations include *Closer to the Edge* in Singapore and *Crossing Over* in Kuala Lumpur; *The Companion* at the Liverpool Biennial 2014; the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival; *Tony Conrad Tribute* at Atelier Nord/Ultima Festival in Oslo; and *Great Tricks from Your Future* at D-CAF in Cairo. In 2015 he was an artist in residence at ISSUE Project Room, Brooklyn, and he was included in the performance program for Greater New York at MoMA/PS1. A new project on vinyl record, *The RCA Mark II*, was recently published by Primary Information.

**Chiara Giovando** is a Los Angeles-based artist, composer, and curator. Giovando is currently director and curator at PANEL LA, an artist residency focused on newly commissioned works. In 2015-2016 she was curator in residence at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center in Portland, Oregon, where she presented a series of exhibitions and programming titled *Sound Is Matter*. She was codirector and curator at Human Resources L.A., and in 2015 she curated *In Search of an Author* at the Unge Kunstneres Samfund in Oslo, and THE OUTSIDE MUSEUM, a temporary museum in the Mojave Desert in collaboration with Portland Museum of Modern Art. In 2012 she was curator in residence with René Block at Kunsthall 44 Møen and organized *Hammer without a Master: Henning Christiansen's Archive*, an exhibition that included fourteen artists and composers as well as archival material. Other recent projects include *The Third Ear*, an exhibition of new sound art curated with the Fellows of Contemporary Art LA. Giovando's own scores *Repulsion Music*, *Puncture Tones*, and *Edges Adaptation* have been played both nationally and internationally including at the Barbican in London and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

**CSY**

Yes, I'm always trying to find these other sort of weird little tools, and other ways to effectively work with the voice.

**JKG**

I think that goes into another major difference between sound as material and other contemporary art materials, even concept as a material—where with sound, it opens up a different kind of thinking. I think of my sound systems as being instruments. I can play different sounds through them—is it a different piece? I don't know—it's the same sculpture? Maybe. I can have that flexibility and ambiguity.

**CSY**

Do you think that there's a correlation between that ambiguity and other power formations?

**JKG**

Well, we are surrounded by a system in which art is supposed to be produced and sold, and that system is very Western, and I don't think that has to apply to sound.

**CG**

I think sound art actually challenges that economy. Not only is it challenging the ways that viewership is engaged temporally and spatially, but it's actually changing the way we understand objectness. I am also very attracted to sound's lack of objectness, or its object ethics. I have a vision of entire landscapes buried in more and more and more objects, and then I think about sound art... I don't know if that makes sense.

**JKG**

Absolutely. I've been thinking about that a lot right now. I use a lot of materials, but everything is modular and is reusable. Even though I make sound blanket objects, they are made out of materials that I buy, and I put into the world—I reuse them. They are still blankets that block sound; they are functioning things.

**CG**

Sound has a kind of freedom in not actually being a thing.





# CATCHY

## JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON

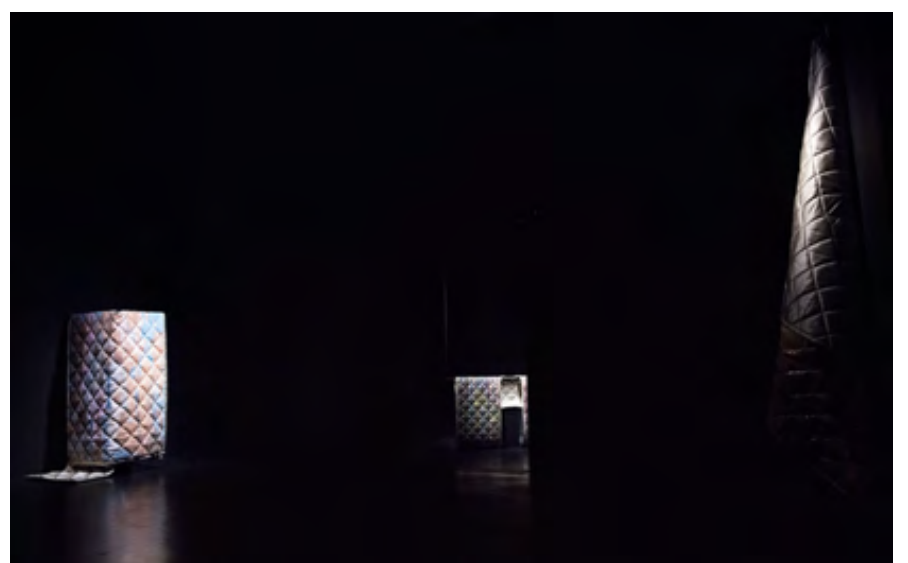
BRADY NG  
EMPTY GALLERY

HONG KONG USA

On the opening night of "Catchy," the parents of LA-based installation artist Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon offhandedly commented that Hong Kong's Empty Gallery was one of the few art spaces that could earnestly present their daughter's work. Perhaps it was the all-black-everything interior—the key feature which sets the kunsthhaus apart from its peers in the city—that provided a suitably minimal, dimly atmospheric backdrop to Gordon's signature, precise manipulation of sound and architecture that warranted the remark. "Catchy" was Gordon's first presentation in East Asia, and featured shifting walls, a newly composed pop song and quilts hued jade, seafoam and lavender.

A hefty speaker emitting a bass beat was set by the entrance passageway, leading visitors forward into the gallery's upper level presentation space. An arresting set of inflated, sound-absorbing walls stood there, kept erect by pneumatic equipment for about four minutes at a time. Speakers that peppered the space emitted sounds that resembled the output of tone generators found in the laboratories of physicists. When the air pumps reversed their function and slowly let air out of the soft, black, ballooning barriers, the walls slowly glided down, losing volume and structure as if they were melting, first revealing light sources, then exposing multiple origins of sound. A song played—an earworm, a catchy tune—with saccharine, meaningless mumbles from which one could decipher: Imma love you / up and down / we go, we go, we go, as well as other lines that would not be out of place in a concert featuring Billboard's Hot 100 songs. Around three minutes later, the song concluded, matching the common length of popular music tracks, and the barriers were filled with air again, blocking off the speakers and lights as clinical tones flooded the soundscape once more.

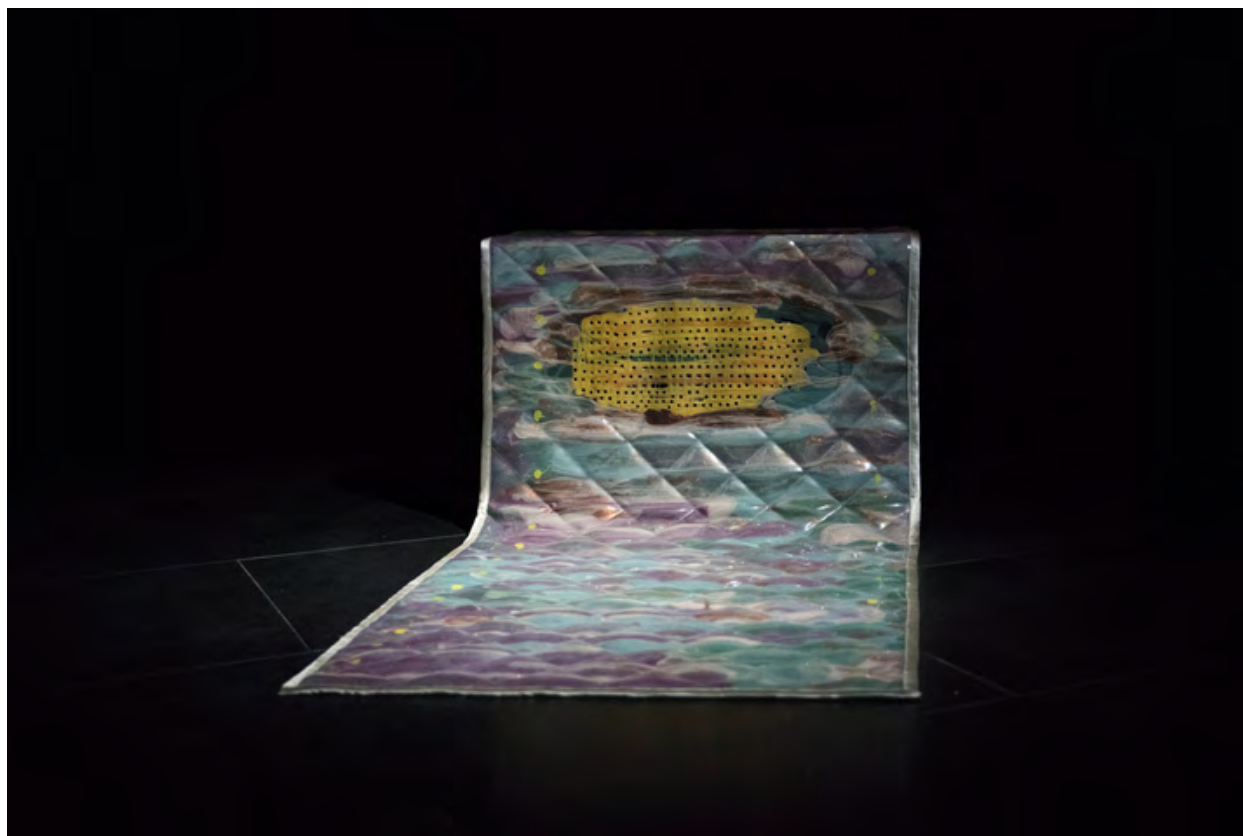
On the lower floor, five speakers emitted Björkian vocal notes and melodies, their angles of audio coverage guided by the gallery's walls and blankets that were draped over metal frames that housed the custom-made equipment. Here, we heard clean tones, snippets of mumbled song lyrics and breathing sounds.



Installation view of **JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON**'s "Catchy" at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, 2017. Courtesy Empty Gallery.]



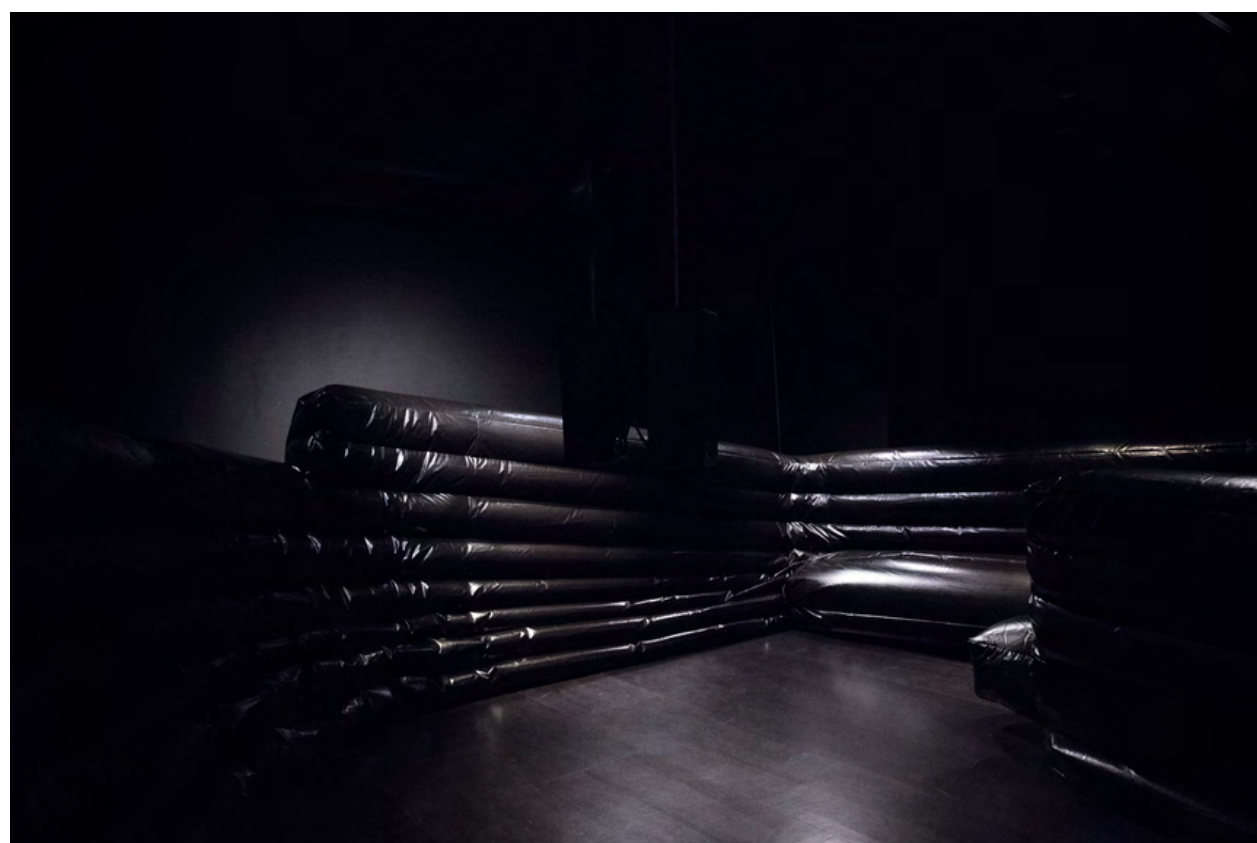
**JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON**, Noise Blanket, No. 10, 2017, poured silicone, artificial fur, nylon, steel armature, 189 × 76 cm. Courtesy Empty Gallery, Hong Kong.



**JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON**, *Noise Blanket, No. 5*, 2017, poured silicone, artificial fur, nylon, steel armature, 183 × 75 cm. Courtesy Empty Gallery, Hong Kong.

Gordon's installation drew inspiration from recording studios where multi-channel productions are the norm and craftsmanship overshadows artistic character. The way to navigate "Catchy" was to think of the sounds from each speaker as separate channels in a single track. The vocals heard on the upper floor were the main lyrics; the bass beat could be heard by the entrance; vocal harmonies and other electronic instrumental sounds were downstairs, ripped apart and spewed forth by five directional speakers placed in different locations, towards different directions, steered further by quilts with flighty, subtle shades of pastels made by the artist. By isolating the sounds that form a single pop music track, Gordon turned the two floors that comprise the gallery into a song, folding the aural dimension into the art space's architecture. To hear the music, one must step through the space: first the narrow pass past the entrance, followed by Gordon's maze, down the stairs, and then into and out of three smaller rooms. While the artist appropriated the language and production techniques of pop music, her composition was never presented as a single unit, and therefore could never be heard in full. Unlike a standard pop music track, visitors were only offered one or two layers at any given spot, at any given time.

The effect of Gordon's site-specific installation is one of detemporization or a reconfiguration of temporal measurement. Within Empty Gallery's black halls—particularly inside Gordon's labyrinth of inflatable walls—our appraisal of time was no longer the consequence of Mesopotamian construction, but shaped by the cycles that allowed light to flood the paths within the barriers and permitted song to permeate the same space.



**JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON**, *Not Exactly B Flat*, 2017, PVC tarpaulin walls, centrifugal blowers, Arduino microcontroller, MIDI and trigger relay, dimensions variable. Courtesy Empty Gallery, Hong Kong.

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon's "Catchy" is on view at [Empty Gallery](#), Hong Kong, until August 19, 2017.