Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork

Press

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Generative feedback and countering control: in conversation with artist Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork

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Gama, Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork at Empty Gallery Hong Kong, September 27 – November 15, 2025. Photo: Felix S.C. Wong.

Raised in Long Beach, California, amidst the industrial thrum of coastal freeways and late-night power plant emissions, the artist Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork discovered early that sound isn't just a part of the atmosphere—it is a physical material and a mechanism of covert authority. After obtaining a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and an MFA in studio art from Stanford University—where they conducted research at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA)—Gork has spent two decades establishing a muscular, uncompromising practice in spatial art. Fusing sound, sculpture, and site-specific installation, their work has commanded deep critical respect and international renown, earning prestigious honors like the Joan Mitchell Fellowship and the Gold Art Prize, alongside exhibitions at SFMOMA, MOCA Los Angeles, the Taipei Biennial, and the Gwangju Biennale.

Gork's work grounds itself in institutional critique, avant-garde composition, and iconoclastic subcultures. While inheriting the spatial ethos of experimental composer Maryanne Amacher—who treated sound as indistinguishable from the room around it—Gork's work also carries the raw charge found throughout the West Coast experimental noise and underground club scenes that the artist came up in. Simultaneously, Gork's practice finds a compelling link to the early systems art of Hans Haacke. Much like Haacke's kinetic, environment-responsive pieces, Gork treats the gallery as a dynamic physical feedback loop rather than a static container—an open circuit where the viewer's movement and agency act as a vital, unpredictable input. A DIY instinct anchors Gork's multi-directional practice, which is also founded upon investigation into the violent histories of institutional and state power, and scientific research into

how sound and pressure work on the nervous system. From these inquiries, Gork has constructed tightly calibrated environments that have incorporated everything from sound-absorptive overcoats felted from human hair to soft inflatables, spatialized speaker networks, and brutalist ‘Zen’ fountains welded from repurposed military aircraft hardware.

Gork refuses the solemn, passive rituals of the gallery white cube, creating instead decentralized feedback systems where visitors are free from the constraints of fixed seating, optimal listening points, or a prescribed duration. By shifting power back to the listener—who navigates contrasting acoustic zones at their own pace—Gork neutralizes authoritative control, cuts through spectator fatigue, and rehabilitates listening as an active, performative act.

I spoke with Gork a week after their return from South Korea, where they presented the labyrinthine installation *Not Exactly BPM (Variation Rrose)* at the 16th Gwangju Biennale. We met at their live/work studio in Arlington Heights—a neighborhood in South Los Angeles stitched together by broad avenues, older wood-frame homes, and low-lying commercial blocks. Their living room was filled with research texts and books on Okinawa and Japanese history, including volumes inherited from Gork’s late grandmother. These pages help trace their ancestral map stretching from Eastern Europe to Japan—a lineage that directly informs recent installations like *Gama* (debuted in 2025), which explores the spectral weight left behind by the Battle of Okinawa and World War II Japanese-American incarceration camps. Ahead of our meeting, Gork reached out by text to ask whether I preferred homemade cold green tea or coffee. When I told them to decide, I arrived to find both prepared, leaving the decision entirely mine—a subtle gesture that mirrored the generous agency and choice built into their sonic environments.

* * *

You grew up in Southern California and are now based in Los Angeles. Do you think living here has given you a distinct way of listening, and has the city’s acoustic environment entered your practice in ways you recognize?

I’ve always been a listener. Around age seven or eight, after encountering some trauma, I became much more introverted and hyper-aware of my surroundings. I think I started using listening as a coping mechanism—a way to disengage, using environmental noise to create distance or direct my attention away from the more troubling things.

I grew up in Long Beach, right where the 605, 405, Route 22, and 7th Street meet. If you’re from here, you know that freeway intersection—it’s quite massive—and that was the ambient white noise I could get lost in. There was also a power plant right there that let off loud steam late at night. My parents told my brother it was “just Star Wars” so he wouldn’t be scared, but I remember driving past it and thinking, “that is not Star Wars.” That was an early realization about perception—that how we perceive a sound or an object can be altered by the information we’re given. It made me ask why that information was framed a certain way, and how my perception was being manipulated.

At the same time, I grew up going to the beach and spending time with family who live in Hawai’i, so the sound of the ocean will forever feel like home. Lying in bed [in Long Beach], I’d listen to the traffic and imagine it was the ocean,

combining or projecting the emotional memory of a sound onto the freeway noise made that environment feel soothing and comforting. Those early acoustic experiences do feel foundational.

Los Angeles is often understood visually, through its light, architecture, freeways, and landscape. What do you think you can learn about LA by listening to it rather than looking at it?

I think the freeways and helicopters are iconic, both visually and sonically. In a different home from my childhood, I recall watching helicopters in the distance from an upstairs window. I'd watch them go by and imagine—since you couldn't really see stars [due to light pollution]—what if those helicopters were shooting stars to wish on? It comes back to changing your perception, trying to reframe your world just by making shifts to how you take it in.

Now, living directly in a helicopter path, it's different. When they hover, it can be annoying of course, but it's something you just have to accept. It's the same with the people doing donuts in the street outside. Sure, the sound is obnoxious, loud, and it stinks, but that's Los Angeles. You can't have this city without the raw, noisy parts. If those things really bother you, you shouldn't live here. I feel strongly about that. LA isn't for everybody.

Before developing your practice in sound, sculpture, and installation, you trained in dance. You have since described yourself primarily as a "listener" rather than a performer. Do you see these roles in opposition to one another?

I actually see listening as a form of performance. As a receiver of information, you're performing that act of listening, but when it comes to capital-P "performance," I much prefer to be behind the scenes or collaborating with performers.

The only performing I really did, sound-wise, was noise music. That worked for me because it felt like I was in the room listening and experimenting right along with everyone else; there wasn't a rigid structure. In my twenties in Oakland, playing synth and noise in an art kraut-punk band called 0th was really about community and being with friends rather than any ambition or career with it.

Did being watched as a performer have any impact on the way you position yourself within, or outside of, your installations?

It's a good question. I think so—the watching and the being watched. You learn dance through observation: watching videos, watching other dancers, watching yourself in the mirror, and then attempting to forget the mirror. It's a feedback loop of observing, adjusting, and watching again. In ballet, understanding what's correct comes down to a physical feedback system—making tiny, minute adjustments to your shoulder, hip, or foot where every small tweak produces a completely different outcome.

When I started working with feedback—whether conceptually or physically by feeding sound back into itself—it just made sense. I was already so accustomed to that process of fine-tuning and seeing how a small adjustment changes the whole system. That absolutely makes sense to me. It brings about a sense of agency.

You have said that "sound is both the beginning and end point" of your work, and that many works begin with an everyday sonic experience that you then research and transform. What tells you that a particular experience contains enough of a question to pursue?

I have no idea. It's completely intuitive—something just clicks. A question I can't get out of my head. Often it happens through a listening practice, whether intentional or not.

While I was in graduate school at Stanford University, where I studied communication technologies and computer music—a place that is so highly organized, clean, and controlled that it almost feels like Disneyland—I was walking around campus and heard one light buzzing obnoxiously. The fact that this single, uncontrolled buzz existed in such a manicured environment triggered an entire slew of ideas for an early noise piece.

It can come from anywhere, simple or complex. My very first inflatable sculpture actually started from an everyday experience while pumping gas. It's rarely a calculated decision; an everyday disruption just catches my attention and takes root.

Pumping gas? Do you mind getting into that?

It was really early on when gas stations started installing speakers that would play ads, news, and music at the pump. I was running late, needed gas, and I remember a song by the pop singer Adele came on—one I really disliked and couldn't escape because it was everywhere at the time, so there I was, trapped at the pump and forced to listen to it.

I think that frustration triggered a deeper inquiry into pop music: What are the specific mechanisms in a pop song that trigger such a strong reaction in the nervous system? In graduate school, I had studied cognitive music theory and psychoacoustics—how tonal systems affect the body through tension and release. Experiencing that forced listening at the gas pump brought the theory onto a real-world surface. It combined the science of how sound manipulates our physiology with the frustration of daily life, and that experience really made me want to blow the concept up.



Installation view of *Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: Poems of Electronic Air* at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2024. *Variations in Mass Nos. 5, 6, 7,* 2024, vinyl, blowers, electronics, and speakers. Collaborators: Viola and violin, Daniel Jacobs; Cello, Zack Reaves; 3D design, Rhett LaRue. Courtesy of Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. Photo: Julia Featheringill.



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I recall in an interview with independent curator and author Micah Silver, you described this manipulation—noting that at an early age, you could identify feeling manipulated by pop music as well as cinema. I am curious how you distinguish between emotional communication and emotional manipulation?

I think it comes down to a top-down situation versus something that leaves room; space for you to insert yourself. I avoided Hollywood movies when I was a kid. I was a bit of a control freak about my emotions; having a film force me to feel a specific way didn't feel good to me. On top of that, growing up in the 90s, I didn't see anyone who looked like me. There weren't a lot of queer or mixed Asian narratives in my world. I didn't know about experimental stuff yet.

It wasn't until I went to school in the Bay Area, where my roommate worked at a video store and brought home experimental films—the French Nouvelle Vague, Bresson, Tarkovsky, etc. Those films left a lot of room for interpretation; films where I could insert myself and my own thoughts. In hindsight, I think it actually has a lot more to do with the soundtracks than acting or narrative. I still struggle with feeling overly sensitive to how music is used in narrative media. Like, I really want to watch scary movies, but the sound design is just too much for me.

That said, my relationship to manipulative media has definitely shifted over time. I mean, I started listening to country music after a recent loss.

Part of the grief process…

Yeah, totally. I just listen to country radio now in the car. [laughs]

After so many years of rigidity about what I listened to in my twenties, there's something so funny and ironic about listening to this heavily manipulative, heartstring-tugging music while sitting in traffic on the 10 freeway—yet somehow, it fits? It just sounds good right now.

That's funny, I've had a similar shift these days. I recently heard that song by Nora Jones [`"Don't Know Why"], and thought, *this… speaks to me now?* I really missed an entire era of pop music, and for what? Music

snobbery.

Yeah, me too, but I think it wasn't so much snobbery as a rigid boundary—guarding what I let in as a way to control my environment.

Right. Like, I found this thing, therefore it's allowed in. Not just taking what was being fed to the masses.

Exactly.

Getting back to that early interview with Silver. At that time, you were developing *Not Exactly B-Flat*. This was 2017, and the subject of Donald Trump surfaced, and you were analyzing the non-semantic, acoustic power of political speech—looking at how cadence, repetition, and his non-sequiturs could manipulate emotion with a total absence of logic.

Looking back from 2026, that focus on speech as physical affect feels almost prophetic. How has your understanding of political speech and acoustic manipulation evolved over the last decade, and do you see your current work operating in that same political space?

I explored those ideas deeply in a performance installation for the Hammer [Museum exhibition *Made in L.A.* 2020], which was unfortunately delayed and restricted due to the pandemic and had very limited performances. The piece was made just before the current AI models were launched. I knew I wanted to use a text generator for the work. Algorithmic and machine learning music and use of neural networks have been developed alongside sound technology since the 1950s, so it felt like a natural extension of my practice.

Working with a programmer friend using earlier GPT-2 models, we fed the system a mix of political speeches—Obama, Bush, Trump, TED Talks, and public addresses—and then trained it specifically on Trump's cadence. At the time, this was early days and the output was maybe 20% usable, so I worked with a speechwriter to edit and format the text, feeding it back into the system to jumble and spit out again. It became a feedback loop of professional human editing and machine generation. Once the show finally opened though, I had tampered down a lot of the Trumpisms—it was getting too triggering and I did not want the piece to be about him, per se, but more about the use of this kind of manipulative language.

Before that, I had mostly worked with abstract noise, but during that period, I was really obsessed with language and structured systems of communication. Then ChatGPT-3 hit, making text generation ubiquitous overnight. While I initially loved using it to assist with programming, the rapid explosion of AI really shifted the conversation.

Would you like to revisit that work now?

I definitely would, and I'd love the opportunity to really rethink the premise. We've moved so far beyond cognitive dissonance and acoustic cadence simply being mechanisms of emotional manipulation—those anti-semantic tools have now been fully codified into policy, daily life, and warfare. The stakes are completely different today.



Installation view of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's *Not Exactly BPM (Variation Rrose)*, 2026. Commissioned by the 16th Gwangju Biennale, Supported by National Center for Art Research, Japan (NCAR), Tanoto Art Foundation (TAF), and Empty Gallery, Speaker equipment provided by Meyer Sound, Berkeley, CA. Courtesy Gwangju Biennale Foundation.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Not Exactly B-Flat, 2017*. Installation view, 356 Mission, Los Angeles. PVC Tarpaulin inflatable walls, Arduino and mini triggers. Sound: "A Song" excerpt. Writing and vocals: MNDR, Carolyn Pennypacker Riggs and Jon Mandabach. Producer: Mess Kid. Spacialization, arrangement and co-producer: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, 9 channel. Dimensions variable.

Works such as *Not Exactly B-Flat* and its later iterations have been reconfigured for spaces with very different scales and acoustics. At what point does adapting an installation to a new space produce a new work rather than another iteration of the same one? What, if anything, must remain consistent for a work to retain its identity?

I think about it in terms of music composition: you have a score that is written, and then you have all these different ways of performing it. That's why I treat them as variations. Every time a work is reconfigured for a new acoustic

environment or spatial scale or timeline, it becomes a variation of the original piece rather than an entirely distinct work.

You have recognized in past interviews that our experience of sound is shaped by the physical structure of our ears, our cultural histories, and our individual sensory and physical capacities. When composing for an installation, how do you account for these differences, and to what extent does your own mode of hearing and sensory perception serve as the starting point? In your mind, do you consider a default?

I mean, obviously, my own body and sensory perception are definitely the starting point—everything is filtered through my experiences and what I'm paying attention to, or intentionally not paying attention to.

While I like to think I create non-hierarchical spaces, these are still highly-controlled environments where I make a lot of structural decisions. However, I deliberately avoid designated sweet spots, seated theater layouts, or fixed durations. Traditional venues make me very uncomfortable. I was fortunate to come up in the punk-noise and experimental scenes in the Bay Area—places like The Compound, Recombinant Media Labs, and warehouse parties—where listening environments were still immersive, but offered choice. Even the simple freedom to choose whether to sit, stand, or face a different direction enables you to find your own place in the experience and become a better listener.

In my installations, I want the audience to have agency. If a visitor doesn't like a particular sound or visual element, they can move to another zone or leave entirely. That desire to grant autonomy is why I doubled down on using specialized acoustic materials in my sculptures. By tailoring the acoustic absorption and reflection within a room, one sound exists here while a different sound exists a few feet away. Moving your body between those sonic zones forces a subtle choice: Left or Right? Why do I prefer this sound over that one? Giving the audience an active, physical relationship to the artwork opens up space for those internal questions to emerge.

Relating to your past involvement in punk-noise and experimental scenes, humor is a real element in a lot of your work. I am curious if you see "humor" as a tool, something used deliberately, or merely a consequential element?

I think humor is a survival mechanism! [laughs]

But maybe part of that punk inheritance?

Yeah, sure. I can't take everything so seriously. The world is too fucked up for that.

In the past, my humor came through in titles, visual irony or poking fun of modernity. For example, [for *Poems of Electronic Air*, 2024], I placed large clumsy inflatable walls underneath Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center. The walls slouch and fall in total disrespect to the cold cement architecture surrounding it. They also have the iconic Harvard redbrick pattern on them, something that Corbusier strictly prohibited from his design of the building. I could go into more detail about my critique of Corbusier, but I think the humor does a better job of communicating it.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Sound Blanket No. 13*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles, New York. Photo: Paul Salveson.



Made in L.A. 2020: a version. Installation view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Photo: Joshua White / JWPictures.com

But there's darkness in the work, too. For example, something I have never shared publicly, is why I use my own hair in my *Sound Blankets* pieces. Hair is naturally hyper-absorptive, and I happen to have a lot of it. Because I have a hair loss condition, I have shaved my head for most of my life and previously wore wigs and extensions. I always collected the hair because it felt like a literal extension of myself, though I never quite knew what to do with it, but back in 2019, while developing new work for [a solo booth at] Frieze, I was experimenting with making felt and it finally clicked. What do you do with hair? You sell it.

It just made sense to add it into the textiles that I was showing at my first commercial art fair, but by taking a material that was so deeply personal and historically loaded and compressing it into an object, I was able to dissipate

it into a new system of circulation—and, ideally, turn a profit from it—playing with value and capitalism in a dark way. Hiding the critique from plain sight, therefore making it more approachable?

Hiding the critique from plain sight, therefore making it more approachable?

Yes… but I do worry sometimes. I worry about how humor functions in certain works. Last year, I started making fountains out of decommissioned military aircraft parts—specifically planes used for Cold War surveillance in the Pacific. Structurally, I was drawn to a pylon that was a bomb rack, which holds ammunition under the wing. When you stand it on end and add small spouts, it kind of looks like a peeing [Isamu] Noguchi sculpture. To me, that's fucking hilarious, but at the same time, this material could have very easily killed people, you know?

It's a piece I want to continue to explore. I still have remnants of airplane parts to make some new work with, so the next generation of these sculptures might be handled a little different.

It's interesting because, to me, these fountains are like bastardized, minimalist corporatized "Zen" fountains. I titled them *HNZF*—which stands for Harsh Noise Zen Fountain—conceived as an acronym of search terms for a commercial product. I wanted the full title to remain unknown, just to use the acronym, though a museum eventually spelled it out on the wall label anyway… but the title is funny, I think.

And so I still have a lot of questions about those sculptures and how the humor lands. Once an artwork enters, say, the museum world or a collector's hands, you lose control over how it's framed. Navigating that tension—between subversive humor, heavy military provenance, and public interpretation—is something I'm still actively processing.

I want to ask about the experimental composer Maryanne Amacher.

Huge influence.

Was she? A direct influence? I thought I read somewhere that you came up on her work sometime after your practice started, only recognizing similarities then…

No, no, no. I learned about her in undergraduate school. I was fortunate to study with [sound artist and instrument builder] Laetitia Sonami, who is a mentor and collaborator of mine now, but was then teaching sound art at the San Francisco Art Institute. I think I was 20 when I first took her class. We learned MaxMSP, how to build electronics and controllers but also about feedback systems, Alvin Lucier, Eliane Radigue and Maryanne Amacher. Then there was also Charles Boon, a composer, who taught a history of sound art; he was more about Cage and Stockhausen.

At the time, there wasn't that much stuff out there about [Amacher]. I remember one article in an anthology of experimental composers writing about their work—[avant-garde composer] John Zorn's Arcana anthology series—plus the Ars Electronica lecture and some bootlegs. That was it, but I was hooked. So no, she is actually a direct influence on me.

[Amacher] believed that music could not be separated from the architecture that surrounded it. I am curious if when you design an installation if there are any particular spatial or acoustic principles you do rely on, or do all aspects shift depending on circumstances you cannot fully anticipate or control?

I can't anticipate much—90% of it gets done in the space. That's why my installations take so long. If you see my studio, it's actually not that big. Because of that, everything is either made on-site or brought together on-site. And then I compose everything right there. I arrive at the space with the materials, but everything is done intuitively during the installation process.

Obviously, this must be a very time-intensive installation process with a lot of meticulous, incremental adjustments. I'm curious if you've thought about how repetition, fatigue, and mood affect your listening. Do you recognize when sustained attention has sharpened your hearing versus when it is beginning to distort it?

This goes back to Amacher a little bit. She used to live in her installations. Micah Silver actually worked with her on one of her last installations at EMPAC [the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center], but in general, I've heard stories that she would basically just live in them. That just made sense to me. If I can, that's how I prefer to work. Once the sculptures are in, once the acoustic sculptures or textiles are in, and once the speakers are connected and I'm ready to go, in my happy place, I would just live there for days straight if I could. I'm able to do that at Empty Gallery in Hong Kong because they built an apartment inside the gallery building. Obviously, museums don't let me do that, so it can be more frustrating to work within certain hours.

My first solo sound installation was in an apartment gallery in San Francisco [A Little Display], and that just made sense to me. It was a 20-channel sound piece with cassette tape loops, all inside a giant blanket that I crocheted speakers into. It felt really natural to be able to spend that much time on the nuance and finessing, take a nap, work on it some more.

But, yes, I do need to take ear breaks. I do need to understand that limitation, but it's hard. Oftentimes, a piece is finished only because I get kicked out for the show to open. Literally, I had to leave the next day with Gwangju because I knew if I stuck around, I was just going to mess with it. I could just go in there with an iPad or a remote viewer on my laptop and make adjustments without stopping.

For the ICA LA [(Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles)] show in 2023, unfortunately, I got COVID, so I actually couldn't finish the physical install. I had to do it all from the parking lot [laughs]… I had my laptop and I'd be on the phone with somebody inside: 'Do you hear this? Is this coming out of the speaker? Okay, how loud is it? Okay, how does it sound compared to that speaker? Is that speaker louder? Is this speaker louder?' Finally, I was able to go in at the last minute with a mask on and actually tweak it, but I really had to set most of it from the car. That was painful.

Your latest project for the Gwangju Biennale, *Not Exactly BPM (Variation Rrose)***, works again with inflatables. What drew you to the club space as a blueprint for collective listening, and how does that inflatable**

architecture work for the premise?

The piece for ICA LA [in 2023] also thought about club spaces and how we navigate through those environments. For that one, it was also a clear maze, but a static design and used microphones and live audio processing for the sound. For this latest inflatable piece, I collaborated with [the techno DJ/ producer] Rrose and the blower noise from the inflatables to comprise the main sound.

The blowers regulate how much air fills the inflatables, which dictates exactly how sound is obstructed. The acoustic environment shifts through a dual mechanism: the loud mechanical hum of the blowers interacts with the audio, masking it at times, while the physically inflated walls deflect and bounce the sound waves coming from the speakers. When the structures fill with air, the acoustic landscape shifts.

As I said, the audio source material is the sound of the blowers themselves. I recorded their cycles using contact, shotgun, and cardioid microphones, and sent those recordings to Rrose to build the composition. There are 21 walls in total, each one automated and controlled independently, allowing for a lot of detail over how the pressure fluctuates and how loud the system gets.

The clear walls, I assume, were deliberate. How come?

This piece has a lot to do with feeling safe in various club scenes. In Los Angeles, I don't go to typical clubs; we have warehouses and in those warehouse spaces, the sound is never that great. That's my biggest complaint. And it's a lot of work—hiring security, the sound system, bar, porta toilets, etc, but the upsides are being able to book the people you want to see and support and there's a strong community feeling.

Then there's New York, Berlin, these other places where they have established clubs with these awesome sound systems, a real bar and actual bathrooms—I'm old, I appreciate these things—yet at the same time, I'm navigating a very different social dynamic. There are some clubs with community guidelines or rules; security making sure people are paying attention and respecting the space. But it's not the standard, which leads to this desire: wanting to dance, wanting to feel safe, wanting to be with people, but also wanting to feel protected. You want to feel like you can just exist without some rando coming up to try to talk to you, or frat boys chanting loudly.

In a way, the clear bubbles of the installation create distinct zones so that you can be with the sound, be with that single speaker, and exist in an intimate space. To feel protected and intimate, but not separated from the crowd. You're still actively engaging with everyone else and their experiences. I can be in my own zone and watch somebody over there dancing to their own rhythm. Mind you, everything is anchored to a very specific BPM, so they aren't on a totally different rhythm than me. We're just in slightly different spaces with that same BPM.

But protected…

Yes, and it's worth noting that the rhythm of the blowers themselves is programmed with MIDI data directly in the software. They aren't just utilities; they are treated as an instrument within the composition. There are very few

instances where they just run constantly, but when they do, a distinct drone arises from the resonant frequency of the blower combining with the inflatable structure. Rrose seizes on those moments, manipulating that raw tone through the speakers and weaving it into the rhythm of the audio. But for the most part, the blowers are really pulsing—either firing in unison at varying tempos, or are highly scattered and polyrhythmic.

It's funny—I had this very validating moment last weekend when I saw one of my favorite DJs play. It was actually at a gay circuit party, but it was Ashland Mines, [the electronic musician] who plays under the name Bobby Beethoven. We were having our own separate party behind the speakers, and every once in a while, I'd look out at the crowd... and Ashland loves to do this thing where he fucks with the audience. He really pushes what is danceable. There are moments when he plays some hardcore noise—there's still a rhythm, but he really messes with it. And so I was watching the crowd in front of him, and at these parties, the crowd is used to a very typical kind of beat. They have this expectation of the 'dun, dun, dun.' When he would change it, you'd see all these topless sweaty bodies bopping at completely different rates, just trying to find their own rhythm in the noise.

With the Gwangju piece, there is a moment where all the inflatables are doing exactly that on their own. They are still within a rhythm, but they don't quite know where they're going. So, watching that crowd, I just thought… 'Oh my god, this is amazing.' It was a complete moment of validation for the piece.

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A Low Hum: The 16th Gwangju Biennale

The biennale treats transformation as something layered across scales and rhythms, at times seismic, at times imperceptibly slow.

Louis Lu



Installation view of JAMES T. HONG's *Apologies*, 2012– , at "You must change your life," the 16th Gwangju Biennale, 2026. Photo by Jeon Byung Cheol. Courtesy the Gwangju Biennale Foundation.

Each evening, the façade of the Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Hall lights up with James T. Hong's *Apologies* (2012–), an ever-expanding anthology of government officials and heads of state offering contrition. It is, in Hong's words, "a timeline of political progress as unrepentant recidivism and contrite repetition." The reel begins in 1937 with Japanese ambassador Hiroshi Saito regretting the sinking of the USS Panay, followed by German chancellor Willy Brandt falling to his knees before the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument, and closes in 2023 with the Dutch king apologizing for his nation's role in slavery. In between, we see a procession of presidents, prime ministers, and a pope begging pardon for inherited legacies of discrimination, dispossession, and crimes. Delivered years, decades, sometimes centuries after the fact, these gestures accumulate into a tedious spectacle. What Hong's work exposes, ultimately, is a paradox at the heart of any political change: the token of penitence stages transformation precisely in order to defer it. This monumental record of inertia is one of the few works in this year's Gwangju Biennale that interrogates its title directive, "You Must Change Your Life," showing how fast the imperative to transform can settle into ritual.

The directive itself is lifted from the closing line in Rainer Maria Rilke's 1908 sonnet "Archaic Torso of Apollo." Artistic director Ho Tzu Nyen has spoken of encountering the poem on an exhausted day and feeling an "expanded capacity." The line carries urgency: it insists you change without explaining how or toward what. That openness allows Ho and his co-curators (Gahee Park, Brian Kuan Wood, and Che Kyongfa) to treat transformation as something layered across scales and rhythms, at times seismic, at times imperceptibly slow.

That split tempo is made tangible in the opening section, “Molecules and Me,” where Goldin+Senneby’s *Resin Pond* (2026) pools nearly two tons of pine resin across the floor into a luminous amber slick. Within the living tree, resin is at once a toxin that repels pests and fungi, and a sealant that closes wounds. It is also energy-dense, terpene-rich, harvestable for refinement into biodiesel and aviation fuel. Jakob Senneby, one half of the duo, lives with multiple sclerosis, a condition in which the body’s defenses chronically turn against its own nervous system. This experience with autoimmunity has reoriented the duo’s longstanding scrutiny of capital’s absurdities. *Resin Pond* proposes that the generative and the destructive are no longer separable—not in climate crisis, not in geopolitics, not in technology, and certainly not in the poison-cure logic of a market that carries within it both its own overcoming and its catastrophe: a perspective that regards change less as directional than conditional.

In the curatorial statement, Ho frames practices as techniques “repeated at regular intervals either to control or to conduct change,” and the tension between repetition and rupture runs through the exhibition. Scattered across the floors are clusters of volcanic rocks from Jeju, their contorted forms holding, within a single mass, radically unequal durations: the slow accrual of sediment, the violence of eruption, the long aftermath of cooling and weathering. Equally threaded through the space, and functioning as the exhibition’s connective tissue, are Sasaki Ken’s more than 60 small paintings of unremarkable things—a pair of Converse sneakers, workers’ boots, a light switch, a tennis ball. One of the canvases depicts an ominously overcast sky: Sasaki’s record of the Tokyo sky in the days after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, when fears of radioactive drift from Fukushima hung in the air. Dispersed as they are, the rocks and the mundane paintings can feel opaque, even excessive. Yet their sheer persistence makes the argument that change moves at no single speed and takes no single form, and that it is often already underway, lodged in the textures of the everyday. Whether this constitutes a veiled hope for transformative force, or an oblique salute to Gwangju’s own insurgent heritage, the exhibition leaves deliberately open.

“Molecules and Me” rewards sustained looking, and it repeatedly nudges the viewer toward the unfinished. Maya Watanabe’s *Liminal* (2019), a single-channel projection on a tilted, engulfing screen, offers extreme close-ups of human remains exhumed from mass graves of Peru’s internal armed conflict, which took place between 1980 and 2000. Decades later, roughly tens of thousands of the victims are still missing or nameless, and many crimes remain unacknowledged. Watanabe’s camera shifts constantly between focus and blur, refusing to let atrocity resolve into a fixed historical image. Even death, the work implies, withholds closure: mourning persists, identity stays suspended, and the past exerts its pressure from within a near-molecular anonymity.

Historical wounds and their seepage into daily life come to a point in the second section, “Bodies and Bonds,” where Mona Benyamin’s two videos furnish the exhibition’s most bracing case for art as a means of processing trauma. Her parents, who lived through the mass displacements of Palestinians during the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the Nakba (1948) and the Naksa (1967), are featured as performers cast into the formats of a sitcom and a newscast. In *Trouble in Paradise* (2018), they run through comic bits about the eradication of Palestinians, broaching the subject through gallows humor delivered with a Brechtian affect over a canned laugh track (“How do you make a Palestinian

cry? You kill his family”). In *Tomorrow, Again* (2023), they reappear as anchors and bystanders: a newsreader who cannot stop weeping, an eyewitness to one disaster after another. Benyamin creates a condition of perpetual emergency and then asks, with a sardonic edge, how one is meant to change a life whose ground state is recurring ruin.

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Installation view of JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORK’s *Not Exactly BPM (Variation Rrose)*, 2026. Commissioned by the 16th Gwangju Biennale, Supported by National Center for Art Research, Japan (NCAR), Tanoto Art Foundation (TAF), and Empty Gallery, Speaker equipment provided by Meyer Sound, Berkeley, CA.

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork’s *Not Exactly BPM (Variation Rrose)* (2026), presented in the final section, returns the focus to the body. It is a deconstructed nightclub built from centrifugal blowers, feedback, and transparent, sound-absorbing inflatables that swell into a sensory enclosure and then slowly exhale. A hypnotic score of kick drums and phase-shifting loops, built with the psychoacoustic artist Rrose, moves the room and its occupants alike. But instead of the euphoria of the dancefloor, the installation’s eerie self-awareness yields a low hum of anxiety and suspended anticipation, an artificial burnt-orange light filtering through vinyl walls.

Gork confronts the conceptually dense, politically freighted, and emotionally taxing works in the exhibition with a visceral reset, displacing intellectual reflection into corporeal attention: breath, pulse, the instability and the pleasure of an enclosed and rhythmic collective. If the biennale has spent its length imagining a “life elsewhere,” this last environment stages the pause before departure. It leaves the beholder with the question—how, having seen and felt all this, does one return to the world changed?

Louis Lu is an associate editor at ArtAsiaPacific.

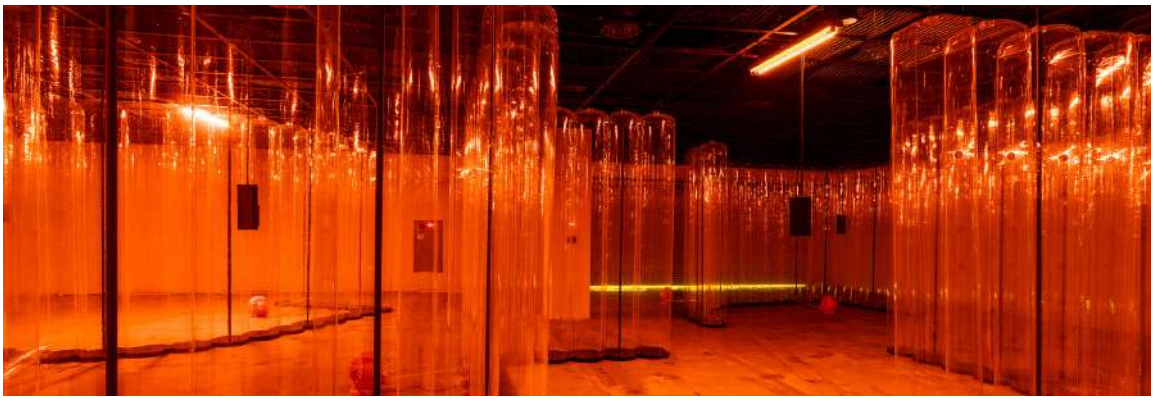
FRIEZE

8 September 2026

Can the Gwangju Biennale Transform Your Life?

The best works in ‘You Must Change Your Life’ move beyond the didacticism of its titular directive toward the sensorial, the human and the keenly observed

Sean Burns



Installation view of JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORK’s *Not Exactly BPM (Variation Rrose)*, 2026. Commissioned by the 16th Gwangju Biennale, Supported by National Center for Art Research, Japan (NCAR), Tanoto Art Foundation (TAF), and Empty Gallery, Speaker equipment provided by Meyer Sound, Berkeley, CA. Courtesy Gwangju Biennale Foundation.

Nestled behind a pillar in the vast first gallery of the Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Hall is a kinetic Lego model reminiscent of one of the scrappier droids in *Star Wars* (1977). Set on top of a chassis with four plastic wheels – two smaller and two bigger – is a mechanical carriage housing an old iPhone plugged into a loose black cable. Its rocking motion stimulates the on-screen pedometer, tricking the device into registering that its user is more active than they really are.

The humorous contraption, *Lego Pedometer Cheating Machine* (2019), by the Stockholm-based artist duo Goldin+Senneby speaks neatly to the contemporary impetus towards never-ending optimization, propelled by advancements in technology and popular online discourse around ‘maxxing’ your charisma, career and corporal self. It’s one of the few works in the Biennale that gently pushes against its title directive, ‘You Must Change Your Life’. The sentiment suggests that you have both the means and the will to do so, in a way that you might expect is ironic, but isn’t.

The title derives from the final line of the 1908 poem ‘Archaic Torso of Apollo’ by the Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and here artistic director Ho Tzu Nyen and co-curators Park Gahee, Che Kyongfa and Brian Kuan Wood position it as an entry point into broader domains of transformation – natural, personal, cosmic, spiritual, etc. – that map onto five distinct thematic galleries: *Molecules and Me, Bodies and Bonds, Landscapes and Learning, Cosmos and Change, Air and Articulations.*

It emerges as a show that wants to teach you something, though, at times, I’m not sure exactly what. There are plenty of exceptional works and, for the most part, a sense of coherence, in spite of the adages used to frame each of the

five zones. The most representative example appears at the entrance to the *Landscapes and Learning* room: ‘We may cultivate land, but learning from land also cultivates us.’ This distant, teacherly tone proliferates across international biennials, which need curatorial direction specific enough to feel novel, but woolly enough to encompass seemingly every human emotion and experience ever.

Yet there are rich, intimate and bodily moments throughout ‘You Must Change Your Life’ and at times, the emphasis on transformation calls for an attentiveness to the smaller – even molecular – aspects of the world. Amanda Heng’s series of photographs, *‘Another Woman’* (1996/2014/2023), is affecting in its simplicity: Heng re-enacts tender, choreographed scenes with her mother at three points in their lives, with the last iteration photographed shortly before her mother’s death. Nearby, Matthew Barney’s surgical student video *SCABACTION* (1988) sees hands foraging in a cheek to extract an ingrowing hair that seems to evade the probing tweezers.

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The final gallery, *Air and Articulations*, is billed as an opportunity to create some space after an undoubtedly dense and thorough presentation. I first encountered Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork’s work in the 2023 Taipei Biennale, co-curated by Wood, and here, her large-scale installation *Not Exactly BPM (Variation Rrose)* (2026) features club music, amber and white neon strip lights and vinyl inflatables that rise and fall, offering a welcome looser note within and a freeing up of the otherwise museological-leaning framework. I leave this edition of Gwangju Biennale with the feeling that the show had taken risks – to be eclectic and reiterative – some of which had paid off, while others less so. But the best works in ‘You Must Change Your Life’ are those that lurch away from the didacticism of that directive and towards the sensorial. It shines in the tender (Heng), deeply human (Hura) and keenly observed (Watanabe).

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Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: Sounding the Wound

In Empty Gallery's pitch-black interior, the artist reimagined an Okinawan cave, amplifying the reverberations of empire and survival.

Yuqian Fan, 18 February 2026



An installation shot of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's *Gama* at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong. Photograph: Felix S.C. Wong for Empty Gallery.

At Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's "Gama," Empty Gallery's pitch-black, two-floor void functioned less as backdrop than as active medium. For her third solo exhibition with the black-box space, Gork continued to nurture darkness as a collaborator, allowing the works to unfold as a single, cavernous installation.

Cold air and darkness seized the senses upon entry. A short corridor and unguarded reception area led to Gork's conceptual, deconstructed "cave," where the titular sculptures, *Gama 1*, *2*, and *3* (all 2025), emerged as sequences of chunky terracotta tiles suspended on steel frames. Named after the Okinawan word gama, meaning "cave," the series uses the island's red clay to trace the interior impressions of Shimuku Gama, where Gork first conceived these works. Conceived as "permeable membranes," the blocks of terracotta hover ominously in liminal darkness, solid and weighty yet cracked and vulnerable.

This contradictory tension perhaps reflects a dissonance within Gork's family heritage, which she felt compelled to confront after Hamas's attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023. Half Japanese, with Okinawan ancestry on her mother's side, and half Jewish on her father's, Gork—personally pro-Palestine—grew up surrounded by ideas concerning technology and the military, as both her father and grandfather worked in aerospace. While her earlier works and shows undertook forensic dissections of sonic and technological systems, "Gama" pivots toward the trauma of the 1945 Battle of Okinawa and the enduring legacy of American and Japanese imperialism.

Amid fractured terracotta and cold steel, jarring digital sounds swelled and receded, emanating from two large sound sculptures, *HNZF I* and *III* (both 2025). Crafted from the pylon and wing, respectively, of an LTV A-7 Corsair II—a 1970s US fighter jet salvaged from an aerospace boneyard in Arizona—the works evoke Zen fountains in form while subverting their usual calming associations. Cold water splashed onto visitors' skin as a looping, disembodied soundtrack shattered the quiet: microphones concealed within the sculptures captured the sound of falling water, and the audio was reprogrammed to render it abrasive.



Installation view of JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORK's *Gama 3*, 2025, terracotta tiles, steel frame, 214 x 233 x 67 cm, at "Gama," Empty Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo by Felix S.C. Wong. Courtesy the artist and Empty Gallery.

During her visit to Shimuku Gama, where a stream flows through the cave, Gork was struck by the menacing echo of running water—a sound at once serene and disquieting. The experience brought to mind the cave's dark history, when local civilians sought refuge inside as US forces attempted to flush them out and Japanese soldiers threatened those who considered surrender. Just as military forces once invaded the cave, the fighter jet fountains now haunt Gork's reimagined cavern. The works point to the Western commodification or mistranslation of Eastern spiritual practices—particularly Zen—into marketable atmospheres of calm, critiquing a manufactured tranquility built atop histories of violence.

As visitors descended a narrow stairway, a sense of confrontation intensified. Opposite *Gama 4* (2025)—a short sequence of terracotta tiles mounted on the wall—was the looming *HNZF II* (2025), fashioned from the canopy of a Douglas A-4 Skyhawk. Dramatically lit, the hulking installation lurked in the cramped chamber like a dormant monster, its glinting industrial edges ensnaring viewers in a threatening aura.

Compared with Gork's two earlier exhibitions at Empty—"CATCHY" in 2017 and "Olistostrome" in 2021—"Gama" signaled a sharpening and expansion of her longstanding concerns. While "listening" had always been central to her practice, in "Gama" it was mobilized with heightened conceptual clarity, foregrounding tensions between protection and confinement, and between memory and erasure. Refusing catharsis, "Gama" offered neither closure nor healing for historical trauma; instead, it held us within its unresolved reverberations.

Yuqian Fan is an editorial assistant at ArtAsiaPacific.

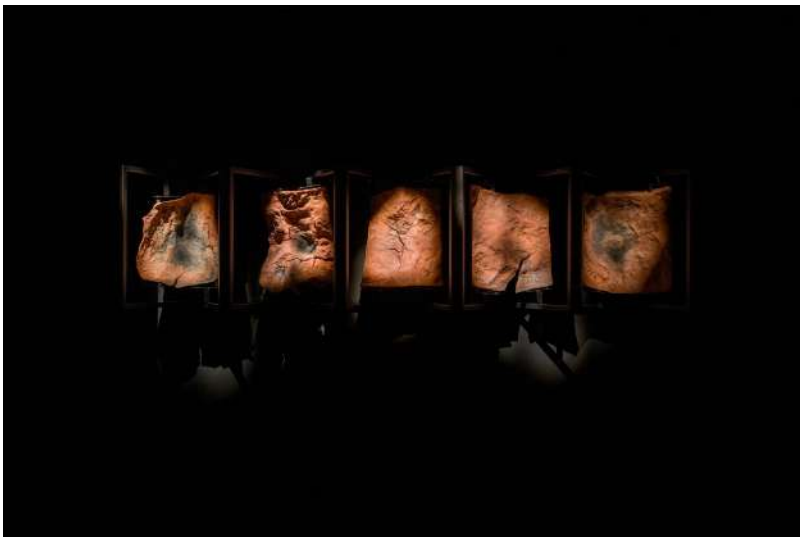
Hannah Sage Kay, "'Letting the sound happen around you': powerful sonic memorial remembers the dead", The Guardian, 11 February 2026

The Guardian

'Letting the sound happen around you': powerful sonic memorial remembers the dead

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork has created a sound installation emulating second world war spaces: a Japanese internment camp in California and caves used as bunkers in Okinawa

Hannah Sage Kay, 11 February 2026



An installation shot of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's Gama at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong. Photograph: Felix S.C. Wong for Empty Gallery.

In 1945, during the Battle of Okinawa, the great-uncle of the Japanese-American, Los Angeles-based artist Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork was stationed on the island as a US solider, having volunteered for service probably in the hopes that his family might be spared from the Japanese internment camps back home. They weren't, and so while his siblings and parents were incarcerated at Tule Lake in northern California, he was on the frontlines in what has been deemed one of the bloodiest conflicts in the Pacific during the second world war.

The caves of Okinawa were used "almost as bunkers to protect people", Kiyomi Gork explains. "But they were also spaces of mass suicide because of Japanese propaganda." Local Uchinanchu who took refuge there were instructed by Japanese soldiers to kill themselves, rather than face what they were told would be a violent fate at the hands of the US army. As one of the few American soldiers who spoke Japanese, Kiyomi Gork's great-uncle worked to ensure their safe passage.

The parallel experiences of the Uchinanchu in the caves and Japanese-Americans interned at Tule Lake – that have been silenced by decades of repressed trauma and historical whitewashing – sit at the heart of Kiyomi Gork's forthcoming exhibition, *Gama 1213-B*, at Canary Test, an experimental arts space in downtown Los Angeles. "The camps are something difficult to address because there's been so much silence and shame around them," she explains. "I grew up with an inherited shame around being Japanese, like not being able to speak or read the language or

acting like a Japanese girl should. There are a lot of problematic western expectations around what being Japanese is. It was a topic that I never felt comfortable addressing in my home or in myself until I got older."



An installation shot of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's Gama at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong. Photograph: Felix S.C. Wong for Empty Gallery.

It was only when Donald Trump started creating more immigrant detention centers in his first term that her family began to talk about the eerie similarity of these centers to the interment camps. Then, when the war broke out in Gaza "I just stopped," Kiyomi Gork says. "I needed to make work about what was happening. And for me the way I could do that was through my family and their relationship to history."

This prompted her to visit the caves of Okinawa. Sitting alone in a quiet, damp space, Kiyomi Gork found herself listening to a trickle of water at the bottom of the caves. "People generally like the sound of water," she remarks, because "we need it to survive, so the sound of it is enhanced by that mortal need". But in the caves, Kiyomi Gork recalls that the water sounded "menacing and unnerving". This prompted her to consider how her perspective of the space – informed by all that she knew and didn't know about the Battle of Okinawa, her great-uncle's service, the lasting scar that the war left on her family and all Uchinanchu, and the island's continued military occupation – changed her relationship to something that is, in most other contexts, innately comforting.

Working in sound, installation and sculpture for over 20 years, Kiyomi Gork routinely explores how sound affects movement and movement affects sound; blurring boundaries between performer, audience and architecture; and often, for example, creating feedback loops that enhance the sound of the viewers' own movements in the space of the exhibition. *Gama 1213-B* represents a departure from this modality. "It's less of a choreography in the space and more of letting the sound happen around you, less you creating the sound with your body," she says. Titled after the Uchinaaguchi word for cave (gama) and the number of her grandfather's barrack at Tule Lake (1213-B), the exhibition at Canary Test will feature a recent sculptural work and a newly created ambisonic sound piece – alongside a selection of books from Kiyomi Gork's research and her grandparent's collection – that honor the charged, intentional and yet uncontrollable silences of these sites.

With clay sourced from the caves in Okinawa, Kiyomi Gork recreated sections of the cave walls as large ceramic tiles, using a mold based on 3D scans of its surface. Inset within a gridded, metal folding screen, these quasi-archeological fragments mimic the sonic effect of the cave's multifaceted surface which possesses so many angles for sound to bounce off that echoes and reverberations are effectively deadened.

Kiyomi Gork's ambisonic sound piece about Tule Lake recreates a different kind of silence. Visiting the site – which is now an airplane field that bears little acknowledgment of where the barracks previously stood, or the people they incarcerated – the artist recorded what remains: sounds of the wind and the open air. She processed this recording through a virtual barrack (working with a sound lab at a structural engineering company in Los Angeles) to simulate what it might have sounded like inside the structures.

"I've gone through a lot of video footage about the camps," Kiyomi Gork says. "But no one really talks about how it felt or [the specifics of] how it sounded." Both this piece, and her sculpture, consequently live in something of an liminal space, oscillating between the physical structures that have been documented and the experiences of them, which can only be imagined.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork. Photograph: Telavaya, courtesy of the artist.

The line of inquiry into her Japanese-American and Uchinanchu roots exemplified by this exhibition, which Kiyomi Gork describes as an unfinished and potentially endless project, is "more about the unknown than anything", she explains. "About being OK with not knowing. Or being OK with the fact that there is this huge silence, and honoring that."

As much as *Gama 1213-B* is a sonic and sculptural memorial to individuals on both sides of the Pacific, how anyone connects with an unknown nevertheless remains unknown. "For me, at least, it's through time," Kiyomi Gork says. "This is a time-based work, so it's through spending time with it, almost like a meditation, [that one can] sit with and acknowledge [what happened]."

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork on why perception is everything

Mark McNeill



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Gama*, Empty Gallery Hong Kong, September 27 – November 15, 2025. Photo: Felix S.C.

Can you tell me about an acoustic space you encountered that changed your perception of sound?

Within the span of a week, I spent hours at the Dream House in New York and the anechoic chamber at Bell Labs. The Dream House is a piece by La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. It’s located in Tribeca and has been around for a long time. It uses a technique of sine waves that interact with each other, creating a binaural beat—an actual physical relationship of sound waves, and as you move around the space, the sound shifts and and you hear different rhythms and tones. There’s no starting and stopping. You just walk in during open hours and that’s that.

Anechoic chambers are spaces where there’s no sonic reflection. The one at Bell Labs is quite huge. It’s a big rectangle with these wedges of fiberglass that jet out from the walls and the floor. You walk on this fence in the middle of the room that is a sonically transparent floor. And the whole room is floated, so there are no vibrations coming from the outside and when you close that door. It is really, really silent. There are all these stories about anechoic chambers, like you’ll go crazy if you sit there for this many minutes or whatever. I had the fortune to spend quite a bit of time there with two friends and we did everything from running around screaming to playing sounds to just laying down. We wanted to see what would happen.

We were laying down in the darkness and somebody who did not know we were in there, came in and flashed the lights. It was an incredibly jarring experience to have the sonic sensory side of my body in a whole different universe to my visual sensoriality. I was 20-years-old and really into op art and sensory perception works. And so the visual elements of the anechoic chamber contrasting with the sonic element was really interesting. Up until that moment, nobody talked about the aesthetics of an anechoic chamber.

Having those experiences so close to each other flipped the switch for me. The Dream House had so much to do with the body and movement, with listening to the room and yourself within it, where the anechoic chamber was almost like an external listening. So this idea that how we listen and our perception of listening can expand our actual physical bodies or not. Those are the two foundational experiences for me.

Can you talk about your experience with active listening and how your interest in it developed?

I grew up in Long Beach, CA in this tiny neighborhood in the middle of a big freeway intersection. There's a giant power plant, and oil fields right next to that. Growing up, at night, the sounds that I would hear were the freeway and intermittently, the sound of steam being released from the power plant. The sound of the freeway sounded like the ocean to me. The sound of waves has always been one of my favorite sounds and to me the freeway was the next best thing. My listening experiences started very young, just spending a lot of time by myself in my room at night and hearing the freeway sounds and the steam from the power plant which my parents always told us was Star Wars. So these funny fantasy narratives around what you're hearing, what you're experiencing, how you decide to think about it and how that changes your emotional experience to the space. I didn't really listen to that much music. What other kids were listening to at the time was West Coast rap, electronic music, indie rock or whatever. But nothing really grabbed me until I started experiencing noise compositional works.

What about noise music was compelling?

It just fit with what my body wanted to experience. I never really listened to records or albums. It was always live, and I was fortunate that I lived in a place where it was quite prolific, in the Bay Area in the 2000s. And it was very community-based and because of Mills College, there were a lot of female composers. The San Francisco Tape Music Center was still a reference point for a lot of people. It was a very rich and welcoming environment.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Gama*, Empty Gallery
Hong Kong, September 27 – November 15, 2025.
Photo: Felix S.C. Wong



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Gama*, Empty Gallery Hong Kong,
September 27 – November 15, 2025. Photo: Felix S.C. Wong

In your work, you give people encouragement and agency to become active in a sonic space. How does movement and interaction factor into the works you create?

My mom worked at a ballet studio so I danced pretty rigorously from when I was five-years-old until I had knee surgery at 17. Quitting dance was pretty abrupt for me, and I went straight into visual arts. I completely stopped doing any kind of movement-based practice whatsoever. And in the Dream House, I felt safe and comfortable. It's a very warm environment. It's carpeted, there's pillows. I could move my body in a very organic, non-choreographed way, and it allowed me a kind of freedom that I'd never experienced before. At this time I wasn't going out dancing. I didn't know how to dance. I didn't know how to just be intimate and reactive and intuitive with sound and movement. And so it was almost like therapy for me to be able to be in that space.

When I'm doing my more spatialized pieces, I'm looking for those moments when there's a *click *that happens between a movement and a sound, an awareness within yourself and the exterior world. Everybody listens differently and I want to honor that. I want to honor your ability to listen how you want to listen. That's why I've never done anything for seats or a theater or fixed positioning-a "sweet spot." If anything, I've tried to do stuff that disrupts the idea of what a sweet spot is.

Everybody experiences the world differently, and our resonant bodies change the environment as the environment changes us. It must be exciting to set pieces in motion that evolve with every new listen.

To be present, to feel vulnerable and intimate with a space is not something that everybody can do, especially in a gallery setting. But that's what my work requires you to do. So that's also a challenge that I've been inspired by. In my earlier sound pieces, a lot of it was around control, creating a specific choreography for the listener. And then realizing that was a dead end, self-reflecting on that desire for control enabled me to open up different relationships between the acoustic sculptures that I make and the multi-channel sound design stuff that I do. It's endless because it's very difficult. I'm not an acoustician, I'm not a physicist, I'm not an audio engineer. And so trying to figure it out is the challenge that is really inspiring for me.

Are you extra sensitive to the acoustics of your own living spaces?

Not really. I'm not an audiophile. I live in the middle of L.A. and I always have the windows open so there's helicopter noise constantly. I'm two blocks away from the 10 freeway and there are cars doing donuts out front. I've always lived in fairly loud environments, and I don't listen to music a lot. I prefer to have more of an intentional listening experience when I'm playing music or it's a functional experience, maybe I need to clean the house so I need a beat or something to activate me. But other than that I love hearing the outside world. That's my happy place. I do love when someone else plays music, though. I'm thankful to have friends who are great DJ's.

I need ear breaks. I take a lot of walks around the block while I'm working. I love working at night. That's the most quiet in a gallery space. I need that time. And my happy place is when I can just work 24/7 during install. If I could spend 36 hours tuning a piece—really narrowing it in—I'd just be so happy. I've heard you refer to sound as slippery.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Gama*, Empty Gallery
Hong Kong, September 27 – November 15, 2025.
Photo: Felix S.C. Wong

Can you talk about the slipperiness of sound?

When I say slippery, I'm not necessarily referencing any kind of particular sound studies or compositional thing. For me, it's just that sound changes constantly and you could be listening to the exact same sound, but say you just had an argument or you just woke up—that sound will be different. Physically, it's not different, but perceptually, it is different. So slipperiness is that it's constantly changing.

I think a lot about habituation: when you are experiencing something so consistently that you no longer are aware of the experience of it. We habituate to touch while wearing clothing—we're not always feeling our clothing on our skin. The same thing with ambient sound—we habituate to it. We no longer hear it but it's still interacting with us, still affecting us. We're always being affected by sound whether or not we are listening. We're hearing through vibrations. There's also the architectural side. Windows let in light, but also let in sound. Curtains can be warm and comforting in a space, but they absorb sound.

Are there experiential feedback loops that you hope to create through your installations that encourage people to listen deeper?

Absolutely. A piece of mine called Solutions to common noise problems tries to highlight ways we are or are not self-aware of the noises we make by mic'ing the whole room and playing back the audio through a complex feedback system. I've always been highly—maybe to a point of destruction—aware of my own presence, the space that I take up and not wanting to take up space or wanting to take up more space. A lot of my own daily life, when I was younger, was wanting to be as small and invisible as possible with my body, but within my work, I wanted to be as big and immersible as possible. So there's always this funny juxtaposition. And I really had this strong desire for other people to be more sensitive, more self-aware. Ten years ago, a lot of my work was all about trying to bring about a new sensitivity or different kind of sensitivity between you and others, the environment, and the ways in which we might then feedback that into our own movements, our own patterns, our own ways of thinking.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Gama*, Empty Gallery Hong Kong, September 27 – November 15, 2025. Photo: Felix S.C. Wong



I did a whole series working with dancers. I had security cameras in all the pieces, so I could watch how people were moving and interacting. If there was somebody else in the space, if they would talk to them, if they would not talk to them, if they would stand against the wall, if they would engage in the center. I was trying to understand human behavior through these pieces. I felt like there was a huge desensitization in our culture and I wanted to poke needles in that.

It's like tuning the audience. People might have an interesting engagement with your pieces and then you send them back out into the world to harmonize. Speaking of out there, do you do a lot of field recording?

I don't. I have gone through phases where I have, but then I've never listened back to them. And I realized the reason why I was doing them was because I wanted to sit in nature for a long time. Now I just sit in nature for a long time. If I have a piece that requires field recording, then yes, I do. I capture some form of information that I can then translate and transpose into my work. But as far as hanging out with my microphone, I'd rather just sit there and listen.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Gama*, Empty Gallery Hong Kong, September 27 – November 15, 2025. Photo: Felix S.C. Wong

It seems more pragmatic to have a reason to record something rather than collect an endless database of things that you never listen to. It's good to be present. Do you have specific aspirations around expanding how you're interacting with the world through sound and engagement with others?

Yeah. The works I just finished were quite heavy and demanding. They had a lot to do with war. They had a lot to do with my own ancestry, which is something totally new for me. The objects in which I was interacting with were loaded. I was using pieces from old fighter jets that were used in American wars. So, I'm sort of looking forward to getting back into works that are more abstracted, a bit more open-ended, less finite in focus, I guess you could say. More expansive, a little more playful even.

How much of starting something new entails starting totally fresh and then expanding outwards, as opposed to starting off by saying, "Here's my list of things I'm going to do"?

That's the thing with the brain, man. The same things keep on popping back up. I literally think I'm making the same work that I've been making for 20 years, just different variations or new versions of them for me. When I think about my foundational questions, my foundational drive, that's never changed actually since I was in my early 20s.

It goes back to that relationship of agency within sound and how do we find it and how do we make that? And what does that mean within the total environment? And there are also emotional elements to that. So often in composition or in experimental music, you don't talk about emotions. You don't talk about regular rhythms. There's certain things that are sort of like faux pas, and it's always been my interest to ask like, "Well, what is that? What are those elements and how is that affecting the ways in which we're listening?"



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Gama*, Empty Gallery
Hong Kong, September 27 – November 15, 2025.
Photo: Felix S.C. Wong

I don't think I'm going through a midlife crisis kind of thing, but it is definitely interesting getting older and having different kinds of perspectives and relationships on your work and where you might see things going in the future or not. I recently made my first monosculptures, like, single-channel audio works which I never imagined I would've made before. So you have no idea. I'm just thankful that I'm able to still do this.

Maybe exploring similar core ideas or questions is actually the development of a unique artistic language. It's looking at various angles of the same questions and ideas and going deeper. That's exciting. Do you find that your work can be a way to navigate prickly issues or engage with emotional struggles?

Yeah, absolutely. One of my earliest pieces, which is one of those pieces I feel like I'm constantly remaking, was maybe 2005 or '06. I was living in a giant warehouse with a bunch of people and everybody was a musician. It was loud, it was very chaotic, and I was going through a phase of very strong depression. And all I wanted to do was be in my little space. It felt safe to be in my little space, but I could still hear everything around us. We had practice spaces, we had instruments in the living room, it was a 6,000 square foot warehouse.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Lobot Gallery, Oakland, 2005.

And so from that experience, I made this tiny one-person geodesic dome that had microphones sticking out of it on cables a hundred feet long that were going in all different directions. And it was installed in a different warehouse space in Oakland for a show. And that space also had a big gallery and live-work spaces. So I had a microphone in their kitchen, a microphone out the window and all this stuff, and this little geodesic dome was very Bucky Fuller-influenced. It was also kind of embroidered on the inside and had a lot of crafty elements to it that felt very homey and cozy. And in a way, that piece for me was an extension of how to feel safe, but connected. That's one of the pieces that I feel like I'm continually making. And it did come from a very dark time, but I was able to transform it. And I feel like that's what we're constantly doing from the personal to the external.

* * *

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork recommends:
Windows can be speakers.
Use Sichuan peppercorns in anything you want to.
Hibiscus aka jamaica aka sorrel tea is great vitamin c, lowers blood pressure, and is affordable and easy to make in cold or hot water.
Look for nature whenever wherever feeling lost.
A favorite Los Angeles activity is beach fires at Dockweiler.

OCULA

October 6, 2025

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork Reshapes the Architecture of How We Listen

Sound is always political for the Los Angeles artist, whether she is sampling the acoustics of Okinawa's underground caves or repurposing fighter jets as decorative water features.

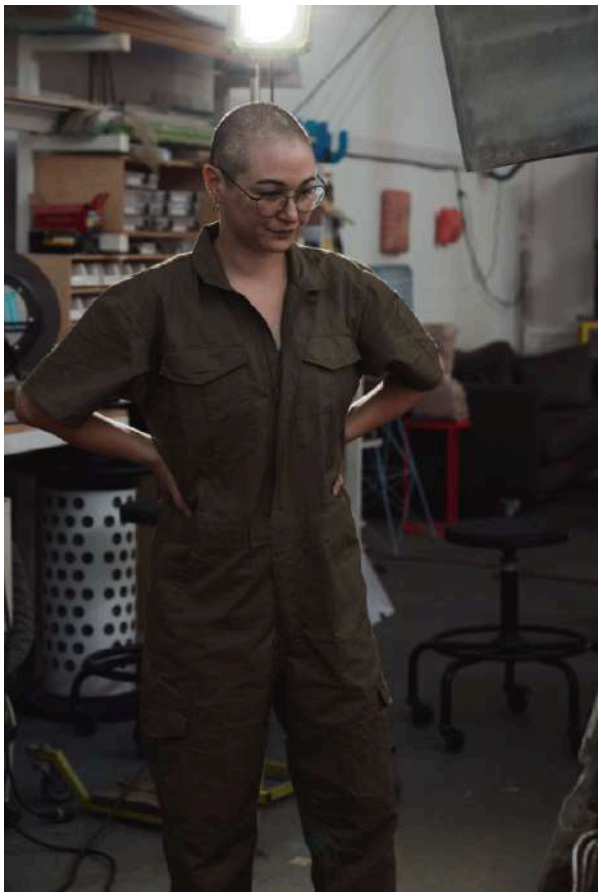
By Jonathan Griffin



For nearly two decades, Los Angeles-based Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork has used sound as a sculptural and architectural medium, as well as sculpture and architecture as acoustic structures to support and manipulate sound. After an early career in noise music, she sidestepped into making installations that incorporate her complex sound works to powerful and atmospheric effect.

For an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in 2023, for example, Kiyomi Gork created a maze from hanging materials such as plastic sheeting and sound-deadening blankets. Into this

environment she fed digitally modified sounds generated in real time from the ambient noises of the gallery next door. Speakers were located throughout the maze, so that sounds emerged differently as visitors explored the installation. ‘What you hear affects how you move and how you move affects how you hear,’ the artist observed, describing in bodily terms the phenomenon of a sonic feedback loop.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork in the fabricator’s studio, Los Angeles, 2025. Photo: Robert Holland for Ocula.

On 27 September, she opened a solo exhibition at Hong Kong’s Empty Gallery, her third in the black-box space and a recognition of the gallery’s tenth anniversary. The exhibition, *Gama*, centres on a series of sculptures made from parts of military aeroplanes, which are activated by pumps that trickle water over them and into receptacles at their bases. This sound is then amplified and modified by the artist, to powerful effect. Also placed in the gallery are freestanding metal structures that hold irregular sections of cracked brown clay; referred to as ‘diffusion tiles’ by Kiyomi Gork, these absorb and deflect the sound from the speakers.

At a fabrication studio in east Los Angeles, where new sculptures for the show were nearing completion, Kiyomi Gork explained to *Ocula* how this new body of work marks an important development in her practice, even while it explores themes that have followed her since childhood.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Variations in Mass Nos. 5, 6, 7 (2024). Exhibition view: Poems of Electronic Air, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2 February–7 April 2024). Courtesy CCVA. Photo: Julia Featheringill.



Exhibition view: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Poems of Electronic Air, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2 February–7 April 2024). Courtesy CCVA. Photo: Julia Featheringill.



Exhibition view: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (11 February–14 May 2023). Photo: Jeff McLane.



Exhibition view: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Like a Breath of Fresh Water, Visual Arts Center, University of Texas Austin (22 September–2 December 2023). Photo: Melissa Nuñez.

JG: You've been making sculptures and installations with sound for nearly two decades now, but these new pieces feel very different. What precipitated them?

JKG: A combination of things. I've been thinking about American industrial military technology since I was an undergrad student. That's connected to my family background, which is a part of myself I felt moved to confront after October 7, 2023. And since 2022, I've been researching the caves in Okinawa. I'm interested in underground architectures, both natural and manmade, because they slip between being spaces of safety and confinement. Also, the acoustics are wild.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Noise-Blanket (2024). Courtesy the artist. Photo: Michael Yu.

JG: What took you to Okinawa?

JKG: My ancestry is Okinawan, on my mother's side. Okinawa is a collection of islands about 400 miles south of Japan that was once its own kingdom, but was colonised by Japan in 1879. It was the location of a battle in 1945 between Japan and the United States, during which Okinawan civilians sheltered in the island's extensive cave systems. A third of the local population died in the battle. When the war in Gaza started, it echoed aspects of the Battle of Okinawa.

JG: And that war resonated with you personally?

JKG: I'm half Jewish, on my father's side. It's something I don't truly identify with, I am 10,000 percent pro-Palestine, but my grandparents were Zionists. My grandfather worked in aerospace, and came to Los Angeles from New York after the war to work for a company called Aerojet, started by Jack Parsons and Theodore von Kármán. That's the industry that my dad ended up going into. So I grew up around a lot of aerospace stuff. I was not interested in it growing up; I thought that it was too escapist or techno-utopian.

JG: What changed?

JKG: In college I started getting into cybernetics and Cold War systems of surveillance, but never addressed my family's involvement.



Exhibition view: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Gama, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (27 September–15 November 2025). Courtesy the artist and Empty Gallery. Photo: Felix S.C. Wong.



Exhibition view: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Gama, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (27 September–15 November 2025). Courtesy the artist and Empty Gallery. Photo: Felix S.C. Wong.

JG: The degraded and worn surfaces of these new sculptures seem very tethered to reality. They don't feel escapist at all.

JKG: No. They're pieces of A4 and A7 fighter jets from the seventies that I got in an aerospace 'boneyard' in Arizona. Planes like these were used in the Vietnam War and the first Gulf War. I'm thinking of these materials like they are natural resources of the U.S.; something foundational and inherent to this country is war.

JG: And you've transformed them into functioning fountains?

JKG: That's where escapism can come in. Treating the scrap like marble or stone, and juxtaposing it with a kind of corporate, Westernised Zen aesthetic. If you Google 'Zen fountain', you find endless versions of quasi-minimalist fountains. 'Zen' in this case is just a marketing term.

JG: A Western debasement or misinterpretation of Zen ideas.

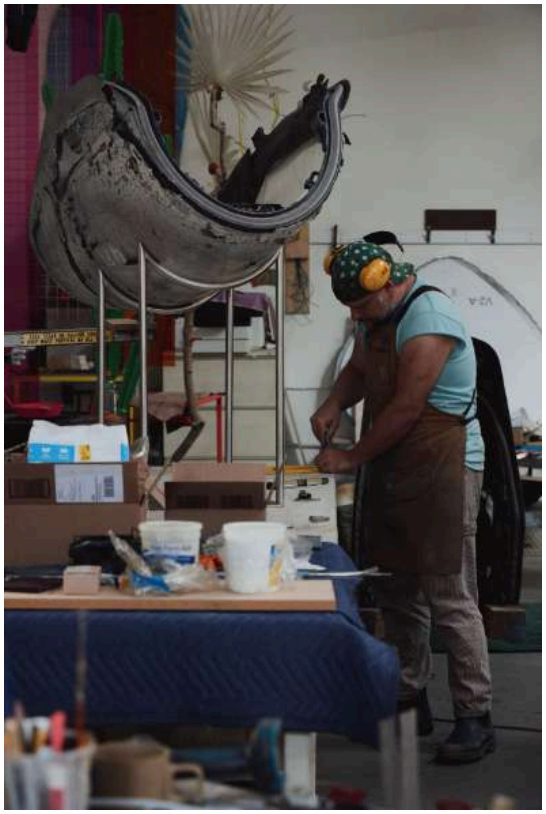
JKG: Yeah, most Zen ideas that we are familiar with in the West are misinterpretations. And Zen Buddhism is actually highly problematic.

JG: And you're installing microphones in basins that catch the water at the bottom of the fountains, and will then pre-program them to modulate the sound?

JKG: The microphones turn what could be a kind of relaxing, meditative sound into something more abrasive.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork in the fabricator's studio, Los Angeles, 2025. Photo: Robert Holland for Ocula.



In the fabricator’s studio, Los Angeles, 2025. Photo: Robert Holland for Ocula.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork at the fabricator’s studio, Los Angeles, 2025. Photo: Robert Holland for Ocula.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork at the fabricator's studio, Los Angeles, 2025. Photo: Robert Holland for Ocula.

JG: Do you conceive of these sculptures as musical instruments?

JKG: To me, everything I make is either an instrument or an acoustic object to support sound.

JG: Is that how you think of the other series in the exhibition, these metal screens incorporating contoured ceramic tiles?

JKG: They relate to the ceramic diffusion tile works I've made over the past ten years or so, but are very different in their subject. Diffusion is a principle in which sound bounces off of a varied surface, and the sound waves go in all different directions. It can be perceived as absorbing sound. It's why caves sound the way they do, but it's also used in the design of concert halls and music studios. These ceramic tiles were cast from impressions of cave walls in Okinawa.

JG: Did you conceive both these bodies of work together?

JKG: Yes, when I visited Shimuku Gama, one of the caves where people survived. There were around 1,000 civilians inside this cave, and the American military were trying to force them out. Japanese soldiers told people that if they surrendered, they would be raped, enslaved, or killed. They were encouraged to take their own lives instead of surrender, which had happened in other caves. The story goes that two local men who had previously lived in Hawai‘i and were familiar with American military policies vouched for the people's safety, and everyone survived. It's one of the few positive stories about what happened in Okinawa.

JG: What's the cave like?

JKG: It's huge and has many chambers. It is very, very quiet. There's no reverb, just the sound of a stream that runs through it. I was sitting far back in the darkness, thinking about these stories and listening to the space. I'd never heard water sound menacing before. I think it's biological how we almost universally find the sound of water attractive. It's part of our humanity—we need water. Doesn't matter

how ugly the fountain is—it's going to sound nice. Immediately, this piece came into my head. I didn't know how it would look or manifest; I just wanted to make water sound menacing.



Exhibition view: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Olistostrome, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (2021). Courtesy the artist and Empty Gallery. Photo: Michael Yu.

JG: This relates to your interest in environments whose meaning is dependent on context: a bunker or cell can be comforting or claustrophobic, depending on what's outside of it. In your installations, do you mean to create unsettling, claustrophobia-inducing spaces, or do you hope to make environments where people can linger?

JKG: Both! I'm very much a 'both/and' person. When I was a student in the early 2000s, I remember experiencing a sound installation presented as eight speakers on the walls of a gallery. It was a 40-minute loop, and I really wanted to listen to it, but I just physically couldn't stay. It was so uncomfortable to stand in a white room with no place to sit, no place for my body. That was an important early experience for me. I became interested in making installations where the body was accepted and comfortable, to some degree, but where the sound changes your perception of the space.

JG: You also used to perform noise music, which can be uncomfortable or abrasive. The relationship between the performer and an audience can be quite antagonistic.

JKG: Now I prefer to help others run sound. I'm a sound system person. I don't like my physical body being seen in the hierarchical order of a performance setting. I think of myself as a listener, so I always put myself into positions of listening. —[O]

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: Gama is on view at Empty Gallery in Hong Kong from 27 September to 15 November 2025.

Main image: Exhibition view: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Gama, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (27 September–15 November 2025). Courtesy the artist and Empty Gallery. Photo: Felix S.C. Wong.

Vanessa Ague, “The Foundation for Contemporary Arts Gives Experimental Sound Practitioners Freedom to Create”, I Care If You Listen, 22 April 2025

I CARE IF YOU LISTEN

The Foundation for Contemporary Arts Gives Experimental Sound Practitioners Freedom to Create

The unrestricted $45,000 grants are allowing this year’s music/sound awardees to pursue long-term projects

Vanessa Ague, 22 April 2025



Photos by Laura Pardo, Televaya, and Zachary Fabri

Dorian Wood was planning a major cross-country move when she received an out-of-the-blue phone call that would alleviate some of the stress of upheaval. The call, from multidisciplinary artist Matana Roberts, let her know that she was set to receive a $45,000 unrestricted award from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. “It was very humbling,” Wood said over the phone. “It was this huge sigh of relief. It’s been very, very helpful since then to not panic so much about my financial situation.”

Established in 1963 by John Cage and Jasper Johns, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts is funded by artists, for artists. The foundation’s by-nomination award is annually given to 23 artists working in the fields of dance, music/sound, performance art/theater, poetry, and the visual arts, and has a vast history. In music and sound alone, awarded artists include Philip Glass, La Monte Young, Pauline Oliveros, Raven Chacon, Pamela Z, Du Yun, Meredith Monk, and hundreds more. More than a lifeline, it is also a recognition of an artist’s commitment to their craft.

This year’s music/sound winners — Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Jamal R. Moore, David Watson, and Dorian Wood — offer a glimpse into different ways of working with sound, whether it be experimenting on bagpipes, creating interdisciplinary sculptures, or composing longform, immersive pieces. Though all of these artists have dedicated many years to their craft, high cost of living, touring, and other financial and life circumstances can make it hard to find time to create.

For the three artists we interviewed, this money is providing much-needed space to dive into long-term projects.

With her funding, Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork is working on two large-scale projects to be presented in the fall at the Empty Gallery in Hong Kong. Gork's practice spans sound, sculpture, and performance, often uniting all three and incorporating extensive research. Many of her works envelop the audience in feedback by placing speakers around the room; her sculptures also sit inside of the space, modifying, reflecting, and creating sound. Recent pieces like Solutions to Common Noise Problems, a six channel sound installation paired with wool and hair coats, and Olistrostrome, a 12 channel installation with large, rumpled foam masses, exemplify Gork's interdisciplinary practice.

Though she has exhibited there before, working with Empty Gallery is always a special opportunity for Gork. This 4,500 square foot black box theater is built especially for media art, with a focus on presenting time-based, ephemeral works. It's also completely sound isolated, making it possible to present in the space without distraction or outside noise. "At Empty Gallery, I can really just do anything," Gork said over the phone. "I'm really excited about that work."

Both pieces to be presented this fall incorporate Gork's deep research through multiple mediums. In this particular moment, she has found it imperative to explore themes of war through her art. One work comprises fountains made from American military planes, which will have microphones attached to them to capture feedback, manipulate it, and project it outward. The other delves into the history of Okinawa's lime caves, which have served as shelters and were used by the Japanese military during the Battle of Okinawa. Gork is interested in looking at these caves from all angles and using them as a vehicle for conversations about war and its effects, as well as personal stories. This depth is a new endeavor, and one that Gork is excited by. "My research tends to start with putting myself physically into acoustic situations and experiencing them and listening to them, and then wrapping my head around all the complexity of what's happening," she said. "This is one of the first times where I'm really going in and also looking at the histories and what these spaces signify culturally as well as acoustically."

...

Each of these artists collaborate with others and use music as a place for exploration, storytelling, and connection. The Foundation for Contemporary Arts award makes it possible for them to do what artists do best: Bring people together not only to commune, but to think, to be, and to move forward. "Sound art is so much based on your interactions with people and talking to people, asking how they listen and what they hear, and collaborating with other musicians," Gork said. "The nice thing about being an artist is that we get to engage with our audience. I am thankful that I'm with a community of people."

I CARE IF YOU LISTEN is an editorially-independent program of the American Composers Forum, and is made possible thanks to generous donor and institutional support. Opinions expressed are solely those of the author and may not represent the views of ICIYL or ACF.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Olistrostrome*, 2021. Wool, foam, river stones, 16 contact microphones, 12 microphones, 12 speakers, SuperCollider software, computer, dimensions variable.

In the Studio: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork
April 18, 2024

I work mostly with sound installation and sculpture, sometimes encompassing performance, architecture, and textiles. For me, sound serves as the beginning and end point. Often, other materials and mediums flow through that, but my work comes from sonic experiences. Then I transform that experience. I research it and try to learn about it, try to see how others respond to it, and then create a sonic environment in which the questions that get conjured up are explored for the public.

Currently, my work is about trying to understand experiences with sound and emotion that exist in this messy world, trying to find my place in it, or create my place in it, and invite others in. I'm trying to piece together the contradictions or synchronicities that happen in public life. Most of the experiences that inform my work are everyday things. It can be something simple like having an emotional song turn on through loudspeakers as you pump gas. The triggers of when sound is used to manipulate space and/or people, whether that is agreed upon amongst all parties or not. Just trying to make sense of it all.

I'm not a musician. I grew up trained in dance, so I think there's a musicality within movement and sound that I understand, but I don't have any formal music training. I became involved with the noise and experimental punk scene, where I learned to just DIY everything. And I am fortunate to have a lot of incredible musicians I collaborate with in my community. I take concepts, tools, and techniques from the audio world and apply them to the physical world through my sculptures.

When people experience my work, I hope that they come away a little bit more sensitive, a little more aware of how their body relates to

space and how the space relates to their body. Just a little bit of self-awareness in regards to one's own movements and the space their body takes up or does not take up.

I've spent a lot of time watching audiences interact with my work, either during research periods or the shows themselves. At The Lab in San Francisco, we even had security cameras installed so that I could see how people interacted and moved. I'm trying to create a choreography—it's an open-ended score, so it's not saying, oh, you have to turn right here or turn left there. But I want to understand, are those sounds working? Are they attracting people in this way or that way? Is there a congestion point within the installation?

I'm thinking about a piece I made last year around this time at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, which was a clear maze, and watching how people interacted with it. At what point did they feel comfortable spending time there? Did they walk through quickly, paying more attention to what they see versus listening, which takes more time? I've also done research projects, working with dancers or other performers to see how attention is being guided, manipulated, or distracted within the space, sound, and architecture.

In my installations, there's a necessary relationship between sound and material. My desire is to create multichannel sound installations, yet none of the spaces I work with are built for sound, so the acoustics prevent me from having clear, controlled audio. On the other end of the spectrum, concert halls or spaces designed for sound are not made to do what I would like to do visually and spatially. So, I create my own spaces within the space. It involves lots of material because I need to manipulate the acoustics to make the sound work. And those materials also inform what I'm able to do with sound.

My work comes together on-site rather than in the studio. I come in with materials and sound samples and/or software that I'm going to use. There's equipment like microphones and speakers and the sculptural elements—textiles and such. I put them all together, and then I start composing. Nothing's actually created until they're all together. I think of these moments as a kind of performance.



Installation view, Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Made in L.A.*, 2020, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

Many different things go into how I decide to make what I make, when and where I do it. For example, I just finished a show at the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts at Harvard. The show comprises three different bodies of work, a lot of which responds to the building and the architecture itself. The Carpenter Center is Corbusier's only building in North America. It's also the second building on Harvard's campus that involved no red brick. It really stands out.

One of the few things I knew when I came to do a site visit is that the field of architectural acoustics—the mathematics and the computational side of it all—was developed at Harvard around the turn of the century. And so there are these stories that came out of there about the poor acoustics in a lecture hall in the Fog Art Museum, where no one could understand the speaker due to a long reverberation time. Wallace Clement Sabine, a Harvard physicist, created the first algorithm for understanding absorption and installed the first felt absorption panels. He later worked on the Boston Symphony Hall.

In undergrad, I was obsessed with this fallacy of men being able to control people and the environment through architecture and these utopian ideals that would lead to a dystopian reality. Corbusier fits into that, particularly with Chandigarh in India, which I visited 15 years ago. I had a very, very strange experience there with his architecture, textiles, and the people inhabiting it. So I was coming into this project with a lot of pessimism about Corbusier's work, but also an acknowledgement for his role in architectural history. He was one of the only architects who designed acoustic materials because he worked in cement, so you need to have softness. One of his acoustic panels is up in the theater at the Carpenter Center. He also designed the Philips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, which housed a very early



Installation view of *Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: Poems of Electronic Air* at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2024. Variations in Mass Nos. 5, 6, 7, 2024, vinyl, blowers, electronics, and speakers. Collaborators: Viola and violin, Daniel Jacobs; Cello, Zack Reaves; 3D design, Rhett LaRue. Courtesy of Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. Photo: Julia Featheringill.

multichannel composition by Edgard Varèse, called Poème électronique. The title for my show, Poems of Electronic Air, references this work. Xenakis, another composer I admire, also worked on that project.

Overall, the show is kind of taking the piss out of the building but also recognizing it. I am still dealing with and responding to Corbusier but also making fun of it, using it against itself.

At the Carpenter Center, an installation upstairs involves rocks on the ground. We built a false floor, or "stage," as I like to think about it, with contact mics underneath, microphones above, and speakers all around. There are these columns that I made out of fiberglass and wool. Within the gallery itself, there are cement columns because the building structure is supported by them. The columns are everywhere. There's no avoiding them, and it's just so ridiculous because this is not a very big gallery, and yet it's not a "clean white box." Corbusier is still very much there, like, "Hey, you're still in my building!" So responding to that, I made my columns, drowning out the columns that existed—that was one of the goals with the sculptures.

Then the downstairs space had inflatable plastic bouncy castle walls, with red brick pattern, that rise and fall in relationship to the columns as well. The columns in the downstairs are holding the walls of the bouncy castle—they're wrapped around it. It has music that's based on romantic classical music that was very popular when the Boston Symphony Hall was created.

It's been a very busy time for me. Including the Carpenter Center show, I've had five shows pretty much back to back, but I don't have any shows coming up right now. I'm looking forward to having a break and starting new research into a very personal topic about the Japanese American side of my family.



Installation at Taipei Biennial: *Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is)* 2017-ongoing, PVC tarpaulin walls, centrifugal blowers, Arduino microcontroller, MIDI and trigger relay. Dimensions variable. Music: MNDR Production: Peter Wade Keusch Production and Engineering. Singers: carolyn pennypacker riggs, jonathan Mandabach and MNDR. Courtesy of the artist, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles.

I'm Yonsei, fourth-generation Japanese American. My family never talked about their experiences with internment camps in the US until Trump got elected. When all the migrant camps were happening, then some of my family members finally started speaking out and talking about it. Most of the generation that experienced the camps are gone. But some of my living relatives were born in the camps.

Part of the Japanese side of my family is Okinawan from Hawaii, and they were not in the camps. So I've always seen how these very different experiences of the US shaped and shifted the family. It's something that I've always had a lot of questions about and don't really understand. It's also very intimidating. It's very personal, and a difficult subject to delve into because there's a lot there that's not known. It was kept silent and so secret for so long.

I think I have also avoided this subject because I was pressured a lot when I was in high school and junior high to make work about being Japanese American. It was the nineties. I really resisted that. I hated being pigeonholed, like, "You're not white, so therefore, you must be making work about your identity." But now I think we're in a different place where those expectations are not as suffocating as I feel like they once were. There is more diversity in the art world and more openness for artists of any ilk and kind to make work about whatever the hell they want to make work about. I now feel more comfortable with trying to do something with this family history.

Last fall, I went to Okinawa for a week and I spent some time in the caves, where a lot of Okinawans committed suicide because the Japanese soldiers told them to. I had a couple of very profound experiences in these caves, which are very heavy and loaded with that history. Then I found out that one of my Japanese American uncles from California was in the US Army and was a translator, trying to get people out of the caves safely. He never talked about that, but my mom found out about it recently from a cousin. There's a lot of uncovering of family secrets—it's all very sad. I don't quite know where to go yet, but I'm going to try to write some travel grants so that I can get to Japan, and go to Okinawa again. I also need to go to the camps in the US where my family members were interned, as I have never been there. I look forward to seeing where it all leads.



Images by the artist from Shimuki Gama (left) and Chibichiri Gama (right), Okinawa.

BOMB

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork

Byron Westbrook



Installation view of Jaqueline Kiyomi Gork, *the input of this machine is the power an output contains*, 2021. Made in L.A. 2020: A Version. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Photo by Joshua White. Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly Gallery.

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's work occupies a singular space at a nexus of visual arts and sound composition. With a multifaceted sphere of influences that includes textiles, club music, archaeoacoustics, and choreography, she has one of the most rigorous and unique practices in what is often termed sound art. Her work manifests as a generous space for audience exploration, where sculpture, sound, and interactive installation environments live and breathe in a symbiotic collaboration with viewer and architecture. Kiyomi Gork's first East Coast institutional solo exhibition, *Poems of Electronic Air*, at Harvard University's Carpenter Center presents an expansive survey of her ideas and work. In the conversation below, I speak with her about concepts explored in the show, including participation, feedback systems, surveillance, choreography, and sonic forms as expressive metaphor.

Byron Westbrook
Something that I admire about your work is that it has the ability to be equally object-based and spatially immersive. There are things to imagine being contained by while exploring being contained, and one can pick or choose what to engage with. This concept of the container is a consistent thread throughout, and I'm interested to know more about your relationship to that idea.

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork
I remember being so frustrated with some of the first formal sound works I experienced in the early 2000s. It wasn't the content of the sound; it was the context: white walls, black speakers, lots of dudes. In order to listen, I need two things: the desire to listen and to feel comfortable spending time in a place. I guess you could think of the container as a secure space for me. There's something about being comfortable with the unknown that I find so important. I feel like I can only access that when feeling safe, not in an escapist way but a present kind of way, which is the only way for me to listen. It's how I make sense of the experiential contradictions I feel all the time and a way to allow myself to drift between spaces as my body and attention desire.

BW

I once had an experience in an installation of yours where another viewer and I struggled to carefully navigate around each other within a narrow, silent structure, while a subtle buzzing noise played from a speaker. The work highlighted our movements and our awareness of our shared presence in a way that felt meaningful. It also implied a specific route for us to follow. I'm curious if you have thoughts on the work operating as a score for the audience?

JKG

Absolutely. I mean to me it's a choreography, and a choreography can be a kind of score. I don't really make scores ahead of time; I set intentions. I interpret my own version of Lawrence and Anna Halprin's RSVP cycles when I need to. After I make the thing, I can see the score or structure and document it for future variations and installations. I used to create scores ahead of time, but it felt limiting to the possibilities where a piece could go once the physical space is active. There's so much unpredictability with acoustics and live sound systems; that's the fun but also stressful part. Often I think of setting the software of an installation as a kind of performance. It's in those moments that the installation becomes my instrument.

BW

Galleries can be challenging for sound works given that they are generally resonant spaces and not always ideal for conversation or amplified sound. I find it compelling that you've chosen to work in a way that is sonically subtractive by using materials that effectively remove from the space sound and the resonance of the physical presence of gallery visitors. What led you to work with these materials?



Installation view of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Solutions to Common Noise Problems*, 2021. François Ghebaly, New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni. Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly Gallery.

JKG

It all happened very organically. When I started working with sound twenty years ago, it was the immersive aspect of it that I found most compelling, the ability for the experience of the sound to guide my body. Visual-art spaces were what I had access to as an art student, so I had to modify the space to achieve that through sound processing, speaker placement, and acoustic interventions. As a mostly visual art student, if I was to put something in the space, I needed that something to be a part of the whole thing. Over the last ten years it has become more conceptual with maintaining the necessary functional aspect. I keep thinking: What is being absorbed? What is the labor of that absorption? Who or what is controlling it? And how does that affect our experience? As bodies we are creators and absorbers of noise, sound and music, voice.

BW

I like how that relates to both the clothing and the inflatable sculptures. In addition to having a surface that reduces resonance in the space, the clothing feels like a proposed container for viewers' bodies. The inflatables contain air, which is crucial to conducting sound, so they are bodies that gather and hold the key

material to make sound. Both kinetic and potential acts of control are demonstrated at play.

JKG
Working with sound, I'm obsessed with how air moves and how sound waves interact cognitively and physically. It's not as invisible as we think. The inflatables also create sound. The blower noise and kinetic movement of air inside of them are key components of the sound composition.

BW
Thinking more about addressing sound in galleries, I'm also curious about how you've incorporated feedback systems that harvest sound from the activity of the viewers within your installations. It's really interesting to think about in terms of the history of sampling, as well as how it offers a sort of sonic mirror for the viewer to engage with.

JKG
I think of acoustics as a given equation I have to accept. It's not so much sampling as about transposing, all in real time. There is a history of transposing soundscapes, including R. Murray Schafer's idea of "schizophonia," Maryanne Amacher's *City-Links*, and many others. It's also a way to create space that acknowledges the audience and that we are all active participants in public space. In grad school I studied archaeoacoustics. And I kept wondering, What if instead of looking at how acoustics impacted behavior in the past, how could the study be applied to the present and include microphones and sound systems as an extension architecture, thinking of all spaces as places of performance?

BW
I like the idea of the work being a semi-utopian space for study and inquiry, almost like a biosphere. I also wonder about your



Installation view of *Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: Poems of Electronic Air*, 2024. Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Photo by Julia Featheringill. Courtesy of Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.

thoughts around the surveillance aspect of gathering sound from the audience? How did this methodology come about?

JKG
For me it's all about a utopian-dystopian boundary, being trapped by escapism or something like that. I started working with live microphones and surveillance pretty early on. The second sculpture I made, in 2006, was a small geodesic dome that took sound from five microphones located in and around a warehouse, live-work gallery called LoBot in West Oakland. At the time I was living in a different warehouse and was pretty depressed. This sculpture was a way to be sonically present while physically isolated. Simultaneously, I was working at Free Radio Berkeley and playing around with pirate radio transmitters broadcasting ambient sound from my kitchen or bicycle. In my band, 0th, we used surveillance software to perform with as a way of turning technology onto itself, a way to experiment and play.

In 2009, I made *Our Best Machines Are Made of Sunshine* at Queens Nails Projects as a way to modify architecture and expand sensory perception. Using microphones, I tried to

make the front wall of the gallery storefront disappear, to have the outside penetrate in, as a way to collapse or fold architecture. I was really into Sara Oppenheimer's work and thinking how sound could function like that. Now it's turned into an interest in self-surveillance. How does behavior and perception of space change when we become aware of the noise we make? There is also a massive history and current practice of using sound surveillance for control. Disrupting the hierarchy of the watched and the watcher is something important to me.

BW

In regard to the participatory elements that you incorporate, there's potential for the viewer to unwittingly appear as a performer in the work. I'm wondering if you have thoughts on how those scenarios might fall into a category of audience labor versus agency?

JKG

That's absolutely a goal. I want the audience to work. It's passive work, though. I'm not asking them to push a button or download an app, just simply be present and listen. But I do realize that's a lot to ask sometimes. I'm under the thought process that the architectures of institutions and galleries are spaces of performance. Voluntary or not.

BW

Another thing that comes up is an idea of proficiency and that there is something gained over time from the viewer learning the language of the work and becoming proficient in ways to "play" it, sort of like an instrument. I'm also thinking about La Monte Young's relationship to duration and how he wants the viewer to calibrate to his environments over time. Do you see the work as having transformative potential?



Installation view of *Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: Poems of Electronic Air*, 2024. Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge, Massachusetts. *Variations in Mass Nos. 5, 6, 7*, 2024, vinyl, blowers, electronics, and speakers. Collaborators: Daniel Jacobs, viola and violin; Zack Reaves, cello; Rhett LaRue, 3D design. Photo by Julia Featheringill. Courtesy of Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.

JKG
Yes, I've always wanted my environments to make people more sensitive or aware of their own movement, their own choices. It's one hundred percent an instrument. Maybe someone can learn about acoustics, but there's not an agenda for that. And I sometimes purposely confuse the space by adding in moments that contradict the acoustics. I also consciously make my work pretty quick to experience because I like for the audience to be able to get an overview of the work within the first five minutes; then they can explore from there. I don't like to be demanding on time.

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Byron Westbrook is an artist and composer whose work has been presented at MoMA PS1 in New York City, ICA London, MOCA Los Angeles, and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. He currently lives in Los Angeles where he hosts the monthly radio program *Chromatic Fields* on dublab. Westbrook's work *Translucents* will be released by Shelter Press in 2024.

FRIEZE

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork Dials Down The Noise

Cassie Packard



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, 'Poems of Electronic Air', 2024, exhibition view, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge. Courtesy: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts; photograph: Julia Featheringill

'This city has a hum – a Manhattan-specific drone music – that I love,' Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork tells me when we meet in New York, after installing her first institutional solo show on the East Coast – 'Poems of Electronic Air'– at Harvard University's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. 'Different parts of the city are characterized by markedly different sounds, down to patches where you can hear whooshes from the subway below.' Sound – as material, process, system and event – is a phenomenon to which the Los Angeles-based artist is emphatically attuned. Born in Long Beach, California, Kiyomi Gork was 'one of those kids who was always making art' to make sense of the world, she says. She cut her teeth in a San Francisco noise band, playing homemade instruments like plastic inflatables rigged with contact microphones. After studying sound art at the now-defunct San Francisco Art Institute, she entered the MFA program at Stanford University, where she researched military sound technologies, and also became involved with the university's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, which was working to reconstruct original experiences of sound at archaeological sites.

'I'm interested in those scenarios where you can really hear the ways architecture controls sound and movement,' Kiyomi Gork says. This interest, along with her desire to 'create what [she] want[s] to experience', has shaped two decades' worth of sonic installations and sculptures, often involving meticulous arrangements of

microphones, speakers and sculptural or architectural elements made from visually evocative, sound-warping matter. A self-described 'materials person,' she regularly collects wide-ranging materials to reference in her art, a habit she picked up working for interior designers; the underpinnings of prohibitively expensive commercial acoustic products often inspire her selections.



Portrait of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork. Courtesy: François Ghebaly; photograph: Telavaya

Kiyomi Gork sculpts unorthodox media – such as wool, fibreglass, synthetic hair, vinyl and silicone – as well as acoustic processes like feedback, reflection, absorption and attenuation, building ecosystems that foreground sound's spatial and material dimensions. Carpenter Center gallery-goers can actively orient themselves toward certain sounds as they navigate the installations, or contribute sounds of their own movement to the installations' recording devices and feedback loops. Consequently, for a medium that can quickly flip between liberatory and disciplinary, agency in the gallery space oscillates: participants are both choreographing their own movements and being choreographed and sound slips between seeming both co-constituted and more externally imposed.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, 'Poems of Electronic Air', 2024, exhibition view, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge. Courtesy: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts; photograph: Julia Featheringill

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Coinciding with the final months of the Taipei Biennial in which she also features, 'Poems of Electronic Air' assembles recent examples from three important bodies of Kiyomi Gork's



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, 'Poems of Electronic Air', 2024, exhibition view, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge. Courtesy: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts; photograph: Julia Featheringill

work. In the exhibition's lone commissioned work, a highlight, she pokes at the brutalist self-serious rigidity of The Carpenter Center – famously the only US building designed by Le Corbusier: *Variations in Mass Nos. 5, 6, 7* (2024) is a musical choreography of bathetic inflatables installed in the building's outdoor plaza. Covered with a pattern of rendered bricks based on Harvard's buildings, three inflatable walls wilt in tandem, draping longingly around Corbusier's columns, then jointly expand, unfurling like flags and bounding into place, accompanied by overwrought swells of Romantic music and orchestral warm-ups, intercut with the sound of the inflating blowers. As it deflates modernist traditions across media, this playful engagement with notions of aural architecture underscores that sound does not occur in a vacuum – spatially, socially or culturally.

Upstairs are recent examples from two long-running sculpture series, the diffusive 'Noise Blankets' (2016–ongoing) and absorptive '*Sound Blanket*'s (2018–ongoing). Inspired by noise reduction sheets, the Sound Blankets (all 2022) manifest as the artist's scaled-up outerwear: absurdly oversize puffer jackets and peacoats – an apparent wink to Joseph Beuys – made from a whorling brown mixture of hand-felted wool and human and synthetic hair. When I stand between the coats, feeling like a kid hiding in a clothing rack, they soften the room's ambient hum. Noise Blanket No. 17 (2023) is a wall-mounted kimono – a gesture to the artist's Okinawan, Japanese and Eastern European heritage – that combines cotton and polyester with slick blooms of brown and white poured silicone. The garment is lined with metal fasteners, prompting auditory imaginings as to how the silicone, an acoustic diffuser, might reshape the sound of their snapping.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, 'Poems of Electronic Air', 2024, exhibition view, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge. Courtesy: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts; photograph: Julia Featheringill

Cloistered in an adjacent gallery is *Solutions to Common Noise Problems* (2021–ongoing), a site-responsive version of a piece that Kiyomi Gork debuted at Hong Kong's Empty Gallery in 2021. Evoking a Japanese rock garden, the immersive installation features a bed of smooth grey river stones; the wall-mounted Attenuator No. 2 (2021), a substantial tumorous form crafted from beech-coloured wool and polystyrene; and *Attenuators Nos. 9, 10, 11*,

12, 13, 14, 15 (2024), seven near floor-to-ceiling columns made of fibreglass and wool in marbled telluric tones. The latter respond to Corbusier's hallmark concrete columns, which cut across the gallery space that the installation occupies. Kiyomi Gork often masks sound frequencies that are dominant in a space with her own version of those sounds. Here, she explains, 'I was thinking about that architecturally, and how I could "mask" Corbusier's columns as unimportant in a way.'

When visitors traverse the river stones, weaving between the pillars, the crunch of their footsteps is registered by hidden microphones. The distorted, layered and amplified sound is piped back into the gallery via 12 speakers. How and where we move – gingerly toeing or boldly clomping, toward a bass trap column or an amplificatory patch – changes what we hear, and what we hear in turn changes how and where we move. If the spatial and the sonic are understood to be social, this dance of constant dis- and re-orientation opens onto the larger question of what might become possible if we oriented ourselves differently, less fixedly, to the world. 'My hope is that people come away a little bit more sensitive, a little bit more aware,' says Kiyomi Gork of the show. 'That might be simple, but it also feels meaningful, because it's so easy to turn off awareness.'



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, 'Poems of Electronic Air', 2024, exhibition view, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge. Courtesy: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts; photograph: Julia Featheringill

Small World Journal

An Interview with Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork

William Smith



Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is) 2017-ongoing, PVC tarpaulin walls, centrifugal blowers, Arduino microcontroller, MIDI and trigger relay. Dimensions variable. Music: MNDR Production: Peter Wade Keusch Production and Engineering; Singers: carolyn pennypacker riggs, jonathan Mandabach and MNDR. Courtesy of the artist, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's piece for TB13, *Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is)*, 2017–ongoing, is a dynamic work of aural architecture. Black vinyl walls inflate and deflate in sync with a multichannel sound piece playing on speakers placed in precise locations throughout the space.

Editor of Taipei Biennial 2023, William Smith, spoke with Gork about the experience of refabricating her project in Taiwan, the avant-garde roots of her interest in sound installations, and the tangled histories of blow-up structures.

William Smith: You first realized a version of this work at Empty Gallery in Hong Kong, where it was called Not Exactly B Flat. There was another iteration at Mission 365, an art space in Los Angeles. What's different about the piece in Taipei?

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: The original was made in a space probably a fifth of the size of the gallery where it was in Taipei Fine Arts Museum. When I re-installed that piece in LA, it was in a gallery closer to the size of the current space. At TFAM I knew I wanted to retain the feeling of intimacy from Empty Gallery but with the feeling of spaciousness that came about at 356 Mission. That was a goal: I wanted visitors to feel choreographed and inside the maze, but they could also get out of the maze and experience the piece from the "outside."

WS: Do you consider the installation in Taipei to be site-specific?

JKG: I don't think of my work as site-specific. It's more site dependent. Acoustics are never going to be the same from one place to the next. The sculpture was also re-fabricated for this show. We tried to improve upon the previous design by re-engineering how the walls rise and fall.

We also had to fit the scale of the museum. When I came to TFAM for a site visit, I noticed that it was a popular museum with a lot of people flowing through. I wanted the work to maintain an intimate feeling, even if there were to be 20

people in the room at once. At Empty Gallery, a maximum of around four people could experience the piece at the same time due to the size of the piece and the gallery.

Everything was designed around the inflatables. Once I understood the acoustics in the room, I started to build the audio piece. Luckily audio is fluid and flexible. You can change keys, adapt different EQ settings, and make other modifications.

WS: The works title suggests that you weren't sure beforehand what key the work would be in—previously it was B Flat.

JKG: Its frequency is about one key higher, 45hz.

WS: What accounts for that change? Is that the nature of the blowers or the inflatable materials?

JKG: Everything. The smaller blowers I've used for previous versions of the piece tend to have a very loud resonant frequency. It's a shrill tone. The ones I'm using in Taipei are each about four times bigger but the tone is not nearly as loud. They have a much softer resonant frequency. The tone has a different feeling to it. It's a different timbre.

WS: "Choreographed" is an interesting term for how visitors might experience the piece. What do you mean by that?

JKG: With a lot of my multichannel work, I think of the choreography or score as one-and-the-same with what you're hearing. What you hear is determined by where your body is placed, and where your head is positioned in the space. Your movements in the space are creating a score as you're navigating it. The sound is pulling your attention in different directions. When you are outside of the sculpture and in the larger part of the room, you're more of a voyeur—an observer of the sculpture. The acoustics are different when you're outside of the maze.

WS: When I was in the piece, I found myself paying attention not just to what I was hearing but also to the nature of listening in general.

JKG: The experience switches between listening and understanding how you're listening. I'm trying to bring about an awareness of how your body is placed and what decisions you might be making unconsciously or consciously in how you're navigating the installation. The experience also changes as more people enter the space. As the walls fall down, you can see other people in the room, creating a dynamic of observing and being observed.

WS: You introduced me to the work of Maryanne Amacher, and I'm curious how you see her influence on this piece.

JKG: I was fortunate that I was able to study sound art as an undergraduate, when I was 20 years old. One of my teachers, Laetitia Sonami, was a colleague of Maryanne Amacher's. Even though I never experienced any of Amacher's installations in person, I've had the privilege of being friends with a community of people who have been her collaborators, students, or colleagues. Even before the current interest in her work, including the publication of her selected writings and interviews by Blank Forms, I had access to some of her writing and bootleg recordings of her work. I remember watching her lecture at Ars Electronica from 1989 and thinking, f**k. She's speaking how I think about sound.

I was inspired by her process of creation, the way that she worked with sound and architecture. Sometimes she had just one

sound file that she would place in speakers all over a space. And she would live in the space, and spend time with it, slowly tweaking it, slowing changing things, listening. Our understanding of space happens over time. It changes based on other sounds that are in the space and people in the space, but also how we're feeling, the time of day, whether we're sleeping or awake.

Early on I would spend days in an installation tweaking it, changing it, listening to it, over and over again. I wasn't trying to copy what she was doing, but it was a process that I understood.

WS: I thought of Amacher's concept of "aural architecture," which encompasses everything from a physical intervention in a space to the structure of someone's ear.

JKG: We all experience sound uniquely. We are all individuals within collective architecture. It's not just our cultural background or our understanding of music or our taste level that's determinant—it's also the unique biological structure of our ears.

WS: How do you see the relationship between your role as a sound artist and your role as sculptor?

JKG: My background is in visual arts. Art galleries are not acoustically suited to what I wanted to do with sound and multichannel audio. I had to incorporate material in the spaces that would respond to and interact with the sound. I understood those interventions as sculptural.

The concept for the inflatables came about through research into acoustic modifications in stadiums. There's an acoustic product—basically, giant black inflatable balloons—that can be placed in the ceiling of stadiums used for football games or Taylor Swift concerts. When these thick vinyl balloons are inflated with air, they provide some absorption. During a pop concert that absorption is needed for the performance to sound decent. When they're deflated, they don't provide any absorption, so a sports event can feel loud. I saw this product at an audio engineering conference. The balloons were just on the ground looking like giant walls.

I'd always wanted to build my own architecture, but it's so expensive. I was just getting tired of dealing with so much material, so much mass—controlling sound requires a lot of mass. I became interested in working with inflatables as a way for me to create mass without actually having to deal with drywall, fiberglass, all these things.

WS: I wanted to ask you about the history of avant-garde music and sound, like John Cage...

JKG: We don't have to go into that lol.

WS: Lol right, but modernist music was of a moment when inflatables became an important part of avant-garde architecture. Is there an intertwined history?

JKG: When I was in school in San Francisco I got to work with Chip Lord, who was one of the Ant Farm guys. They were very involved with the San Francisco Art Institute. A big Ant Farm retrospective, featuring their inflatable architecture, also came to SFMOMAwhen I worked there. I've always been in interested in Utopian/Distopian architecture and how it relates to technology and social constructs.

I've lived on communes. I've lived in alternative warehouse spaces. I tried to do that in my twenties, in the Bay Area.

WS: There's nothing hippie-ish about your installation.

JKG: In my early work you'd see it.

WS: You seem to have turned the utopian impulse on its head by constructing an imposing maze. It feels like a barrier.

JKG: That drive to find that utopian space often results in a dystopian world. It's like they don't exist without the other. Those things exist in opposition together. That was my lived experience, even before trying to be involved in those kinds of communities. Escapism, liberatarian thought, the fetish for self-sufficiency. There's a desire to strive for something "better," and in that process it can make the world worse.

WS: I see a lot of skepticism about avant-garde and utopian histories in your work.

JKG: A lot of those histories were made by a very specific demographic. They were not in acknowledgement of the land itself. Being part Indigenous, which is not something I speak about a lot, I felt attuned to the contradictions and hypocrisies of these histories.

It's not just something that I see, it also kind of exists in the whole East West thing. My dad is Jewish but he's Buddhist. My mom is Japanese but is atheist. A lot of Buddhist texts were translated by Jewish white dudes, and it's all been transformed, rebranded in California, and fed back in a certain way. Here we are striving to create these utopian communities when actually those communities did exist. We just killed them. What the f**k is up with that?

WS: That heaviness comes into the work. In the way you've lit the space—or rather kept it mostly in darkness.

JKG: But the work is also funny.

WS: Many people might associate the walls with bouncy castles. And when the walls deflate, become flaccid, and fall down—that's the essence of physical comedy.

JKG: At the same time, inflatables are also used in architecture of war, whether as cheap, quickly constructed hangars, or as obstacle courses for training. Some of the obstacle courses are made by the same companies that make bouncy castles. There are complex tensions in this material. Technology that's used for playful ends often stems from something dark and sinister. At least in the US.

WS: Those implications are present for sure. Also fetishistic associations: shiny, shiny plastic.

JKG: Oh yeah. I've always leaned toward that: attraction/repulsion.

WS: Could you talk about the use of pop, or pop-adjacent vocals in the audio? Is that part of the public address of the piece?

JKG: Up until this piece I had only really worked with noise, non-language-based sound. And when I say language, to me language includes music. Language includes any kind of content that's understood by other people without explanation. I think doing this work is important in some place that has its own history and relationship to pop music outside the US and the pop machine structure.

I worked with friends whose jobs are in the pop music machine, writing commercial songs or writing songs for other singers or working in production studios. I'm still grappling with how that language is understood, disrupted, manipulated, and can fall apart—but can also be very powerful.

For a long time, I didn't listen to music. I still listen to music only in certain circumstances.

As a kid, I got involved with noise and punk more because I didn't like feeling manipulated. I didn't watch Hollywood movies starting from a very young age because I felt like I was being controlled by the media. It felt very weird. Why am I crying? Why do I feel sad? Later on, I was able to let up, I thoroughly enjoy lots of that stuff. But I did not understand it at first; it made me immediately uncomfortable.

WS: Your piece feels like a controlled exposure to the emotional manipulation of the pop machine. The polished vocals are so evocative in your work, but they're in fragments.

JKG: You have to piece it together. That's consistent with all my work that deals with noise. It relies on the audience to do the work of putting the piece together. And everyone is going to put that piece together in their own way. That ties back to Amacher's thinking about how we all hear differently, we're all very structurally different. How can work acknowledge and embrace that rather than dictating what the audience has to feel.



Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is) 2017-ongoing, PVC tarpaulin walls, centrifugal blowers, Arduino microcontroller, MIDI and trigger relay. Dimensions variable. Music: MNDR Production: Peter Wade Keusch Production and Engineering; Singers: carolyn pennypacker riggs, jonathan Mandabach and MNDR. Courtesy of the artist, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles

frieze

Trailer for a Spectacle: Taipei Biennial 2023

Sean Burns

'*Small World*', the title of the Taipei Biennial 2023, contains both a promise and a threat. It speaks to a stricken, shrinking and interconnected planet but also to a sense of insularity, intimacy and proximity. As with most biennials, the size of the curatorial task at hand – structuring a sprawling show across three floors of the Fine Arts Museum, featuring 58 artists and 120 individual works – calls for a conceit broad enough to feel encompassing but specific enough to hold critical sway.



Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is), 2017–ongoing, PVC tarpaulin walls, centrifugal blowers, Arduino microcontroller, MIDI and trigger relay, dimensions variable. Courtesy: the artist and Taipei Fine Arts Museum

This iteration – curated by Freya Chou, Reem Shadid and Brian Kuan Wood – errs towards a looser application of curatorial authority in a refreshing departure from the more theoretical approaches adopted by previous curators, such as Mali Wu and Francesco Manacorda in '*Post-Nature – A Museum as an Ecosystem*' (2018). Here, the recurring motifs are scale, circularity, sound – or lack of – and anti-spectacle. The works that obfuscate notions of spectacle by engaging with absence (of body or noise) offer the show's greatest delights, cleverly conveying to the audience the curators' awareness of the double-bind of the biennial format, which often seeks to achieve too much under the rubric of a city or nation...

'Small World' has a feeling of lightness about it that I like. The curators haven't been afraid to programme idiosyncratically (one room contains a spirited small survey of Taiwanese maverick Li Jiun-Yang, replete with glow-in-the-dark drawings and bespoke musical instruments) and according to their fascination with sound and its relationship to visual art. The show contains some exceptional works, none more exciting than Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's *Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is)* (2023), about whom Wood quips: 'You can tell she's a club kid.' It's a searing installation of ominous black, rubbery walls inflated by six air pumps. Resonant frequencies from the pumps blast out of six speakers in a play between muscularity, circularity and softness.

Biennials can often feel like exhausting gauntlet runs. However, there's a strong sense here that Chou, Shadid and Wood had fun with the proposition while remaining attentive to the location's unique specificities. In Taiwan, the impetus to crystalize the optics of a national identity and galvanize the island's autonomy has never been more urgent. Art can certainly – though not unproblematically – be a way to do that. '*Small World*' triumphs in the charmingly reluctant moments when it appears to toy with the expectations of the occasion.

artasiapacific

Taipei Biennial 2023: The Promises and Perils of a "Small World"

HG Masters



Installation view of JACQUELINE KYOMI GORK's Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is), 2023, mixed media installation, inflatable sculpture, speakers, dimensions variable. Courtesy TFAM.

How small is the world? Small enough that at the Taipei Biennial 2023's opening weekend (November 16–19) at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), you could experience Indonesian electronic musician Julian Abraham Togar jamming with the abstract "kinetic paintings" created live by 87-year-old Palestinian artist Samia Halaby, using software she programmed. Small enough for a meteorite, a relic from the time of our solar system's formation, to fit on a child's fingertip, as captured by Taiwanese American artist Arthur Ou in the photograph *Untitled (Octavia with Meteor 1)* (2020)...

In matters of scale, the small (the microscopic, the local, the immediate, the personal) can wield sizable influence on the large..."Small World" is, physically, an event contained within the galleries of TFAM, unlike many biennials worldwide that expand into the city. Reflecting many artists' concern for modes of care and emotional support, several works of "Small World" also created their own audiovisual universes. In the TFAM courtyard, Natascha Sadr Haghighian's installation *Watershed* (2023) comprised six amorphous, bodily-like forms composed from reflective plastic animal figurines and perched on top of walkers; they doubled as resonant bodies for speakers for an immersive musical composition based around a Cantonese pop song by Karen Mok with lyrics translated to Minnan and Mandarin.

Also featuring music as a core element to its experience of space, J*acqueline Kiyomi Gork's installation's Not Exactly (Whatever the New Key Is)* (2023) is a near-pitch-black room with a maze of inflatable black walls filled with a medley of songs—the music crescendos and then the walls dramatically collapse and the sounds of air-blowers fill the room with strangely harmonic frequencies. In each of these two works, emotive strands of pop music are expanded and stretched to fit with abstracted sculptural installations about forms of collapse, care, and support at key times in one's life...



Visual Arts Center

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork
Like a Breath of Fresh Water

Visual Arts Center
The University of Texas at Austin
Sept 22 – Dec 2, 2023

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork: Like a Breath of Fresh Water is organized by MacKenzie Stevens, former director, and Melissa Fandos, VAC curatorial fellow, 2023–2024.

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Lantern images courtesy of the artist.
Japanese Tea Garden images courtesy of the artist.
Installation images by Alex Boeschenstein and Melissa Nuñez.

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What follows is an excerpt from an interview with the Visual Arts Center's fall 2023 artist-in-residence, Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork.

Gork builds immersive installations that combine sound, amorphous sculptures, performance, and architecture. The interview speaks to Gork's first representational work, which takes the form of a Japanese lantern, and is currently on view at the VAC. The interview was conducted by Melissa Fandos in September 2023 with editorial assistance from MacKenzie Stevens. It has been edited and condensed for clarity.

MELISSA FANDOS **You often build immersive installations combining sound and soft sculptures. We expect a sculpture to be made of stone or bronze—heavy, enduring materials...**

JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORK And masculine...

MF **And masculine. Instead you use wool, foam, hair, and air blowers. For the installation at the VAC, you model a stone lantern from air and gray vinyl. How do you make material choices for your work?**

JKG This is the first time I'm actually taking an object and playing with it. Also, it's not stone. It's concrete, which is super important because it was cast and not carved. I do not know when it was made, but sometime between WWII and the 1960s. Japanese imports of stone lanterns and stone lamps were just not financially possible for my family. They were all pretty low income farmers and domestic workers outside of Sacramento—where some of the worst discrimination took place. My great uncle bought a kit from Japan that showed him how to make the mold, and then he cast them. Every family member got one. The one I have is the lantern my grandfather got from his brother.





MF **Do you know what your great uncle was doing around that time?**

JKG No idea. A lot of my interest in working with family objects is because I don't know anything about them. I feel like a lot of the Japanese American experience as far as being a *yonsei*, which is fourth generation, has to do with not knowing. And, accepting the not knowing and still trying to engage with it... Returning to the question of materials, it was driven by my desire to spend time with this object, to kind of honor it and also, in a way, play with it. It's sad to me that my relatives and ancestors are so lost.

I had already been doing some research about Japanese lanterns before I came to Austin because I inherited this one last year. I started to go to more Japanese gardens in California to check them out and I discovered how weird they are. A lot of these gardens were created in the 1960s as friendship or peace gardens. They were a cultural gift to the cities in which they are located by Japanese and Japanese Americans, maybe as a way to be accepted. Today many are run down and neglected. Doing this research meant I was traveling to different Japanese gardens around California in small towns—not the nice big ones like those in San Francisco [Golden Gate Park] that are well-maintained.

During my residency at the VAC, I visited the Japanese garden in San Antonio [Japanese Tea Garden]. To me it was the most alive garden I had been to. It was also the least "Japanese." It was renamed a Chinese Garden during WWII and maintained that name until 1984. It has been cared for by many non-Japanese gardeners and is full of overgrown flower beds and tropical plants, and there is even a large waterfall. The torii gate at the entrance is made out of faux wood cement by Mexican artist Dionicio Rodriguez. It has morphed, but it is alive. Especially compared to the neglected gardens in California. And that's sort of how I feel about being Japanese. Morphed but alive.





The first thing that came to me while thinking about this piece happened while I was sitting in the VAC's courtyard, hearing the natural sound of the water with the combination of the Texas heat. Even the sound of water can cool you down...I learned that the particular shape of the lantern my great uncle cast is called a snow lantern, a *yukimi doro*. And they're usually placed next to water. Sometimes even having one leg in the water. And when those two things clicked together, I thought, okay, that's a connection.

When I sat next to the lantern and the fountain in the courtyard a complex melancholy feeling washed over me. There's a melancholy—a sad, beautiful—kind of thing that I wanted to explore. I hope through the process of creating this piece, working with the sound and being in that environment, I'll get more insights into the object and try to transform that feeling of disconnect that I have with the lantern. Because I still feel very disconnected. I don't know much about my great uncle. I don't know where the other lanterns are. There's so much I don't know.

MF **I think that's a beautiful project to say I'm going sit with the not knowing and I'm going sit with the emotions that I feel toward it. And that can be the end. Maybe you have something on the other side, or you have clarity about something, but also maybe you don't and it's just the time that you sat with it. Thank you for expressing that.**

JKG Yeah. Thank you for asking because I hadn't put that into words before. But this is my process—I work very intuitively and things just sort of come together through various forms of research and desires.

MF **What drew you to making the lantern into an inflatable?**

JKG I think one of the reasons is because I find inflatables to be fairly sad...There's a sort of tiredness that comes with it, a playfulness, goofiness, or sadness as it deflates. It breathes. The audience usually empathizes with that or anthropomorphizes the inflatable.

Something that also interests me is substituting materials in the objects I make. For example, in my silicon and felt works I try to make the material look like marble or fiberglass. This takes the visual cues of a mass produced or sourced architectural material and turns it into something handmade, almost domestic. When I learned that the lantern was cast concrete (growing up I thought it was stone) I wanted to retain the shape but change the original material into something else. I couldn't figure out how to fill it with water in a safe way so filling it with air made sense to me. I wanted to take the material typically used for bouncy castles or advertising balloons and make something more personal, unique.







MF **Can you share more about your process to compose the sound for this work?**

JKG During the process of making the piece, and once the inflatable and tech were set up, I spent four days composing the audio and the inflatable choreography. During this time many fears came up. I feared I was making a mockery of the lantern by turning it into a cartoon-looking blow-up toy. I respect this object and what it represents, and did not want to make a joke out of it. I mean, there is humor, but more of the morbid kind, not goofy.

The acoustics of the room overpowered the sound, and I was unsure what the sound would ultimately be in that kind of architecture. Each blower is quite loud and carries a tone. I measured the tone of each blower in their three settings of operation: turning on, fully inflated, and turning off. Once the piece is inflated, the tone gets more pronounced, and as it's slowing down it quiets and gets lower in tone. In the past, all of my inflatables have been abstract shapes with an audio composition that sounds musical. Because this work at the VAC is not an abstract sculpture, I thought the sound could be abstract, which is something I've never done before.

I took the frequency calculations and created audio filters that resonated the dominant tone of each blower with its upper and lower harmonics. I then ran the water sound through the filters, sometimes multiple times. It ended up being unexpectedly beautiful. I was able to transform something I thought was isolated and melancholy into something connected and beautiful.



MF **After having some space from the installation, can you share your reflections on the work and how you hope someone visiting the space might engage with it?**

JKG I hope the audience spends time with it; sits with it inside the gallery and outside in the courtyard; breathes with it; and shares in the excitement as it finally blows up almost whole, but not fully.

While I'm still not sure how to address the before and after of creating this piece, I now feel connected to the lantern. I have my own connection to it.

I would like to thank the VAC and MacKenzie Stevens for allowing me to experiment in this way and connect to something very personal.



ARTnews

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork Brings the Experience of Techno Warehouses to the ICA LA

BY FRANCESCA ATON February 16, 2023 8:30am



Installation view of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork's *the input of this machine is the power an output contains*, 2020; in the exhibition "Made in L.A. 2020: a version" at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2020.
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND EMPTY GALLERY, HONG KONG. PHOTO JOSHUA WHITE/JWPICTURES.COM.

Inspired by the music of Los Angeles’s techno warehouses, Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork has created a visceral site-specific work that plays with the embodiment of sound.

Situated in in the ICA LA’s project room (through May 14), the installation Into/Loving/Against/Lost in the Loop pulls audio from the neighboring exhibition about Milford Graves, the drummer and artist who died in 2021. This includes the sounds Graves made for the ICA show, as well as any visitor interventions. One can, for example, scream in the galleries and Kiyomi Gork’s audio equipment will pick it up in her installation in the adjacent room.

These sounds are filtered through SuperCollider software, which the artist worked on with LA-based DJ and producer Ezra Rubin, also known as Kingdom. Together, Kingdom and Kiyomi Gork created a rhythmic beat.

Within Kiyomi Gork’s installation, one is prompted to traverse a maze-like structure made of clear-cut vinyl curtains hung from a steel armature. While felt and wool line the structure, the sound still bleeds between the galleries of Graves’s and Kiyomi Gork’s shows, creating a unique sonic experience.

As you’re walking through the show, curator Caroline Ellen Liou said, “you’re really questioning your own perception of what you’re hearing. Is that what I just heard in the outside galleries, or is it being distorted?”

Though Kiyomi Gork’s practice has long investigated the ways sound impacts body movement, this is the first time the artist has experimented with beats.

“Rhythm and beats really can take over space,” Kiyomi Gork said. “When you have a beat, your body automatically associates with it. That’s a lot of power.”



Installation view of Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork’s *Inside You Is Me*, 2017; at V-A-C for Geometry of Now Festival, Moscow.
PHOTO RUY SANCHEZ-BLANCO AND ROBIN RODGER

Moving through Kiyomi Gork's installation is both an experiment in choreography and a more philosophical quandary. As in LA's techno warehouses, one's body might be drawn into the somatic impulse of a generated rhythm. And, yet, visitors can pick where and how they move through the installation—if they choose to experience it at all.

"You can choose to go left or right, forward or around the corner," Kiyomi Gork explained. "One of the funny parts is that the maze is clear. You can see everywhere you're going, but you're corralled by these clear plastic curtains. And so, what is the investigated is the sound. The sound is changing as you're turning the corners; what you're walking toward or away from is the audio."

The maze structure—as opposed to a labyrinth with a set pathway—allows for individual choices and gives a sense of agency to those walking through. While the materials absorb a certain amount of audio, the bleed between sounds can impact how one processes this audio.

"I've placed things very specifically so that you might hear bits of audio when you walk toward something, and I've kind of played around like that throughout the entire space," Kiyomi Gork said.

Not unlike a club, one might bop to Kiyomi Gork and Kingdom's beats, but what's heard inside the installation will vary dramatically depending on when one visits it. As Graves's videos play in adjacent galleries, different sounds will get piped in. And then there's the fact that the Graves show's attendees will always generate their own distinct soundtracks.

Kiyomi Gork's "work sits really comfortably at [the intersection of] both isolating people and then bringing them into this collective experience," says Liou. "There's no clear answer. [The experience] is always both/and."

Ultimately, like a feedback loop, Kiyomi Gork brings to the forefront questions of how we as individuals impact the larger whole of our surrounding environment.

https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/jacqueline-kiyomi-gork-ica-la-1234657502/
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Ysabelle Cheung, "Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork", *ArtForum*, Vol. 60, No.5, January 2022

ARTFORUM

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.



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

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

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 Fifteeenth 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*

https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/202201/jacqueline-kiyomi-gork-87516
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Lumi Tan, “Setting the Stage: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork”, *Mousse Magazine*, Issue 77, October 2021



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 themself 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.

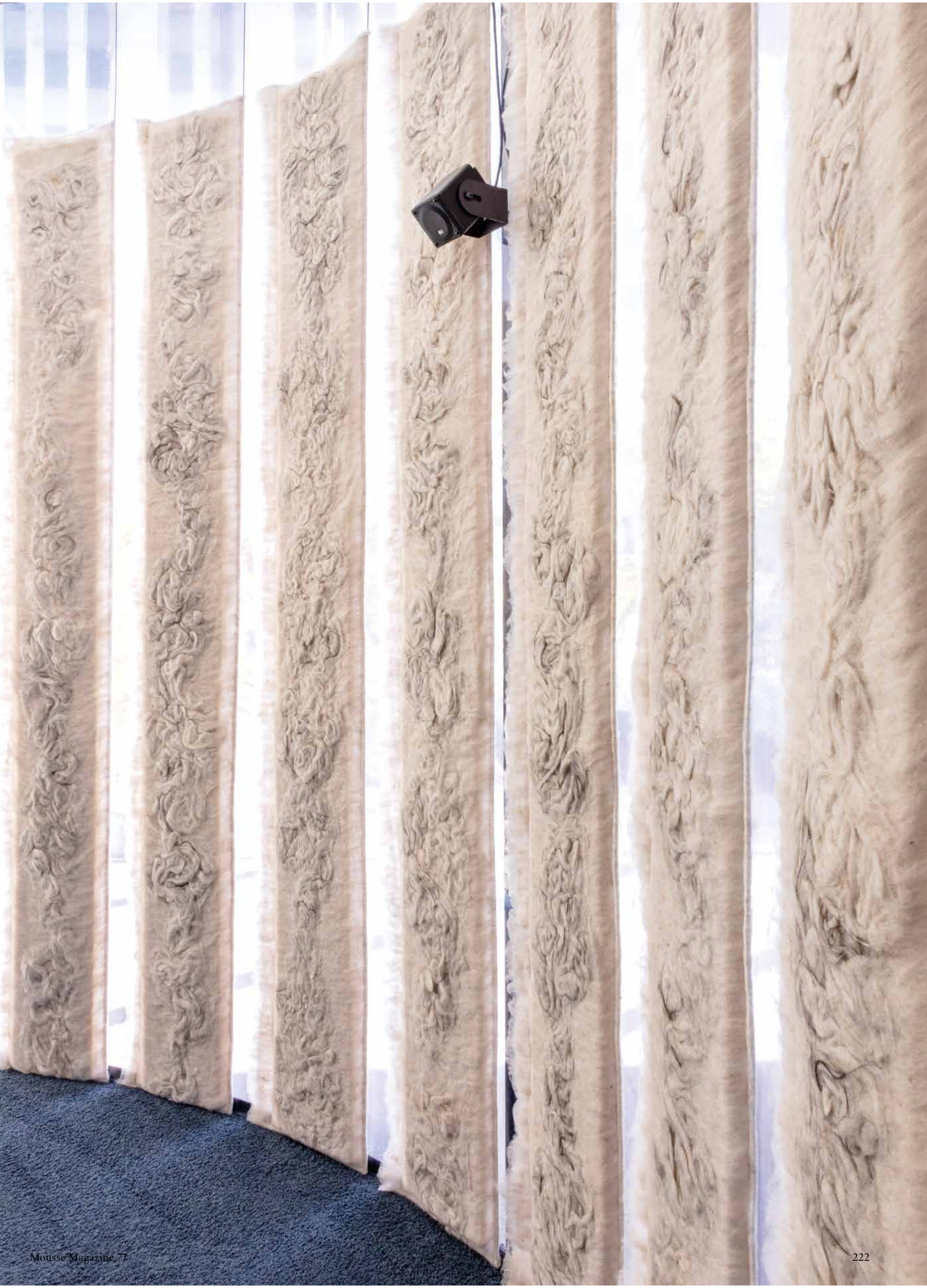
They repeatedly call upon applications of architecture beyond site specificity; hand-sewn, felted garments and blankets, which refer to exterior and interior bodily protection while providing acoustic baffling, have long been part of her practice. Set apart from the main installation at Empty Gallery 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 unwereable. 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 Angeels / 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











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Paul Laster, “Highlights Of Frieze New York 2018”, *Art Asia Pacific*, 04 May 2018

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.

http://artasiapacific.com/Blog/HighlightsOfFriezeNewYork2018
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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.

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"In their own words: ten Frieze New York artists tell us about their works for the Frame section", *The Art Newspaper*, 03 May 2018

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. "

https://www.theartnewspaper.com/gallery/in-their-own-words-ten-artists-tell-us-about-their-works-for-frame

© The Art Newspaper

Alex Greenerger, "Sound Body, Sound Mind: At Frieze, a Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon Installation Shapes the Way Viewers Move"
ARTnews, 02 May 2018

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 wooly-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.

https://www.artnews.com/art-news/market/sound-body-sound-mind-frieze-jacqueline-kiyomi-gordon-installation-shapes-way-viewers-move-10255/

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MOUSSE

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…

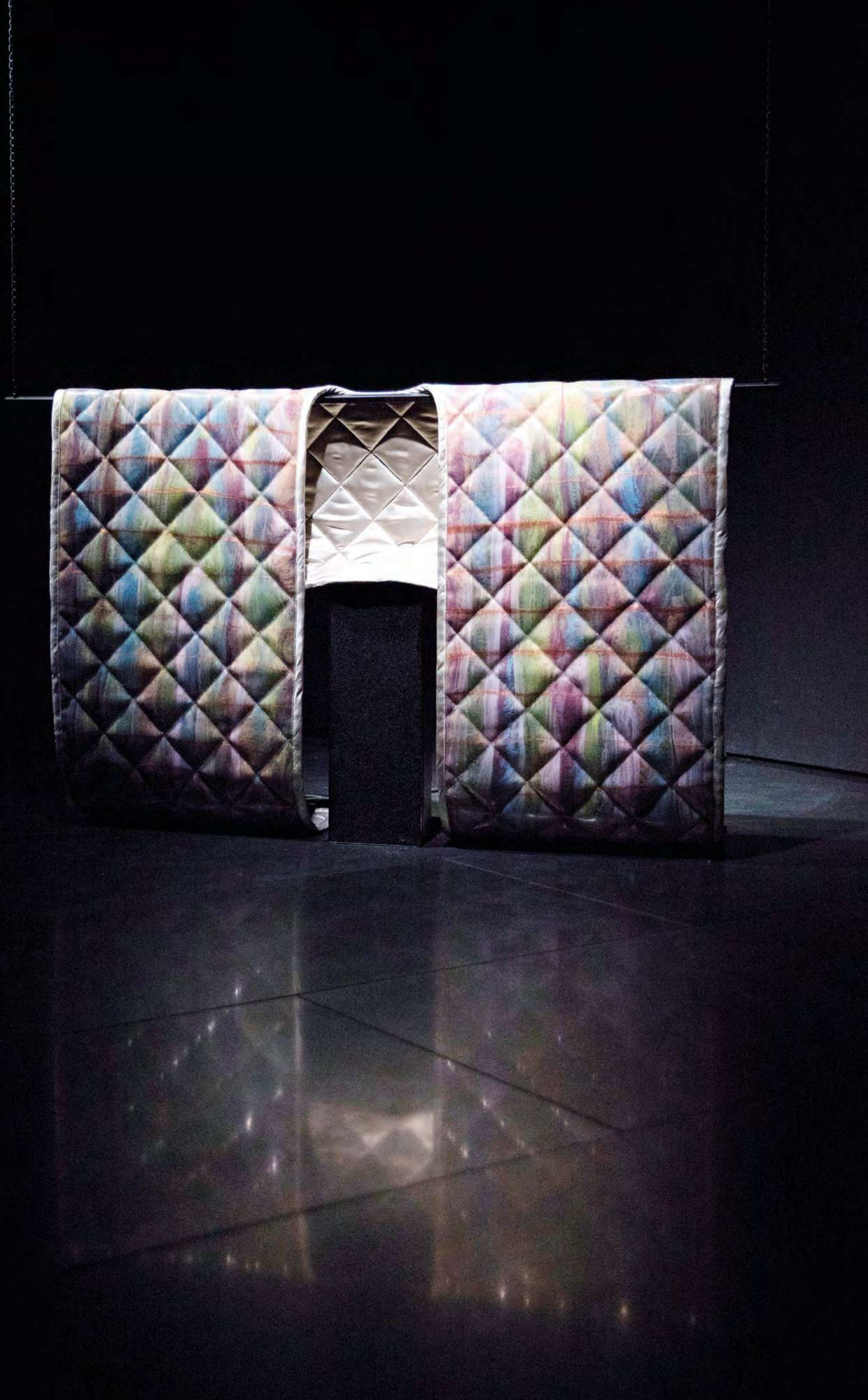
JKG
Like a giant blanket covered in speakers?

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?

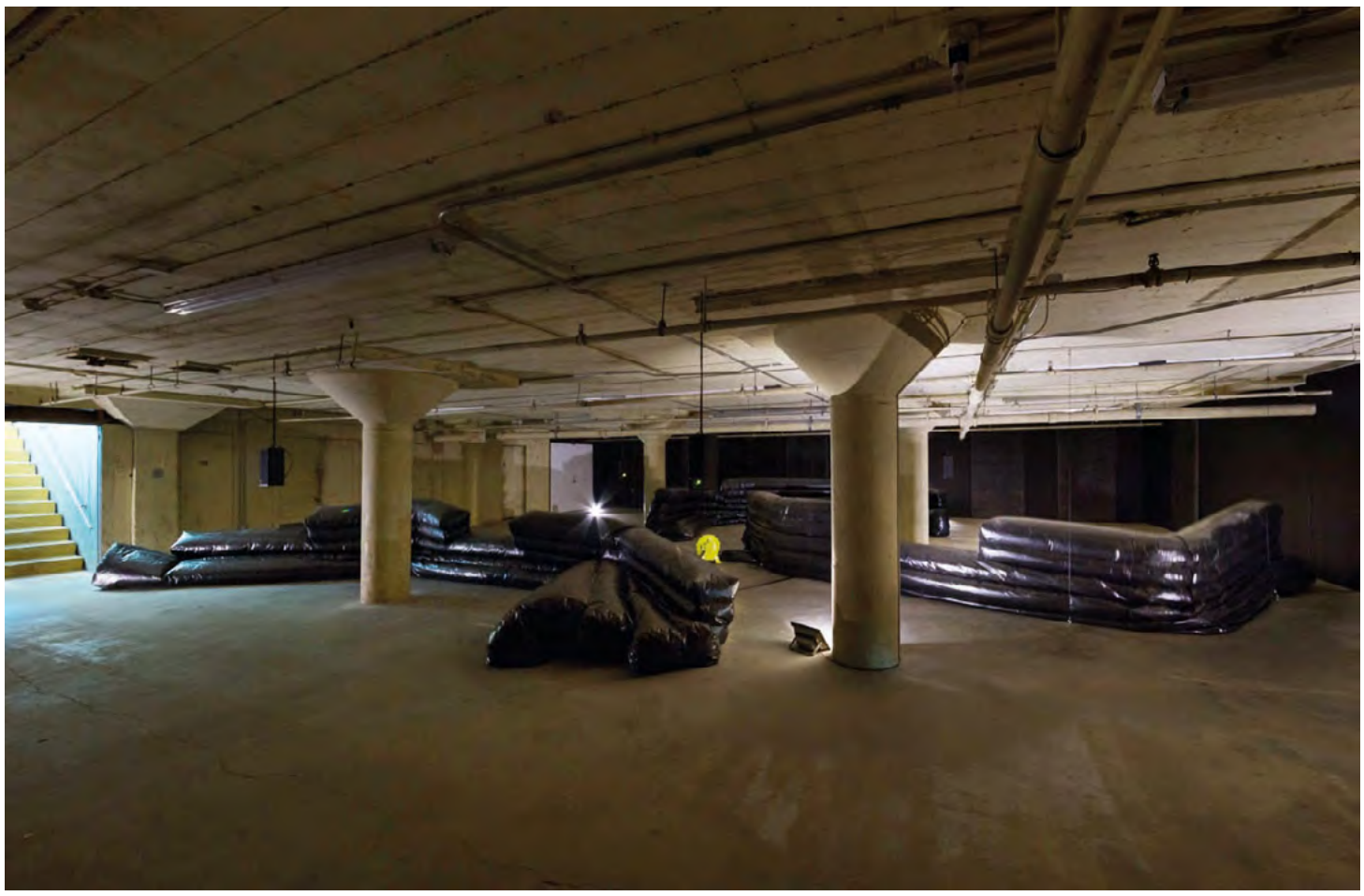
JKG For instance, one of the Stanford research projects focused on a pre-Incan temple that had completely perplexing architecture when considered through a normal physical orientation. There were several small chambers that weren't big enough for humans to walk through, but then they found that it's 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

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.

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 Kunsthal 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.

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Brady Ng, “Catchy”, *Art Asia Pacific*, Summer 2017

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 kunsthaus 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.

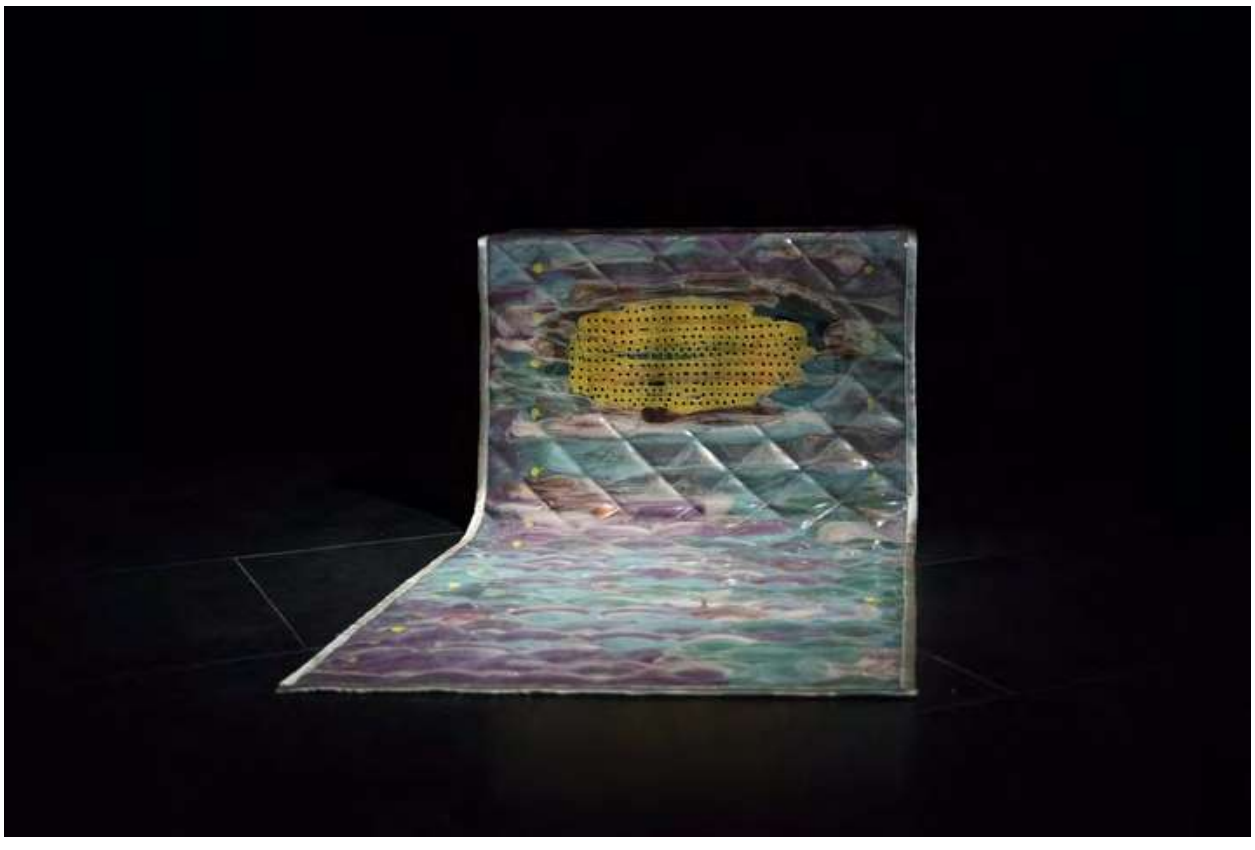
On the lower floor, five speakers emitted Björkian vocal notes and melodies, their angles of audio coverage guided by the gallery’s walls and blankets that were draped over metal frames that housed the custom-made equipment. Here, we heard clean tones, snippets of mumbled song lyrics and breathing sounds.



Installation view of **JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON**’s “Catchy” at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, 2017. Courtesy Empty Gallery.]



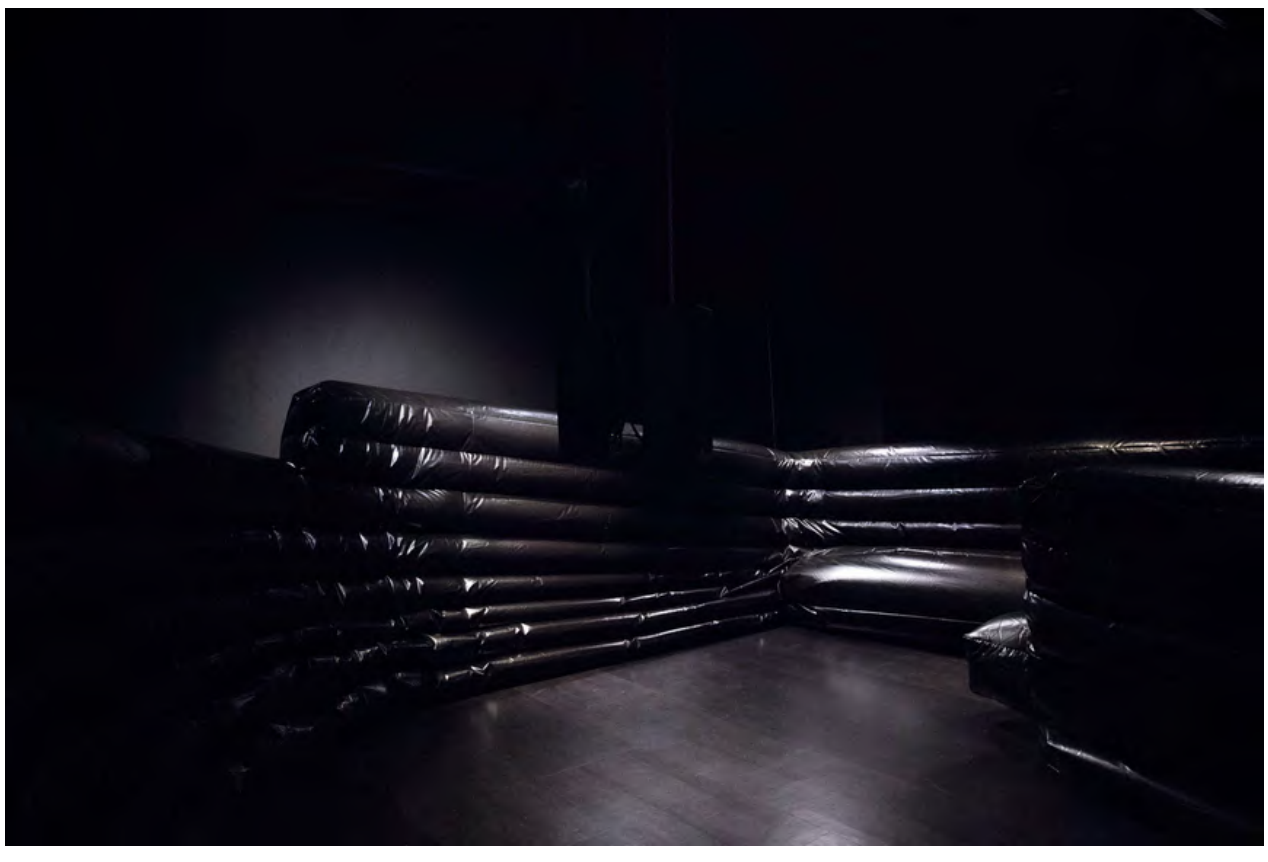
JACQUELINE KIYOMI GORDON, Noise Blanket, No. 10, 2017, poured silicone, artificial fur, nylon, steel armature, 189 × 76 cm. Courtesy Empty Gallery, Hong Kong.



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.

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