

For Haegue Yang's first solo exhibition in the Nordic region she presents a series of new works conceived especially for Bergen Kunsthall as well as one major sculptural piece from 2010. Yang's works are internationally appreciated, and known for an eloquent and seductive language of visual abstraction that is often combined with sensory experiences. Less well known is her ongoing research, which is empowered by close readings of connected biographical narratives about historical figures, and builds on underlying references to cultural, social and political history; or – as in this exhibition – direct dialogue with an individual artist or a particular work from the history of art.

Space 2: Windy Orbits

Entering the exhibition “Journal of Echomimetic Motions”, one first encounters the wind and sound from the paired sculptures, Windy Orbits (2013). Even though Windy Orbits stands static on the floor, each sculpture manifests its mechanical motion fully. The two sculptures are composed of eight electric table fans stacked vertically in three layers. Nearly half of these fans are equipped with rotating blades covered with either nickel-plated or brass-plated bells. Powered by rotation and oscillation, sound and wind fill the space with a continuous low murmur, as if the two Windy Orbits are in conversation with each other in an unknown language.

Yang often works with the idea of pairs or couples in juxtapositions of halves, twins and doubles, combining to form parts of a collectivity. The two sculptures involve rotations at different speeds, miming the mutations of self or subjectivity, yearning for each other while locked in their mechanical circling. Yang's conceptual interest in recurrences, repetitions, circlings as well as her sculptural approach to the ‘portraying power’ of anthropomorphic sculptures is clearly articulated in Windy Orbits. Ironically, their ‘human’ quality is achieved by using either everyday objects or mechanical devices. Windy Orbits announces and introduces “Journal of Echomimetic Motions” in a non-verbal way, but with a sensory approach that mobilizes a kind of ‘voice’ and ‘touch’ by creating sound and wind.

After this introduction of key elements such as motion, sound, rotation, geometry and dance, one can further explore their recurrences in various modes throughout the exhibition. The architecture of the exhibition ensures that you enter it in the middle room of the Kunsthall. A spiralling line on the floor starts here – at the centre of the exhibition – and leads directly into the largest hall of the exhibition in the space to the right.

Space 1: Sonic Figures

The biggest exhibition hall is transformed into an experimental stage where sculptures take over the role of protagonists, while wall pieces form the scenic structure of a theatre. Continuing her dialogue with the canon of modernist art, Yang explores her interest in the figurative and spatial elements of the Bauhaus master Oskar Schlemmer's Triadic Ballet from 1922. A series of five new sonic sculptures are surrounded by a scenic environment of collages mounted on painted walls. These elements of colour, texture, geometry and composition in collages reconfigure the order of the ballet's three acts into a spatial arrangement and complete an expansive installation, while the sculptures invite us to dance with them rather than dance in front of us.

The five sculptures in the series Sonic Figures (2013) are all based on the costumes and characters in Schlemmer's ballet piece. Yang has abstracted the figures further by employing bells, which appear at one and the same time as distinctly personified characters, and as formal sculptures based on geometric forms such as spheres, domes and triangles. Two of the figures are hung from the roof with steel wires and a heavy-duty spring and can be set in swinging motion by the visitors pushing or pulling. The other three figures are mounted on casters and are equipped with handles so they can be moved around the room. The figures are 'mutant hybrids' of sculptures and active performers, situating the space somewhere between theatre and exhibition hall.

The room is decorated in three colours – black, pink and yellow – with shapes and figures inspired by Triadic Ballet, each referring to one act of the piece. Originating in the work type known as Trustworthies, but specially conceived for "Journal of Echomimetic Motions", collages are placed on the four walls in three colours, composing a fluid, abstract yet tactile narrative. Trustworthies are primarily made of used envelopes where the security patterns are visible. Recently, Yang has introduced sandpaper in addition to the envelopes, and Trustworthies (2013) comprises a total of eleven pieces, each of which consists of up to eight individual collage frames. Together, the collages and wall paint constitute an extensive and complex composition that forms a dialectical stage design in the exhibition space.

Bells have been a recurring element in a number of Yang's works in recent years, and have most recently been used as the main material in several sculptures, starting with some light-sculptures as well as Dress Vehicles (2012), and featuring more prominently in Sonicwears (2013), Sonic Rotating Ovals (2013) and Sonic Dances (2013). All five Sonic Figures are entirely covered by this material and thus become resonating bodies; visitors are invited to move (push or pull) the sculptures and listen to the various sonic nuances of the figures, simultaneously dancing to the sound and playing it. These impressive arrays of the many bells in a complex composition make

Sonic Figures visually grandiose.

Space 3: Sonic Rotating Lines and Sonic Rotating Geometries

Space 3 of the Kunsthall is occupied by another sonic sculptural series, Sonic Rotating Lines (2013) and Sonic Rotating Geometries (2013). These 'lines' and 'geometric shapes' are wall-mounted objects covered over with nickel-plated bells, and can be set in rotation by hand. This manual input transforms the hard-edged shapes into 'circles', disintegrating the rigorous physical angular geometry into a illusory geometry of circles. The act of spinning also triggers the tinkling of the bells, filling the surrounding space with a rhythmic sound corresponding to the speed of rotation. The principle of rotation has appeared numerous times in earlier works. However, there is a new element in this presentation – a painted circular colour field behind each of the ten objects, whose diameter is identical to the range of movement of the work. When the objects are set in motion an optical colour-dissolve effect arises between the object and the painted wall behind it. The painted circles on the wall are in bright monochrome – but not quite pure primary – colours selected from the palette of the spaces called Ciné-Dancing and Salle de Fête at Aubette 1928 in Strasbourg. Aubette 1928 is a historic masterwork designed by Theo van Doesburg, Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Yang had an exhibition there earlier this year, where her Sonicwears (2013) and Dress Vehicles (2012) were pre- sented in dialogue with this impressive modernist interior design.

Space 4: Medicine Men

In the final space of the exhibition Yang shows an intimate con- figuration of six light-sculptures which together make up the work Medicine Men (2010). Under the title Warrior Believer Lover (2011), Yang made her largest presentation of so-called light sculptures, and Medicine Men is one of two prominent groups in Warrior Believer Lover which was comprised of 33 light sculptures. Usually consisting of clothes racks from shop displays, the light-sculptures are characterized by a highly varied selection of materials and objects which she assembles on these racks, ranging from everyday household articles or mass-produced, cheap, often 'gaudy' trinkets in strong colours to hand-knitted or crocheted elements as well as natural materials such as driftwood, dried herbs and mushrooms. Medicine Men is accompanied by Igor Stravinsky's ballet compo- sition The Rite of Spring (1913). A recording of this piece will be played back in the room two to three times per day according to Islamic prayer times.

Yang's anthropomorphic light-sculptures are configured into specific 'types' – in this case medicine men (i.e. shamans). A wide selection of wigs is one of the shared elements that gives a unified

character to this group, in which highly individual peculiarities portray various possible modes of body extension that medicine men often use to transcend the human dimension. The different colours and shapes of the wigs suggest different personalities, something the artist also underscores or ironizes in the titles of the various figures (for example Hairy Bloody and Hairy Noble).

Like Sonic Figures and Windy Orbits, these figures are also mounted on steel racks running on casters. But unlike Sonic Figures, neither Windy Orbit nor Medicine Men can be physically moved around by the public. Fixed in position by electric cables, they only imply motion rather than actually being mobile. Common to all the figures that populate the exhibition, however, is that they stand on a kind of legs (the rack) and feet (the casters). They stand on the same ground as we do, and they have a shape and scale that imply certain personalities. This anthropomorphic aspect of the light-sculptures prevents them from becoming mere formal art objects that we might view at a contemplative distance. They exist next to us, share the immediate spatial context with us and appear to us as subjects rather than objects.

“Journal of Echomimetic Motions” is an ambitious exhibition in which the artist has made a bold attempt at reaching new depths in her ongoing practice through a significant number of new works. The exhibition can be seen as a statement about artistic process, where Yang is critically testing new grounds and moving beyond already tried experiments. This reaching-out towards abstraction by way of figuration is perhaps a hint at where the artist’s production will head in the future. In Sonic Figures we see a move towards machine and robot aesthetics, referencing historical avant-garde movements, while simultaneously investigating the tradition of figurative sculpture. In Sonic Rotating Lines and Sonic Rotating Geometries she continues her merging of different fields of practice by fusing performance, conceptual art and philosophical inquiry.

“Journal of Echomimetic Motions” looks into notions such as motion and mobility. These ideas have long been a central focus for Yang, but she insists on questioning them over and over again, yet each time with a new modality of language. Mobility is manifested in this exhibition not only in purely physical or formal terms as mechanical devices and kinetic constructions, but also in political and historical terms. Mobility, understood as ‘mental nomadism’, progressive movement as well as mechanical and bodily motion, is also related to major concerns to which Yang constantly returns: migration, postcolonial diasporas, enforced exile, social mobility or what one could perhaps call ‘lifetime mobility’. With her mobile performative sculptures Yang negates the static furnishings of the exhibition space with its fixed installations and carefully placed objects and introduces instability and continuous change into an otherwise solid institutional framework. Understood as complex concepts, motion and mobility become a fruitful focus for Yang’s multi-faceted artistic

exploration.

Haegue Yang (b. 1971) was born in Seoul and currently lives and works in Berlin and Seoul.

(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)