

Haegue Yang GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL

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PARIS

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The themes that Haegue Yang investigates in her recent work—the sixth sense, grafts between the natural and technological realms—are always seen as in process. In the end she leaves her own thoughts regarding them unresolved, as signaled by her recurrent use of the adverb *quasi* in titles of works and shows over the past decade or so: *Quasi-MB*, 2006–2007, and “Quasi-Pagan Minimal” and “Quasi-Pagan Modern” (both 2016). This prefix indicates the incomplete attainment of a condition, a property, or an identity, suggesting that the status of the work is suspended and calling attention to a lack, a

structural imperfection. Distributed through the gallery space in “Quasi-ESP,” her recent show, works from three series entered into a dialogue, opening up to unexpected associations, for example in variations of the color yellow: faded in the case of straw, amber in the varnish for the wood of the paintings, gilded in the Chromolux paper of the collages.

In “The Intermediates,” 2015–, a series of sculptures produced in Korea out of artificial straw, Yang explores that material’s richness. Fake straw appears identical to real straw, yet it has no odor and does not rot or decay. Used for clothing as well as furnishings, this ersatz substance is at once solid and light, and unites a morphological pliability with a sense of precariousness and the unfinished.

While one might associate straw with rustic craftsmanship, basketry, and furnishings in a country house, it does not carry any specific cultural identity. Here, Yang let her artificial straw assume a range of heteroge-

neous forms. On the one hand, she used it to compose open and serpentine hanging sculptures that nearly touch the ground, as if performing a dance step. Their sinuosity gives the inorganic material a vital breath, at times vaguely threatening, as in the black *The Intermediate—Tinted Serpent Creature* (all works 2017), which, with its tentacles, seems as if it might at any moment free itself from the hooks anchoring it to the ceiling. In *The Intermediate—Psychic Turbine Vents Ball*, on the other hand, one saw the closed form of the sphere, deprived of any possibility of rotation by the excrescences, such as aluminum ventilators, that cover it. Other pieces with turbine vents had previously been exhibited outdoors; now, vainly awaiting a puff of wind, they hung inertly. Sometimes the extraneous elements were more discreet, such as the television antennae that rise up among artificial plant stalks in *The Intermediate—Antenna Basket on Rings*, placed atop a straw vase in the shape of elephant ears.



Haegue Yang, *The Intermediate—Antenna Basket on Rings*, 2017, artificial straw, powder-coated stainless steel, steel wire, artificial plants, TV antennae, 70 1/4 x 31 1/2 x 31 1/2". From the series “The Intermediates,” 2015–.

The elephant ear is a familiar motif in Yang's work, also seen in stylized form in *Elephant Dancing on Toes* at the entrance to the show. That work is part of the series "Lacquer Paintings," 1994–, based on scientific charts reproduced in botanical manuals and in herbariums. To create these pieces, Yang collected various plants in Berlin and Mexico City, as well as earth, dust, tobacco leaves, even a fly. She then covered these objets trouvés with thin layers of lacquer and allowed them to air-dry, creating a slight but distinct relief. The effect is similar to amber resin and distances these works from the objectivity of botanical illustrations, with their depictions of specimens isolated against a neutral background and arranged in a way that underscores the plants' structures. The stratigraphy in Yang's work restores a temporality absent from scientific information.

In the series "Hardware Store Collages," 1994–, Yang displays arrangements of cutout images of technological prostheses, such as earphones, drones, cameras, ultra-flat screens, surveillance cameras, Segway scooters, and remote controls, executing this meticulously precise decoupage against a gold or silver background and arranging the elements into molecule-like structures. Taken from catalogues for stores selling digital electronics, the cutouts form colorful and playful do-it-yourself projects that reflect Yang's long-standing passion for the Bauhaus. The reference is not to the homonymous art movement, but to the chain of hardware stores of that name, which the artist discovered when she moved from Seoul to Berlin: "The thick store catalogue became my bible, and where I learned German words." Leafing through these pages, Yang chanced upon an organized visual and conceptual universe, accumulations kept under control, a *Warenwelt*, or world of merchandise, not yet threatened by the indeterminacy of the "quasi."

—Riccardo Venturi

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.