

# ArtReview Asia



HK\$90



vol 3 no 3

07 >

## Haegue Yang *Shooting the Elephant* 象 *Thinking the Elephant*

Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul 12 February – 10 May

*Shooting the Elephant* 象 *Thinking the Elephant* is Berlin-and-Seoul-based Korean artist Haegue Yang's first show at her home country in five years. It is a retrospective that shows work from almost all of her important series, some of which are shown in Asia for the first time. For example *Cittadella* (2011), one of the most famous and largest Venetian blind installations made by the artist, creates an immersive experience of space and time via 'immaterial' elements like light, shadow and wind. *Boxing Ballet* (2013/2015), a set of mobile sculptures made of bells and metal structures, is a result of Yang's study of the Russian avant-garde and her experiments in introducing sound elements and movement or mobility to classical sculpture. *Storage Piece* (2004) looks extremely small and quiet when it is placed along with other works, despite the fact that it is accompanied by *Speech for Storage Piece* (2004), a related sound element. The reinstallation of Yang's 2001 *VIP's Union*, is an example of the artist's very early work – distinct from her later installations – setting a practical resting room in the exhibition space with chairs and tables collected from people from different backgrounds, working in Seoul.

Walking through the retrospective, it is not hard to become conscious of the development of Yang's language, and the progress or change in

her interests and attention over time. Yet, some continuous features can be found in the works from every stage. For example, *VIP's Union*, created 14 years ago, obviously aims to build up a temporary community of people who lent their furniture to the artist. But look at the composition of those objects and it is not hard to see Yang's rational sensitivity to the space and her interest in abstract painting, which relates this piece to her later Venetian blind installations, including one newly created for this show – *Sol LeWitt Upside Down – Structure with Three Towers, Expanded 23 Times* (2015).

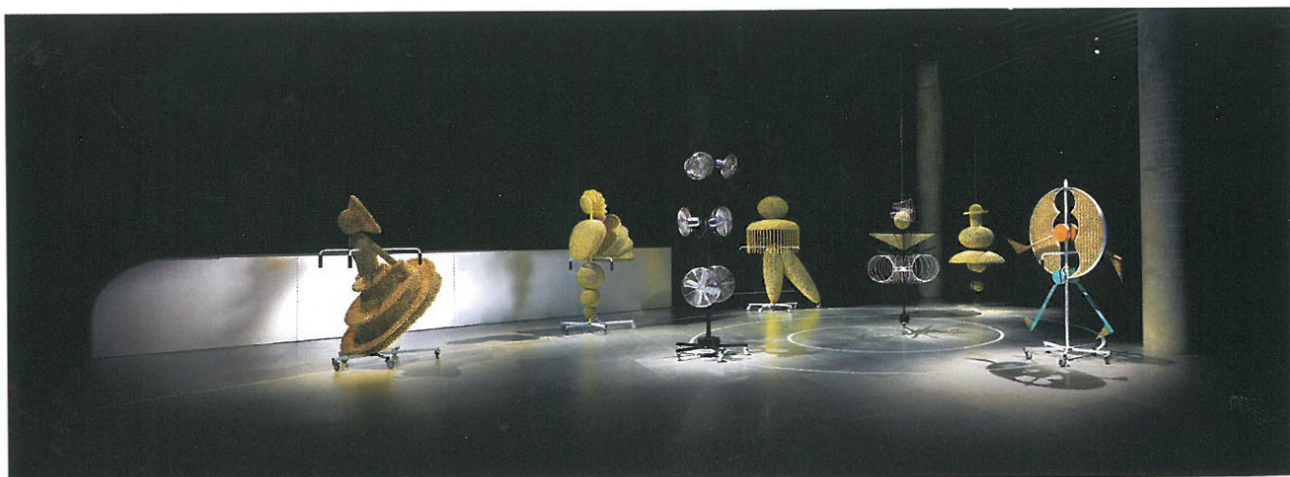
More interestingly, the artist doesn't seem to be satisfied with simply reinstalling old works. Indeed, not only to the visitor, but also to Yang herself, the show (or the planning and making of it) is an opportunity to look back on old works, and to 'invent' a new interpretation or variation of them. For example, *Hovering Line Dance – Trustworthy #240* (2015) is a conversation between Yang's graphic project *Trustworthies* (2010–) and her new wall piece. There are many other cases in this show that demonstrate the relation, dialogue and evolution between one work and another, perhaps telling us that an artist's oeuvre is an organic organisation that has an ability to self-maintain and regenerate.

Besides that wall piece and the new Venetian

blind installation, Yang has also created a new series of work for this show: a group of sculptures and three architectural structures made of artificial straw, titled *The Intermediates* (2015). Materials to Yang are a carrier of meanings and cultures, and so straw, as a living and construction material in many cultures, is a material language through which she can discuss culture. The sculptures and the large-scale architectural structures are built, in a metaphorical way, as an assembly of individuals and the abstraction of collective. They coexist, confront, function as the reference and recourse to each other. The dialectical relationship between them somehow creates the theme of the show.

It is always a huge challenge to place a number of large installations in one show and to organise the space in a rational way. The two-storey museum is actually a bit confusing due to its irregular shape, massive columns and sloping passage. Given this, the exhibition performs beyond expectation. With the contrast between bright ground floor and dark upper floor and the straw architectural structures functioning as Yang's Venetian blind unit in the installation, but in a larger scale, the exhibition builds a rhythm that it is evident to anyone moving through it.

Aimee Lin



*Boxing Ballet*, 2013/2015 (installation view, *Shooting the Elephant* 象 *Thinking the Elephant*, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, 2015.  
Photo: Hyunsoo Kim. Courtesy the artist.