

at random
Hyang Cho

November 9-
December 15, 2018

Artist Statement | Hyang Cho

Language, specifically English has been the primary medium of many of my art to express the otherness and anxiety I sense in everyday life. Communicating with the language that I am not fluent makes me aware of my marginal status in the society. Once supposedly natural activities such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading became unnatural, I started to recognize how language interweaves one's life in a society. Misunderstanding, confusion, and uncertainty became part of my everyday life.

모국어가 아닌 언어로 소통을 하며 나는 나의 특색한, 다른, 이상한 말하기를 끊임없이 인식하고 말의 다름을 통해 나 자신의 다름을 되새겼다. 그러면서도 나의 소수적 정체성을 직접 드러내지 않으려 하며 어떤 제어를 만들어 제어를 통한 과정에서 차용으로 나오는 말투와 어휘 등을 통해 주위와 다른 나를 만들어 왔다. Trying not to explicitly reveal my marginal status, I adapt the mechanical process, which automatically produces mistakes and peculiarities, e.g., shadowing my distinct accent by reading text at the speed of normal reading. This practice obscures my marginal status, disguises my mistakes, and expresses everyday distress I feel. Although I used well-known texts or musical notes like Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, writings of Spinoza, stories of Edgar Allan Poe, Trial by Kafka, and Well-tempered Clavier and Inventions by J. S. Bach, my art is not about a personal interpretation or translation of the existing works of others nor the homage to them, but about the act of enunciation itself. Therefore the subjectivity, misunderstanding, and distortion are the useful methods, and the discordance and conflicts are the productive ground of my art.

말씀은 이상하고 종종 문법에 맞지 않는 말을 하지만 다른 사람의 말을 알아듣는 데 별 지장이 없고 책을 읽으며 사전을 찾는 횟수도 줄어들었으며, 하고 싶은 말을 어느 정도 할 수 있게 되었기 때문이다. As time goes, the discomfort and otherness I feel become not so apparent as before, and they are absorbed in my daily life. Although I still speak with a distinct accent and write in wrong grammar, I communicate with others without much difficulty. Unnatural activities that were once natural become natural again. My current art reflects the transition of my interaction with language and everyday life. 불편해져서야 알아채는 불편한 숨쉬기가 아닌, 불편하지 않기 때문에 알아채지 못했던 별 생각 없이 하고 있는 숨쉬기를 알아채기 시작하는 것도 모른다. I begin to notice the everyday, in which the otherness and anxiety silently permeated, and perceive the passing time in everyday, which is not the moment of memorable events or the unit to measure, but just passing, accumulating, and sometimes repeating.

With materials such as blank pages in books, used glass jars, recycled cotton, collected buttons, stones, found picture frames and letters, I collect, sort, cut, fold, stack, copy, spin, and weave everyday. I do not seek specialness or usefulness out of commonness or useless. In my works, ordinariness remains as ordinary and uselessness remains as useless. The unused cotton bedding of my mother became a sheet of fabric of no use and empty pages in books remain as empty in a new book of no content and bottles are bottles and buttons are buttons. What I really recognize is the uselessness of useless things, boredom of boring activities, and ordinariness of everyday life, aesthetics of nothing much. 무엇이든 평범한 것은 empty인 것은 아무것도 아닌 것은 쓸모없는 것은 아무런 영향이 없어 놓아 버릴 것인 것은 쓸모없음과 평범함의 평범함에 대해 말하려 한다.

With Translation, With Words, With Language: Hyang Cho's Aesthetics of Nothing Much | Y Vy Truong

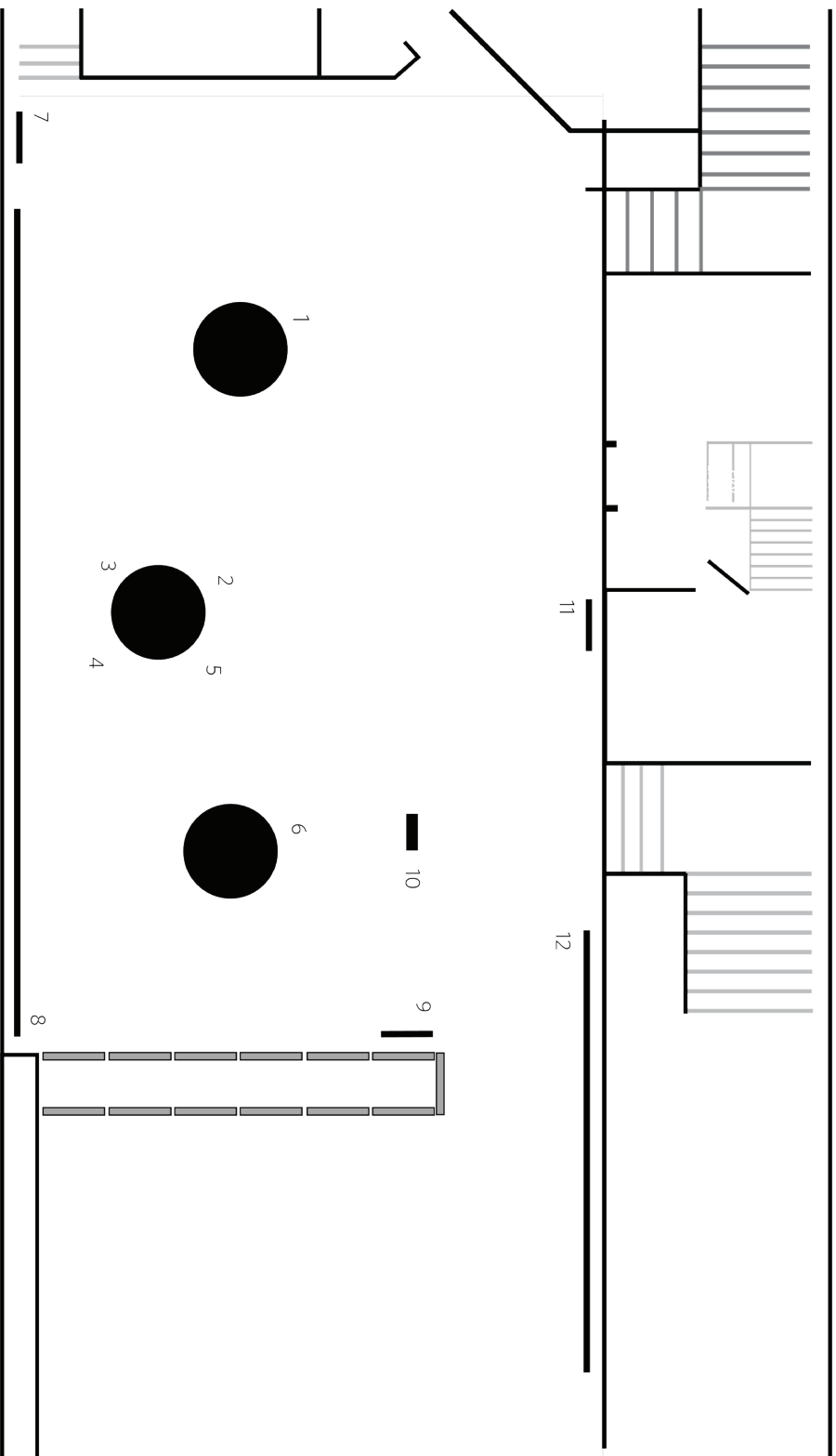
Hyang Cho's work is a series of objects that look unassuming, almost mundane, but which hide the enormous efforts put into the execution of her pieces. Jars, buttons, hand-traced letters, and found buttons strung onto a line of thread are all part of the visual language Cho has developed that is both humorous and uncanny, familiar and strange, and paradoxical in many ways.

For this exhibition I asked Cho to write an artist statement in Korean as a way to rethink about her work in her first language; an exercise to see how different languages embody different modes of understanding, and how often the process of translation is imperfect. Despite the ease with which we can access online language tools, translations are often awkward and tenuous.

Having been in Canada for fifteen years and based in Guelph, Ontario, most of Cho's formal education and artistic practice has been conducted in English – a language that is not only her second language but one that fundamentally conveys meaning differently from Korean. She reflects: "I think while English is word centred language, Korean is more nuance centred language. Writing in English is mechanical, and more objective."

For Cho, language is no longer a mode of communication, but a mechanical and embodied process through which we can witness the tension, anxiety, and the uncertainty of linguistic conventions. More broadly, and in the thinking about Cho's work, language becomes a series of calculated movements. Both the Korean and English texts present two distinct modes of conceptualizing Cho's work.

at random is a series of translations that present themselves as simple but with a shifting weight that condenses the enormity of Cho's artistic methods and practice. The mechanical process of time passing, accumulating, and sometimes repeating is embodied in the objects, challenging our perceptions of completeness and efficiency. More specifically, it challenges us to think about the untranslatable: how the methods of her work seem almost unapparent in the simplicity of the objects themselves.



- 1 Well-Tempered Clavier, books #25, #26, #42, #43, #53, #65 handle with care
- 2 Books 1 handle with care
- 3 Sphered
- 4 Index Cards please take one
- 5 Blank Book handle with care
- 6 Stones
- 7 Holes
- 8 Letters
- 9 Holes
- 10 All I Have is Time
- 11 Jars
- 12 Buttons