

JIN-ME YOON

Living Time From Away

June 8 to September 8, 2019

Curator: Anne-Marie St-Jean Aubre

Encompassing nearly 30 years of artistic creation, *Living Time From Away* is the first part of a career survey dedicated to the work of Korean-born Vancouver-based artist Jin-me Yoon. Adopting a thematic approach, the exhibition explores works that exemplify several of the artist's primary concerns related to her Korean heritage, her migration experience, and her encounters with what is identified as Canadian reality. Being confronted by the contextual and changing readings of her body—a surface of inscription and projection—Yoon proposes works that subvert stereotypes and assumptions related to gender, maternity, race, culture, and nationality. Her photographic projects from the 1990s, rooted in the Vancouver tradition of conceptual photography and the work of feminist, racialized and queer artists performing for the camera, focus on deconstruction. They cite what Yoon calls her “inherited representations,” which she disrupts by inserting elements that raise doubts about what one is seeing, with the intention of questioning the very terms of inclusion. While these preoccupations are a constant, her recent works highlight the poetic and affective aspects of her practice.

By drawing on iconic images popularized by the tourism industry, largely focussed on celebrating the grandeur of the Canadian landscape, Yoon questions the ideological underpinnings of such images. These landscapes consolidate a limited concept of national identity that suppresses countless memories

associated with these spaces, thus promoting a version of Canadian history, from which many are excluded. Travelling the country from coast to coast, Yoon has analyzed narratives and representations associated with Vancouver Island, Hornby Island, Calgary, Banff, and Prince Edward Island, revealing them as normalized and often idealized constructs. Although the artist is renowned for this aspect of her practice, this survey exhibition adds another layer to our appreciation of her work. An important leitmotif in the works presented is the interconnectedness of human lives at different stages of existence: an infant that has become a young adult, parents in their twilight years, gestures of filial support, a sensitivity for spirituality, death, and nature understood as a global entity encompassing humanity. Even though these notions are universal, it is the artist herself along with her family and close ones that inhabit the works, thus adding an emotional overtone that complicates and destabilizes the presumption of the clinical aesthetic of her conceptual representations. With this choice, she reminds us that exclusion and misconceptions are not just experienced on a theoretical level, but affect real individuals in their day-to-day lives.

Anne-Marie St-Jean Aubre,
Curator of Contemporary Art

The second part of this career survey, examining a different body of Jin-me Yoon's work, will be shown at the Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides from September 8 to November 3, 2019. This project will tour in Quebec and in Ontario, and was produced with the financial support of Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, and the Fondation du Musée d'art de Joliette.

Translation by: Louise Ashcroft

JIN-ME YOON

Seoul, South Korea, 1960

1. *Rest*

2012

Chromogenic print

148,6 x 121,9 cm

Collection of the artist

2. *Hanum Yoon-Henderson*

1996

Chromogenic prints

47,63 x 60,33 cm each

Collection of the artist

This diptych reprises the same parameters as the 134 photographs comprising the series *A Group of Sixty-Seven* (1996). An individual is portrayed against the backdrop of two paintings by iconic Canadian artists: face-on, with his back turned to *Maligne Lake, Jasper Park* (1924) by Lawren S. Harris; and then with back turned to the viewer, observing *Old Time Coastal Village* (1929–30) by Emily Carr. When this series was created, with the support of the Vancouver Art Gallery, it was imperative for Jin-me Yoon that the sixty-seven members of the Vancouver Korean community featured in *A Group of Sixty-Seven* chose voluntarily to participate in the project, given the political issues that it raises. Although Hanum Yoon-Henderson was too young to participate in the discussions during the meals organized around the photo shoot, the artist still wished to include him in the process. This diptych was not part of the original corpus; she kept it for herself instead.

The title of the original series makes reference to two significant subjects: the year 1967, which marks the centennial of Canadian Confederation and the loosening of Canadian immigration restrictions; and the Group of Seven, a group of male painters associated with the development of Canadian art, and more specifically with landscape painting inspired by the vast “wild and uninhabited” spaces of Canada’s national territory. In the case of Hanum Yoon-Henderson,

the title plays another role: by naming the subject portrayed, who is in fact the artist's son, Yoon underlines the ambiguous status of the images, situated between official portrait and passport photo, souvenir family snapshot and benchmark in conceptual photography. It also emphasizes the cross-cultural identity of the subject, who, from a younger generation, is marked differently by history and can benefit from other opportunities. This play on repetition and variation is typical of Yoon's early photographic works from the 1990s, citing and questioning the rigid and stereotypical modes of representation associated with notions of identity.

3. *Living Time series*

2019

Unmounted inkjet prints over-matted with custom Western hemlock frame

66,4 x 76,5 x 3,8 cm each

Collection of the artist

Time and space are factors that fundamentally define the human condition. They have long fuelled Jin-me Yoon's imagination, leading her to question notions of origins, transmission, home, affiliation, and memory. The seemingly boundless nature of the sky and the sea, allied with trees that seem enormous in comparison to the bodies around them, speak of a reality that transcends the human lifespan. These natural elements seem immutable in face of subjective lived time. Traversing the artist's works without being their central focus, time is the concept through which Yoon presents her family and friends at different stages in their lives. In homage to her son, and her friends who chose to settle on Hornby Island, these six diptychs portray them as strong yet fragile, connected to the Earth yet vulnerable in the lush West coast landscape. Presented as a series to highlight their conceptual underpinnings, these photographs recall the aesthetic of both Western Romantic painting and East Asian brush painting. In them, Yoon presents trees and nature as forces that deserve to be respected.

4. Turn

2017

Single channel HD video, colour, sound

12 min 33 s (loop)

Collection of the artist

5. Matter Flows and Forces, from the series Long View

2018

Chromogenic print transmounted on Plexiglas

274,3 x 180,3 cm

Collection of the artist

Located in the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve on Vancouver Island, Long Beach is part of the Nuučaáníł [Nuu-chah-nulth] Nations' traditional territory. Radar Hill, located just north of the park, was the site of a military radar installation during the Second World War. On the path leading there is a monument that pays tribute to the Korean War veterans who fought in the Battle of Kapyong in 1951. Invited to produce a work for the *LandMarks2017/Repères2017* project, Jin-me Yoon chose to literally excavate the site to unearth layers of meaning—historical, touristic, affective—embedded in its memory, memories often unspoken in face of the splendor of this infinite horizon. The act of building the mound of sand, whose size approximates the monument to the veterans, evokes a funeral rite. It also creates an image that speaks of labour and of how we affirm our presence in a territory through ephemeral gestures that will be washed away over time. On the other side of the Pacific Ocean lies Korea, country of origin of the artist, who considers Canada her home. The perpetual ebb and flow of the water reflects the push and pull of these two sides of Yoon's experience and identity, which lies somewhere in the inbetween: always in motion, always changing.

6. *Touring Home From Away*

1998–1999

9 custom-fabricated black anodized, double-sided lightboxes,
18 Ilfochrome translucent prints with polyester overlamine
66 x 81,3 x 12,7 cm chacun

Collection of Confederation Centre Art Gallery

The nine diptychs comprising *Touring Home From Away* are presented in double-sided lightboxes that resemble advertising panels. Created in Prince Edward Island, whose economy is based mainly on agriculture and tourism, the images create an entwined narrative that explores not only the island's iconic sites and features—the house of the main fictional character in the novel *Anne of Green Gables*, a lighthouse, a potato field with its furrows of red earth—but also generic, everyday places: a convenience store, a Tim Hortons, an amusement park, and a superstore. The combination of these two types of imagery, staged photographs and imitations of family snapshots, undermines the idyllic portrait promoted by the tourism industry. By presenting the works recto-verso, the artist literally shows both sides of the images, playing on reversal to disrupt the narrative and reveal what often remains unseen.

In this project, Yoon reflects on the multiple meanings embedded in a territory that, through the act of representation, has been transformed into a landscape, and on the various issues related to it. By placing herself in a photograph alongside John Joe Sark, Keptin of the local Mi'kmaq Grand Council, against the backdrop of a golf course, she questions the implications of land ownership. The Canadian Confederation was signed in Charlottetown in 1867 without the involvement of the First Nations, even though the Mi'kmaq nation has inhabited the territory, which they call Epekwitk, for at least 12 000 years. Are emigrants who move to unceded territories today aware of this history, and do they have the responsibility to take action in this regard? Facing a monument honouring Canadian veterans who fought in the Korean War (1950–53), Yoon, a Korean immigrant who arrived in 1968, and her son, born in Canada, are not engaged by it in the same way. What does belonging to a nation, a concept that implies a degree of patriotism, mean in these circumstances? The subjects portrayed live at the intersection of several identities, which undoubtedly complicates their process of identification.

7. *Living Time*

2019

Two-channel HD video, colour, sound

23 min 29 s (loop)

Collection of the artist

Experimental camerawork: Jin-me Yoon

Videography and Post-Production: Ian Barbour

Performers: Anne Ngan, Byeong Sung Lee, Kihan Yoon-Henderson, Hanum Yoon-Henderson, Jin-me Yoon

Special thanks: Hornby Island Community Archives, Hornby Island Natural History Centre, Comox Airforce Museum, Vancouver Island Military History Museum, British Columbia Archives, Stefan Randstrom (for family archival footage on Hornby Island), Jae Woo Kang

This project was produced with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

8. *Souvenirs of the Self (Lake Louise)*

“Feast your eyes on the picturesque beauty of this lake named to honour Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, daughter of Queen Victoria. She discovers the lake on a sunny day; before that she did not exist.”

9. *Souvenirs of the Self (Rocky Mountain Bus Tour)*

“Come and enjoy the great Canadian wilderness. As they parted she wished them all a safe journey home.”

10. *Souvenirs of the Self (Banff Avenue)*

“Banff has been charming visitors from around the world for over a hundred years. She has trouble finding that perfect souvenir for herself.”

11. *Souvenirs of the Self (Banff Park Museum)*

“Marvel over the impressive collection of Western Canada’s oldest natural history museum. She looks with curiosity and imagines life beyond the rigid casings.”

12. *Souvenirs of the Self (Bankhead)*

“Explore the riches to rags drama of this historic coal mining town. She discovers that Chinese workers lived on the other side of the slack heaps. ”

13. *Souvenirs of the Self (Banff Springs Hotel)*

“Indulge in the European elegance and grandeur of days gone by. She remembers being told that tradition is something you can always count on.”

2019 (1991)

Inkjet prints on laminated polyester

185,4 x 121,9 cm each

Collection of the artist

Created at the invitation of the Banff Centre, the six images in the *Souvenirs of the Self* series adopt the form and conventions of the post card, an important tool for promoting tourism and, until recently, a popular souvenir with tourists. Inscribed on the back of each is a two-part descriptive caption, in English and translated into French, identifying the place and the state of mind of the woman in the image, referred to as “she” to highlight her position as an object from whom the narrator distances herself. This caption is accompanied by a message in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, aimed at those who can read it: “We too are custodians of this earth.” Composed like collages, juxtaposing a person with visible traits of East Asian heritage dressed in Nordic clothing with an iconic view of a Western Canadian landscape, the photographs provoke confusion: What exactly are we looking at? A snapshot of a tourist visiting sites near Banff National Park. Her fixed gaze and stiff posture, the same in each image, don’t, however, give the impression that she’s enjoying her trip. In a multicultural context like that of Canada, why is this woman not immediately perceived as being Canadian? What is national identity and what makes it recognizable? And what are the specific terms of inclusion and belonging? These are the questions raised by these images. The original postcards, which were first sold in tourist shops, where they were not identified as art following the interventionist strategy favoured by the artist, are not displayed here. For this exhibition, they were recreated to go on the wall outside the exhibition spaces, recalling Yoon’s original intention.

14. *Between Departure and Arrival*

1997

Two-channel video installation, sound, print on mylar scroll

Variable dimensions, 9 min 51 s (loop)

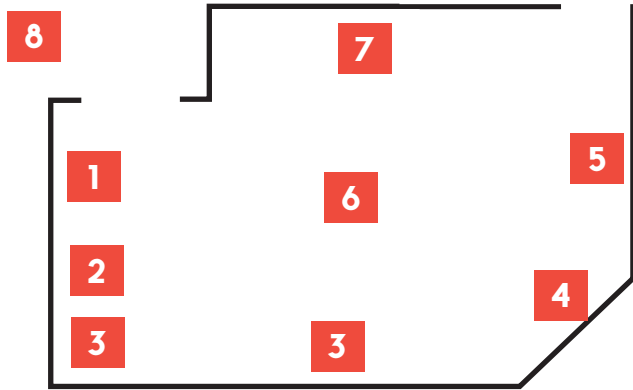
Collection of the artist

This work marks a turning point in Jin-me Yoon's artistic practice as it is one of her first projects to include video and sound. A head viewed from above, with hair styled in traditional Korean fashion, floats in a cloudy sky. This visual metonymic trope represents a racialized subject; in the installation, it partly obscures a screen presenting archive images documenting the presence of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean communities in British Columbia. Race is a sociological construct shaped by racism, just as the concept of "difference" implies an understood norm against which all other characteristics are measured. Yoon is particularly interested in what she calls her "inherited representations": meanings imposed on her since her body functions as a surface of projection. It bears the traces of her Korean heritage, in the context of a country whose history is punctuated with the presence of Japanese and Chinese citizens—Japanese internment camps during the Second World War, and the Chinese head tax (1885-1923) imposed following the construction of the trans-Canada railroad (1885), in which the Chinese workers had been instrumental. While Japanese in Korea were identified as enemy colonizers—as witnessed by Yoon's parents, they find themselves undifferentiated within Canada's large East Asian community, with which Yoon was affiliated on her arrival in Canada. A voice calls out in Japanese: "Are you Korean?" A question that is loaded since many Korean residents in Japan still disguise their identity recalling the Japanese colonization of Korea. Languages intermingle, meanings are skewed in their translation from one language to another, and certain cultural concepts, like "Han," remain untranslatable. In *Between Departure and Arrival*, the artist extends her exploration beyond the limited notion of assigned identity to focus on identity construction, a subjective process rooted in cultural heritage that evolves over time in response to specific contexts.

FLOOR PLANS

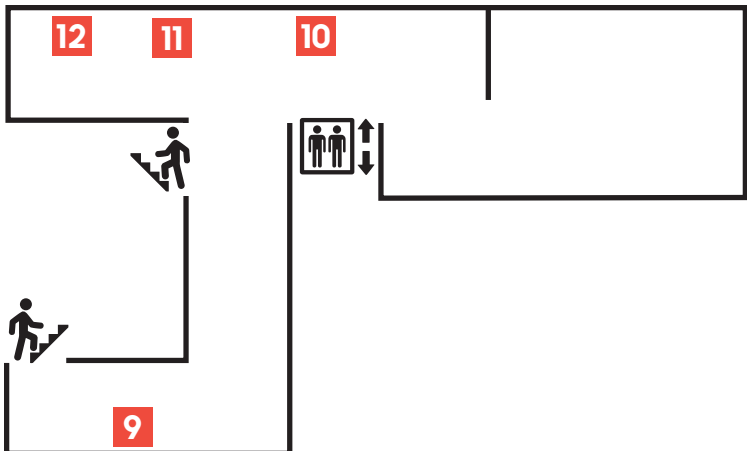
1st floor

Salle EBI



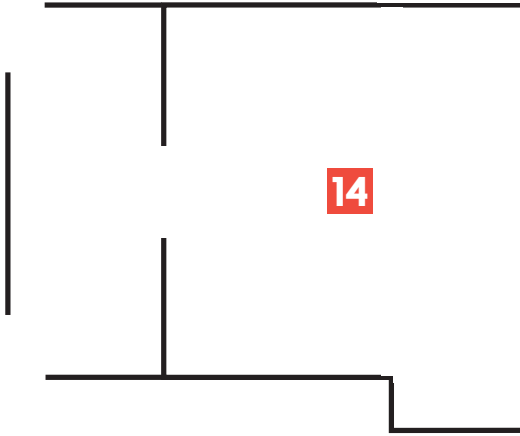
2nd floor, in the hallway

Espace Georgette Menuau-Préville,
Espace 2e étage
and Aire de détente Famille René Préville



2nd floor

Salle Harnois Groupe pétrolier



3rd floor in the hallway

Espace 3e étage

