

TEXTE //
YEONJIN OH

BIOGRAPHIE GÉNÉRALE YEONJIN OH

Le travail de Yeonjin Oh se situe à l'intersection de la photographie, de la peinture et de la gravure, comme elle expérimente continuellement avec diverses techniques. Travaillant souvent dans une chambre noire, elle utilise le processus analogique de solarisation, exposant et développant des images à plusieurs reprises. De plus, en intégrant les marques laissées par les produits chimiques photographiques qui coulent sur le papier, elle fait de ces traces une partie essentielle du dessin lui-même. Cette approche lui permet d'explorer la nature fluide et en constante évolution des images, qui sont constamment dans un état de flux et de transformation. Son travail se concentre sur l'abstraction des images, la poursuite de diverses formes de modulation et de variation. A travers une image qui peut évacuer la séquence des mouvements, le but est de montrer la formation, l'existence ainsi que la structure d'une image, pouvant être le point final ainsi qu'une plate-forme du regard, l'avant et après d'une image dont la surface n'est pas en soi déconnectée.

Yeonjin Oh intervient dans et dessine des relations entre les paramètres qui constituent l'imagerie, les varie, et crée une nouvelle illusion. Elle a obtenu sa Licence en Design de la Seoul National University (2017) et son Master en Arts Plastiques de la Korea National University of Arts (2020). Oh a organisé plusieurs expositions personnelles comme *This is Not an Option, or Is It?* au OCI Museum (2024), *Tweed* à ThisWeekendRoom, Séoul (2022); *The Tides of Memory* à SongEun ArtSpace, Séoul (2021); *The Very Eye of Night* à SongEun ArtCube, Seoul (2020); and *Lace* à Alltimespace, Séoul (2019). Ses travaux ont été exposés dans de nombreuses expositions collectives comme *The Printed World*, SeMA, Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, Séoul (2022).

TRAVAIL GÉNÉRAL YEONJIN OH

Jusqu'à présent, sur la base du processus photographique et de la conscience des problèmes, j'ai repositionné de manière structurée les conditions fondamentales pour construire une image et ses éléments. Avec le regard d'une artiste visuelle contemporaine et en reconstituant le médium, j'ai conçu ma propre structure de l'image.

Produit de la vision moderne, la photographie, tout en basculant dans la dichotomie des notions opposées comme l'argentique et le numérique, la matière et la non matière, l'objet et la reproduction, l'immobilité et le mouvement, le transparent et l'opaque, constitue un spectre ambivalent, depuis le 19ème siècle jusqu'à notre période contemporaine où ont été inventées les technologies numériques.

Ce spectre qui existe dans l'histoire de la photo et dans le dévoilement d'un médium, je le vois comme une structure dans laquelle je peux intervenir en tant que artiste visuelle contemporaine. En repositionnant la composition temporelle et spatiale, le processus argentique et le processus numérique, la lumière et les couches de la matière, j'explore la structure fondamentale que l'image possède et souhaite visualiser la structure en elle même.

En fin de compte, à travers l'image restructurée, dans le dos de « ce qui est visible », une image a été créée et attire l'attention sur toute la structure et l'histoire. J'avais envie de faire comprendre que l'image ne se résume pas en un état particulier où elle est séparée en soi, mais qu'elle est un liant ubiquitaire à l'intérieur d'une structure invisible.

Yeonjin Oh

FILM IN MOTION, VISION IN MOTION, MEDIUM IN MOTION
TEXTE DE HYEJIN MUN

pour l'exposition personnelle de Yeonjin Oh, *This Is Not an Opinion, or Is It?*,
OCI Museum of Art, Séoul, Corée du Sud, 2024

Looking through Yeonjin Oh's work, the first thing that came to my mind was the early works of Richard Serra. Given that her work has primarily been discussed in relation to photography, my association may seem quite unexpected or unrelated. There are several reasons that made me juxtapose Yeonjin Oh with Richard Serra. Firstly, it is the strong performativity where the process itself becomes the result. Similar to Serra's *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969), which captures the solidified shape formed by throwing molten lead against a corner where the wall and floor meet, Oh's *Tweed* (2022) and *Pastry* (2022) series, whose images are engraved with the process of spraying developer and exposure, retain the traces of repetitive performances as an index—just like their titles connoting layers. Besides these works, as all of her works involve labor-intensive variations of the darkroom processes including exposure, development, and printing, the production procedures are transparently revealed, compressing the process into the result. In this sense, even if the result does not change physically, her works can be read as process art, a unique photographic work where the indexicality of photography is not applied to the subject but to the process.

On the other hand, her work also shares an affinity with Serra's in that the material properties and the principles of image compositions are clearly manifested. In *Stacked Steel Slabs* (1969), where Serra piled up steel slabs until they were on the verge of losing their verticality, the moment when the sculptural composition becomes complete is determined by the center of gravity, namely the inside of the sculpture. In *Solar Breath* (2019) by Oh, just as the weight and shape of steel plates determine the structure of Serra's work, the amount of acrylic paint applied on the translucent chiffon fabric printed with images controls the light transmission, and consequently the colors and brightness of the work. The honesty in reflecting the photochemical qualities of image-producing materials and apparatus—including the nature of materials acting as film, focal length, exposure time, aperture openings, and the duration for which the developer is applied—directly onto the image's color and form strangely connects to Serra's literal execution of rolling, folding, and dropping lead plates. The final reason for their similarity lies in their shared attitudes of refusing to remain within traditional categories and experimenting with boundaries, all while staying rooted in their initial mediums. Serra made a number of films, including *Hand Catching Lead* (1968), which was an attempt to add temporality to the spatiality of sculpture, thereby expanding the horizon of sculpture into a new spatiotemporal continuum. Likewise, Yeonjin Oh has always oscillated between photography and painting, and between photography and video. Moving from photography to painting, and back to photography, *Solar Breath* is reminiscent of Gerhard Richter, who experiments with picture instead of painting, freely hovering between flat mediums by painting after photographs, painting on photographs, or taking pictures of such paintings. Inspired by Maya Deren's film *The Very Eye of Night* (1958), where the film, subject, and camera are in motion, *Anorthoscope* (2020) embodies the motion of images in constant change through repetitive sequences and the production of a third image.

The works in her solo exhibition "This Is Not an Opinion, or Is It?" (2024) at the OCI Museum of Art are no exception to the aforementioned aspects. By laying a holographic film on an acrylic sheet, placing crumpled plastic on top, and then hardening it with resin, the *Self-referential Film (Molted)* (2024) series captures the performativity where the degree to which the artist crumpled the plastic is frozen in place. The thickness of the work, protruding almost like a sculpture, expands the extension of the photographic medium by ambiguously swaying across the boundaries between the two- and three-dimensional. Meanwhile, the *Lean* (2024) series, whose abstract form is achieved through double or triple exposures of stripe-patterned films on clear slime, is similar in that its materiality is directly related to the image, blurring the boundaries of the medium. The uneven surface and fluid-like materiality of the slime create a moiré pattern in the light passing through the stripe, providing the chromogenic print with painterly variations. There is a reason why seemingly relief-like *Self-referential Film (Molted)* is still labeled as "photography." The artist statement from 2018 stated "While I perceive my works as photography, I do not want them to be incorporated into the traditional category of photography, wishing this attitude is interpreted as photographic again" remains valid today when the hybrid and expansion across mediums are sought.

The new body of works is an extension of her recent research on film in motion. Here, film in motion does not refer to typical moving images. Yeonjin Oh's concept of moving signifies not the physical movement of film, but its non-fixity. In photographs taken with a camera, the negative film always presupposed a fixed image. Even if minor changes occurred during the development and printing process, the negative film had already been fixed technically. In the work of Oh, who does not use a camera, traditional film in the conventional sense is nonexistent. The flowing developer itself can become her film (as in *Pastry*), or the subject is transformed into the film through contact printing (as in *Contact* (2017)). Since 2020, the artist has focused on film as liquid. *Lamella* (2020), *Object-Through* (2020-), and *Self-referential Film* (2020-), which are foundational to her new works, all started in 2020. *Lamella* is a photograph taken with a camera, capturing transient light scattering through a soap film formed around a metal frame, presenting the (soap) film as liquid, whereas *Object-Through* is a cameraless photograph where liquid or gel serves as film, either by dropping water on a transparent plate laid on photographic paper or by placing slime on a small acrylic water tank in an enlarger. In *Lean*, she added striped patterns to *Object-Through*, the black-and-white photograph without any background image, and infused it with colors through multiple exposures with lights of various hues. These fluid films, sloshing without being fixed, possess a duality: they not only reveal the subject matter (the striped pattern) by allowing light to pass through but also become visible subjects themselves. It is how film as a transparent window, which reveals the subject by being looked through, and film as an object, which becomes the subject itself to be looked at, converge. On the other hand, the *Self-referential Film* series is a direct precursor to the new *Self-referential Film (Molted)* series. The basic principle is similar. While in the *Self-referential Film* series, a PVC film is mounted on canvas and resin is scattered or applied, in the structure of the *Self-referential Film (Molted)* series, a layer of crumpled plastic is added onto a holographic PVC film, with its shape fixed by resin. Because of the difference in the production methods, the previous work, with resin partially running down or flowing on the surface, often has the subtitle "Melting," whereas the new work, with its preserved angular plastic forms reminiscent of crustacean shells, is subtitled "Molted." The concept of *Self-referential Film* is also a self-conscious exploration of film. The film is brought to the forefront and stands before the image, unlike in general photographs where it is hidden behind the image. The title "Self-referential" indicates the self-conscious film that reveals its own existence as a structure.

Vision in motion, tinged with different colors depending on viewing angles, and film in motion, wobbling in a gel state, represent the artist's question and answer to the stereotypes of photography: If the negative (film) were in motion or appeared at the forefront, what would such a photograph be? Yeonjin Oh presents her perspective through the third image, where film becomes an object and flows. Vision in motion in this sense does not necessarily involve physical movement, unlike the concept of László Moholy-Nagy. For Yeonjin Oh, moving signifies a state where conditions are not fixed—a state of flux where repetition generates differences, not identity. Her cameraless photographs necessarily vary according to the medium of film, exposure duration and frequency, light intensity, and the amount of developer applied, which makes every print original, yet collectively meaningful as part of a whole rather than as a single entity. The variations that arise when conditions change emerge only through repetition, and it is in plurality that the potential for change is revealed. This is why all of her works are series. The world of conditions in motion is a new photographic spacetime that is "tautological like thousands of parallel universes, while simultaneously creating slight differences and dissonances." This world is akin to that of Henri Bergson. For Bergson, the world is a successive movement itself, and images are such movement coagulated into specific instantaneity. The universe is not something fixed but a spatiotemporal continuum in motion, and images arise when we momentarily perceive this successive vibration. Emerging from each adjustment of the darkroom conditions—such as scale, exposure time, focal length, etc.—and intertwining chance with intention, Yeonjin Oh's images are unique outcomes realized when numerous latent potentialities for development meet specific moments. Every image is a singular entity formed through the relationships between specific time, specific temperature and humidity, specific state of the artist, and specific materials. In her practice, the relationship between an individual image and series, between each series and the whole body of work, and between one medium and another corresponds to the Bergsonian relationship between images and movement. Yeonjin Oh's image is the instantaneous result of configuring each condition within the continuous spectrum of moving: an image momentarily paused within the perpetual movement. Within this image, the film, the image itself, the condition, and the medium are all in constant motion.

Hyejin Mun

ALLEGORY OF STILL IMAGE AND MOTION
TEXTE DE JIHYUNG PARK

pour l'exposition personnelle de Yeonjin Oh, *The Very Eye of Night*,
SongEun Art and Cultural Foundation, Séoul, Corée du Sud, 2020

Time is a relativistic space in which its movement can flow either forwards or backwards, and can even have the ability to stop or repeat itself. Yeonjin Oh addresses the concept of time as an illusion; in her solo exhibition, *The Very Eye of Night*, she explores the nature behind the rhetoric of distortion and attempts to marry quantum mechanics with general relativity in relation to the constant value of the temporal axis. In particular, she recalls the theoretical discoveries made in the past alongside new radical optical experiments and re articulates these findings from a modern day perspective. In doing so, Oh is able to delve into the movement of these professedly still images and challenge its surroundings and essence; she imagines the flow of time projected onto images among seemingly unrelated historical references. Above all, her greatest concerns when approaching her works is considering the matter of sustainability post media constructions. She renders predetermined critical precedents around photography as 'art' – which includes the veracity of analogue photograph, the flatness of a digital photograph, and one's capability to create infinite copies and edits – useless.

The artist enumerates several words like "film," "bubble," "fluid," "Anorthoscope," and "The Very Eye of Night." These are the keywords that have been extracted from the creative experiments and discoveries of Maya Deren, the avant-garde dancer and filmmaker, and Joseph Plateau, a Belgian physicist. She reconstructs the conceptual protocol for the forgoing words, assuming the mobility of film as a supporting role. Her main focus is neither on the continuous record of the moving subject nor on the physical movement of the lens. Specifically, she determines that moving images from some social media platforms such as TikTok are 'unmoving' due to the fact that these kind of infinitely multiplying loops of memes do not allow for any anomalies, meaning that the very nature of these conditions are already in a fixated state, like a metronome, repeating mechanically. The meaningless action and reaction without a proper entrance or exit are predetermined, thus symbolizing its flat narratives and fixed time. To the artist, temporal movement is defined by the potential energy an image consumes to 'move' at any time. Therefore, time and movements from the artist's works are not taken away from the surface of images, but derived from their implied dynamic changes.

Let us go back to the words she suggests. *Anorthoscope* (2020) is composed of still cuts from *The Very Eye of Night* (1958), which is the swan song of Deren and the conceptual images of water Oh created with 3D programs. Oh sees the possibility of 'moving' in the hybridity of dance and film that is epitomized in Deren's work, and the vague disjunction between the bodyscape of dancers in the negative films and the cluster of white stars in the positive films. Instead of screening the scenes from a single point of view, this surreal video gives a strange feeling that the camera work follows the dancer towards multiple, scattered junctions of time and space. It creates a sense of invisible areas of movement where the film itself is moving beyond the visible realm along the temporal axis – the screening of dancing. In the exhibition, the dimensional crossover between the two movements in Deren's film is converted to side-by-side arrangements of ten photographs and ten subject-frames prerequisite to those photos, called *Anorthoscope*,* which is the name of an optical toy invented by Plateau in the early nineteenth century. In between the two sets of images, the artist might want the viewers to experience the virtual movement generated by the operational principle of *Anorthoscope* and the visual effect of *The Very Eye of Night*.

Based on the fact that Plateau, who invented the Anorthoscope, also established the law of formation of bubble film, Oh delves deeper into the optical correlation between bubbles and Deren's *The Very Eye of Night*. *Lamella* (2020) is a series of photographs of bubbles attached to thin geometrical structures. The artist perceives bubble as a subject captured through lens, a curtain on the screen soon to be scattered, and a changeable film with flickering colors and patterns though seemingly transparent. Bubbles are present at the same time rarely visible in that liquid, increases its surface tension and temporarily shares its border surface to another to be flat or swollen, and then pops. In *Lamella*, however, a dramatic structure occurs at the moment of crossing and distorting like a choreographer in the Deren's film. The moving images containing bubble's film and floating body gestures are images on the surface of each supporter, and at the same time they are the agents of moving which demonstrates the potential changes of structures of representation depending on time.

The external aesthetics of the work might limit the viewer's experience to observing a variety of chemical or physical effects of the work, since the labor-intensive printing process shows the results of variables without any adjustments – and the results do in fact have the kind of attractive formative language. But what the artist actually suggests is a critical assumption on the conventional perception of the appearance of still images or the limited thinking that moving images are always moving and still images are always still. She rewrites the temporality of photographs by contradicting, connecting, and editing the optical attempts that Deren and Plateau have made. Her works will stay for a moment as a temporal status implying past, present and near future, and soon start 'moving,' to find an answer to what is really moving.

* *Anorthoscope* is a moving-image device invented by Joseph Plateau that creates another still figure by spinning still images.

Jihyung Park

THE VERY EYE OF NIGHT
TEXTE DE YEONWOO KIM

pour l'exposition personnelle de Yeonjin Oh, *The Very Eye of Night*,
SongEun Art and Cultural Foundation, Séoul, Corée du Sud, 2020

SongEun Art and Cultural Foundation proudly presents Yeonjin Oh's solo exhibition *The Very Eye of Night*, as one of the selected artists shows from the 2020-2021 SongEun ArtCube open call. SongEun ArtCube is a nonprofit exhibition space established to encourage the artistic creativity and motivation of up and coming artists. Since its inauguration in January 2002, SongEun has supported a vast number of artists through the annual open call program by inviting selected artists to have a solo exhibition at SongEun ArtCube as well as providing a publication of their works.

Yeonjin Oh has been conducting various experiments to explore the mediality of photographs based on their printing method, in which a number of variables act within the working process. The artist works beyond the boundaries of the selected genre, focusing on the relationship between various mediums such as photography, paintings, and prints. In this exhibition, Oh presents *Anorthoscope* (2020), which is a reenactment of the images. It is based on a monochrome short dance film, *The Very Eye of Night*, released in 1958 by Maya Deren (1917~1961). The film begins with the sequence of negative images of dancers floating against the background of the dark, starry night. The flat figures that are visualized like paper dolls are granted movements in the following scene, and float in the dark and infinite space like dancing free from gravity. Her film in which dancer's movements embody the ancient myths about astrology is fascinating and mysterious, as it transcends the physical realm of time and space. It is notable that the camera does not simply capture the motions but maximizes them by using specific editing and shooting techniques. As a step of a dancer flows to the following scene, each scene of segmented times is connected to each other by sequential movements of the body. In other words, their 'moving' gains momentum once more through this medium of video.

'Moving' is the keyword that Oh has constantly presented over her recent works both explicitly and implicitly, in which the main inspiration for the theme is the notion of 'temporality.' From Serial Book Series, the ongoing series from her early career, she captured the frames of the video of the same title, and inserted them to image scale in proportion to frames per second in *Still Mute* (2015). She also considers the ratio of the stage from a short play written by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) other than a square formation and considers how the movements would extend according to the stage in *Quad by Ratio* (2017). It is interesting that she schematizes the temporal changes due to the swift changes in the actor's movements according to its surrounding spatial change. The artist's study on variations under certain conditions has inevitably incited a deeper understanding and curiosity to 'time', which is prone to change depending on the given circumstance.

Oh reproduces Deren's images in two main ways. First, the painting on the right side of the exhibition room is completed with the touch of acrylic paints on the canvas covered by translucent chiffon with an image printed on it. Coated with layers of paints, the surface of the canvas feels soft like a film, but not like an absorbent material like cotton. The products of contact printing on the canvas, which serves as a kind of 'plate' are displayed on the opposite wall, without any frame. The outputs are distinct due to unpredictable variables when controlling CMY filter values or exposure time. For instance, unexpected colors other than complementary color of the canvas (theoretically) are printed out depending on surrounding lights. The tiny difference in exposure time, even if it's a second, produces a number of different images, making it difficult to control. The images from *The Very Eye of Night* are reversed in color and form symmetry with the original ones on the canvas, displayed with the virtual images of water the artist made using graphic programs.

Lamella (2020) is a series of six photographs of bubbles with black backgrounds. The fact that 'bubble' is the subject of the artist's first photograph shares context with her previous works using fluid films. To change the condition of 'film' and in turn create unique and diversified images, she conducted many experiences such as putting slime into a small case made out of OTP film or taking pictures of spoiled water on a glass plate. The film of a bubble is a fluid material in that it varies in form and dimension depending on the frame and pops in an instant. The rainbow spectrum on the bubble film is also unfixed, changing its forms depending on the light or angle. This flexible characteristic of bubble has drawn attention of many scholars as well as artists. Among them Joseph Plateau (1801-1883), a physicist in 19th century, discovered the law in the bubble film and invented moving image devices, Anorthoscope and Phenakistoscope. This coincidence makes bubble more attractive subject.

galerie dohyanglee

Oh defines 'moving image' as image of changing conditions. Whether the scenes are made with premise that image can move or not determines the output. 'Moving,' however, does not always indicate that image is actually transforming. Instead, Deren's images in this exhibition are reproduced from video to canvas, and then re-printed to photograph in the darkroom. Canvases and photo images on the wall and the ceiling demonstrate open possibility of image that can expand infinitely and successively change mediums. As implying that image is unfixed and changeable, her works are moving images that have movements inside though they seem still.

What makes the moving world astonishing by itself is that things that do not move can move in this world. Only when the unmoving are moving, still images reach the possibility of moving.

Yeonwoo Kim