

EVERYDAY MIRACLES (EXTENDED)

Hamra Abbas
Ringo Bunoan
Chen Hui-Chiao
Shilpa Gupta
Kan Xuan
Minouk Lim
Jewyo Rhii

EVERYDAY MIRACLES (EXTENDED)

Curated by Hou Hanru in collaboration with Clara Kim

Phase 1

Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute

October 1, 2009–October 31, 2009

Opening Reception: September 30, 2009, 5:30–7:30pm

Visiting Artists and Scholars Panel Discussion: September 30, 2009, 7:30pm

Artists: Shilpa Gupta, Kan Xuan, Minouk Lim and Jewyo Rhii

Phase 2

Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute

November 13, 2009–January 30, 2010

Opening Reception: November 12, 2009, 5:30–7:30pm

Visiting Artists and Scholars Panel Discussion: November 11, 2009, 7:30pm

Artists: Hamra Abbas, Ringo Bunoan and Chen Hui-chiao

Phase 3

REDCAT

November 22, 2009–January 17, 2010

Opening Reception: November 21, 2009, 6-9pm

Artists: Hamra Abbas, Ringo Bunoan, Chen Hui-chiao, Shilpa Gupta,
Kan Xuan, Minouk Lim and Jewyo Rhii

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Walter and McBean Galleries
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Gallery Hours: 11am–6pm, Tuesday–Saturday
Free and open to the public



631 West 2nd Street, Los Angeles, California USA 90012
Visit www.redcat.org or
call +1 213 237 2800 for more information
Gallery Hours: noon–6pm or intermission, closed Mondays
Always free

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A Very Brief Curatorial Statement

Two years ago, I curated the Chinese Pavilion in the 52nd Venice Biennale. The project was titled [Everyday Miracles](#). It presented four women artists Shen Yuan, Yin Xiuzhen, Kan Xuan and Cao Fei, who belonging to four age groups (from late 40s to late 20s), had demonstrated some of the most independent and unique positions that have significantly enriched the evolution of the Chinese art scene across three decades. Their unique ways of perceiving and negotiating with the changing realities, both in China and in the world in the context of globalization, serve as particularly interesting and inspiring points of departure for this exhibition at SFAI and REDCAT. Under the title [Everyday Miracles \(Extended\)](#), we have expanded and developed this initiative further to cover a group of women artists from various parts of the continent: Minouk Lim and Jewyo Rhii from Korea, Chen Hui-Chiao from Taiwan, Kan Xuan from China, Ringo Bunoan from the Philippines, Shilpa Gupta from India and Hamra Abbas from Pakistan.

These artists use contemporary technologies and languages to transform matters and events of the everyday, the ordinary, from focused perspectives, into images and expressions of the extraordinary and even the miraculous. Through their work, these artists show that there is an urgent necessity to look at our world, as well as artistic production, beyond the horizon of the established system dominated by the male-centric, sometimes misogynist visions, involving modernization and the logic of the society of the spectacle prompted by frantic consumption and speculation. In order to encourage the work of those who hold true intellectual freedom and integrity, these artists often resist mainstream propositions for different forms of personal and social lives, seeking more critical and alternative understandings of larger social, cultural, political and historic issues.

This situation and the necessity to change have obviously been shared by most parts of the world today, now under the pressures of modernization and globalization. This is particularly evident, intense, and hence critical in Asia today—from the Pacific to the Indian Oceans. Contemporary art in Asia is now the new start of the global art scene. In the meantime, it also faces the abovementioned challenges. Individual artists—especially women—have struggled to express their independent voices against the uniformity imposed by the established system—the market, the media and the institution, etc. The artists in [Everyday Miracles \(Extended\)](#) present highly diverse visions, positions and expressions—that reach far beyond conventional feminist discourses, deeply rooted in their engagements with the reflections of the world of the everyday and powerfully thrive from different personal trajectories and cultural backgrounds—are among the most relevant and significant works that are fundamentally transforming the global art scene.

To organize such a project in the context of the American West Coast implies another crucial meaning: the world today is no longer centralized in the alliance among the Western powers. It's time to look to the other side: the Pacific is the new perspective.

And this historic change is happening everyday. In the world of the everyday, real miracles are given birth...

Hou Hanru, 31 August 2009, San Francisco

Hamra Abbas



God Grows on Trees (2008), 99 miniature gouache paintings and C-print, courtesy of the artist and Green Cardamom, London [REDCAT]



Love Yourself (2009), installation of silicon sex toys/vibrators and neon, courtesy of the artist and Green Cardamom, London [SFAI]

Working in a variety of media including video, installation and sculpture, Abbas' peripatetic artistic practice resists easy labeling. She mixes the old with the new, the culturally specific with the universal while exploring ideas of cultural ownership and alienation, and the creative and destructive energies of love and war. In *God Grows on Trees*, Abbas painted 99 individual portraits of children over a period of a year from her visits to Madrassahs (religious schools) in Pakistan. Speaking to the current fascination with Madrassahs as exoticized subjects in Western media, Abbas attempts to portray the universality of childhood experience, marrying realism with the techniques of the miniature. The digital print, added to the work later, depicts trees along a road in Lahore, that are nailed with metal plates which reproduce the 99 names or attributes of God in Islamic tradition. A continuation of the artist's *Love series*, *Love Yourself* is an installation of vibrating, toy-like fighter jets, missiles, bombs and bullets which switched on together with the neon works on the wall creates a vibrant installation of sound, movement and light. The background neon blinks 'as good as the real thing'. The installation seeks to draw the attention of the viewer by a titillating display of colorful, vibrating objects and blatant sexual innuendo—voyeurism giving way to a disturbing realization that these symbols of violence have been turned into pleasure objects.

Born 1976 in Kuwait, Abbas was trained in sculpture and miniature painting at National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan. She was an assistant lecturer in Universität der Künste, Berlin and a visiting faculty member in National College of Arts, Lahore. Her works have been presented at the 2008 Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou; the 10th International Istanbul Biennial in 2007; National Art Gallery, Islamabad; the 2006 Sydney Biennial; Green Cardamom, London; and Gallery NCA, Rawalpindi. Abbas lives and works in Islamabad and Boston.

Minouk Lim



Game of 20 Questions—The Sound of Monsoon Goblin Crossing a Shallow Stream (2008), double projection video, courtesy of the artist [SFAI]

Minouk Lim's evocative and varied practice focuses on the conditions and ramifications of reckless development and capital-driven boosterism in urban Seoul. Her work often engages the silent, invisible and peripheral aspects of rampant modernization to poignantly reflect on its effects on society. *Game of 20 Questions* is a documentary about the annual Migrants Arirang Festival that attempts to engage ethnic minorities in Korea with whom, in the artist's words, "we are together yet apart, residing beyond the other side of the lens." Now in its fourth year, the festival—called the Multicultural Festival in Korean—was previously known as the Foreign Workers Festival and the Migrant Workers Festival. The evolution of the name reflects a shift away from the traditions of a single race, homogenous society (during intense economic growth in Korea) toward new transnational forms of labor prompted by rapid globalization. It also reflects the Korean people's dilemma and soul-searching over what to call a group of people in the 'here and now' that have become their own neighbors and family members.

S.O.S.—Adoptive Dissensus is a 44-minute video recording of the original 90-minute light and sound performance documentary theater that took place on March 29 and 30, 2009 on the Han River by the initiative of the International Multidisciplinary Art Festival,

Ringo Bunoan



Bridge (2008), wooden pallets, courtesy of the artist [REDCAT]



Wall (2008-09), used pillows, courtesy of the artist [SFAI]

Ringo Bunoan addresses memory, shared experience, and community life through her installations. Using everyday objects to create monumental forms, Bunoan's work is a nod to restraint, both in terms of form and emotion, and a reflection on the fractures, ruins and excess of contemporary life. *Bridge* is the artist's return to sculpture using ordinary found material sourced from her immediate environment. Evocative of crossings and connections, missed or otherwise, Bunoan's *Bridge* is a simple construction using old wooden pallets crudely stacked and nailed together to form an arch. Working with scale, she foregrounds the presence of her material and explores both its physical and psychological dimensions. The formal concerns are evident, and at the same time, it draws feelings of distance, longing and retrieval. In *Wall*, Bunoan takes pillows as banal, everyday objects and as sites of countless nights and mid-day naps that conjure dreaming and drooling as our subconscious runs unchecked. Pillows catch what leaks from our minds. They are the sites of physical rest and rejuvenation, as well as cradles of our ideas, memories, nightmares and dreams. In the site-specific work, a wall made of used pillows takes on monumental form—the individual pillow serving as a personal archive of another's accumulation of sleep, or a stranger's subconscious saliva. The wall of used pillows also mimics a pile of bodies, where the lines between pleasure, desire, and violence become blurred. As an installation, it is a monument of soft mass—standing on the side of Minimalism that embraces process, the body and collaboration.

Born in 1974 in Manila, Bunoan received her BFA in Art History from the University of the Philippines-College of Fine Arts, Diliman, Quezon City. She has participated in solo exhibitions at the Silverlens Gallery, Matak City, Philippines and Mo. Space, Manila and has been included in group exhibitions at Mo. Space; Prose Gallery, Matak City, Philippines; West Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines and Green Papaya Art Projects, Quezon City, Philippines. She lives and works in Manila.

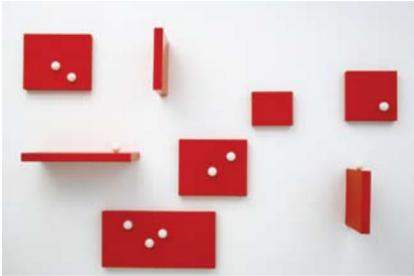


S.O.S.—Adoptive Dissensus (2009), 3-channel HD projection in loop, courtesy of the artist [REDCAT]

BOM. The sound, music and scripts in this video are recordings from the original performance that took place on the cruise. The event had the privilege of engaging Mr. Kang Yong Joo, the youngest long-term political prisoner of conscience in South Korea, who performed his true story by signaling SOS morse code with auto headlights. The performances occurred in three locations, inside and outside of the cruise ship and the Han River bank and proceeded while real time communication with the ship took place simultaneously. This work questions the relationship of memory faded by speed, resistance from it, and the relationship between human beings and nature inside the city. Lim will also present a new, three-channel version of this work at REDCAT.

Born 1968 in Daejeon, Korea, Lim studied fine arts at Ewha Women's University in Seoul and Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris. She was the recipient of the 7th Hermes Korea Art Prize in 2007 and Gwangju Bank Prize at the 6th Gwangju Biennale in 2006. Her work has been included in exhibitions at Artsonje Center, Seoul; Rodin Gallery, Seoul; Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt; Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt and Marronnier Art Gallery, Seoul; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She lives and works in Seoul.

Chen Hui-Chiao



Here and Now: Sound Falling II (2006), steel, ping-pong balls, spray paint, private collection, courtesy of the artist and Main Trend Gallery, Taipei [REDCAT]



Here and Now: Winter (2009), double bed, ping-pong ball, beads, 3D grid on the wall, courtesy of the artist [SFAI]

In her work, Chen Hui-Chiao deals with ritualistic repetitive movements, examining the interrelationship between external realities and inner consciousness, through which she searches for personal meaning and equilibrium. Inspired by poetry, psychology, and the dream state, Chen reinterprets and redefines matter through form, exploring the meaning of relationships, conceptually as well as formally. In the series *Here and Now*, the artist explains: "All stories were once a feeling in the gut, invisible, transient memories. It is a truly ancient feeling. Maybe it is a feeling in the guts, a sense of ethereal nothingness, and a wholeness that comes into existence as part of countless individual situations mixed together. Perhaps these inner feelings are themselves the product of some magical process of distillation inside the body, so that the more you strive to analyze its constituent elements, the harder it becomes to grasp something taken entirely for granted. In other words, one comes increasingly to realize or feel that something never really took place, except in the imagination. Maybe this is just a story but at this moment in time the only remaining truth is the story. (Excerpt from the 10th International Istanbul Biennial catalogue).

Here and Now: Sound Falling II

Listen, listens well.

Not to my words, but to the tumult that rages in your body
When you listen to yourself.

That it comes from beyond a wind that dies down or a rain that grows gentle....

-Chen Hui-Chiao

Here and Now: Winter (2009)

..... Silently the birds

Fly through us. Om, pious forest,

I look outside myself, and the tree inside me grows.

-Chen Hui-Chiao

Born 1964 in Tanshui, Taiwan, Chen is the director of the alternative space IT PARK in Taipei, one of the few surviving alternative spaces still active in the Taipei metropolitan area. Her works have been presented at the Museum of Contemporary Arts, Taipei in 2006; Nagoya University of Arts, Nagoya, Japan in 2006; Glenfiddich Art Gallery, Scotland in 2005; and the 10th International Istanbul Biennial in 2007. Chen lives and works in Taipei.

Shilpa Gupta



In Our Times: Speeches of Jinnah and Nehru at the time of Independence of India and Pakistan, August 1947 (2008), singing mobile microphones, 76 x 57 x 24 in., courtesy of the artist. [SFAI]



Untitled Don't See Don't Hear Don't Speak (2008), photographs printed on flex, 300 x 120 in., courtesy of the artist [REDCAT]

Shilpa Gupta works with interactive video, web media, photography, objects, sound, and public performance, to subversively probe and examine such themes as desire, religion and notions of security on the street and along real and imagined borders. In *In Our Times*, two microphones sway and sing to itself broadcasting on one side the speech of Jawaharlal Nehru given on the 14th of August, and on the other side, the speech by Jinnah given on the 11th of August, both in the year 1947, at the time of Independence. The solitary microphones ask for the same dream of equality, a nation free of nepotism and freedom of religion. Transcripts of these speeches pulled from the *Modern History Sourcebook* hangs on the wall—its font size contracting making it difficult to read. The work represents the unresolved histories which continue to seep into the contested present. In *Untitled Don't See Don't Hear Don't Speak*, Gupta continues a series of photos based on the story of three monkeys (see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil) associated with Mahatma Gandhi, in which the monkeys are covering their eyes, ears and nose. The mural like photographs are metaphors of a contemporary world driven by capitalism and individualism where it has become convenient to shut our senses and stay oblivious to the surroundings.

Born 1976 in Mumbai, Gupta studied at the Sir. J.J. School of Fine Arts in Mumbai. She has recently participated in the 7th Gwangju Biennale in 2008; the 3rd Yokohama Triennale in 2008; Tate Modern, London; Serpentine Gallery, London; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai and Delhi; and the Tamayo Museum, Mexico City. In addition, Gupta initiated Aar Paar, a public art exchange project between India and Pakistan, as well as the Video Art Road Show, in which video programs were screened on the streets of Mumbai and Delhi. She currently lives and works in Mumbai.

Jewyo Rhii



Ten Years, Please (2007-09), installation with objects, courtesy of the artist [SFAI/REDCAT]

Rhii's practice suggests ways of alleviating weakness of the body and mind. Employing a variety of methods and formats, the artist shares simple tools and strategies to avoid physical and psychological discomfort, envisioning ways to revitalize and comfort oneself in moments of lonesomeness and susceptibility. *Ten Years, Please* brings together several elements of the larger installation first presented in 2007 at Gallery 27 in Kaywon Art and Design School. The original installation consisted of drawings, modest three-dimensional pieces and other objects. The work had been saved from becoming rubbish, when the curator Kim Sunjung invited the artist to show the installation, giving her a good reason to ship all the objects from Amsterdam to Seoul. A survival journey that took 18 months in five carts until they arrived at Gallery 27. The gallery provided enough space to unload all the individual objects, presented each one in the plain sight for the first time. In this situation the viewer could appreciate the aesthetic modality of each object, which appeared strange and frail but contained delicate and humorous details. The exhibition provided the means to find temporary homes for each object—entrusting the works to other artists and colleagues for storage and safekeeping after the exhibition. Rhii's work evolved slowly in stages, the rhythm of the installation revealing intensive layers

Kan Xuan



Island (2 Yuan/1 Pound/1 Euro/1 Dollar) (2007-08), video on 4 monitors, 8 minutes, courtesy of the artist [SFAI/REDCAT]



On Everything (2005-08), video installation and wood table, courtesy of the artist [SFAI]

Kan Xuan's practice takes interest in the relationships between independent visions of personal subjectivity, spirituality and the social condition. Through very concrete and earnest engagements with everyday objects, her video works explore modes of perception. *On Everything* presents an installation of animated images of Buddha, a common image in everyday life in China. The Buddha figures remain static but the process of filming and editing activates them into living, changing portraits. *100 Times* shows 100 seemingly similar ceramic cups smashed to the ground, one after another. Because each cup was fired with varying amounts of glaze, the sound of their destruction creates different tones. In another video titled *Object*, a series of objects rendered on the monitor without color (coins, hair, milk, honey, etc) fall slowly into a transparent container filled with water, while a voice lists the names and colors, creating a strange suspension between fiction and reality. The four monitors that make up *Island* show images of material objects that can be bought with 2 yuan, 1 pound, 1 euro or 1 dollar (watch, nailpolish, nailclipper) literalizing symbolic and material value. Through video, Kan is interested in the conflicted relationship between the real and fake.

Born 1972 in XuanCheng, China, Kan graduated from the China Art Academy in Hangzhou and recently completed a fellowship at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including the Chinese Pavilion of the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; 10th International Istanbul Biennial in 2007; De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam; 9th Havana Biennial in 2006; Serpentine Gallery, London; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Victoria; and the Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery. She lives and works in Beijing and Amsterdam.



Ten Years, Please (2007-09), installation with objects, courtesy of the artist [SFAI/REDCAT]

of stories, circumstances and events. Those who were entrusted with individual elements were given the opportunity to keep a dossier of handwritten documents that revealed stories about these unique objects. Following these narratives, one could understand why these works look the way they do, the circumstances and environments that influenced the way they evolved, and what they experienced in the course of their drifting life. Finally then, one could begin to perceive that it is part of a narrative about marginalized domains, relationships in life, mortality, ephemerality and the suspension of time.

Born 1971 in Seoul, Rhii was recently an artist in residence at Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam from 2004 to 2005. Most recently, Rhii has focused on producing art books including *Of Five Carts and On* (2009), *Two* (2004), *Warming and Humidifying* (2003) and *Once You Lie Down* (1999). The artist has presented her work in solo and group exhibitions at Korean Missulsang, Seoul; Samuso, Seoul; 51st Venice Biennale in 2005; Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery and the 10th International Istanbul Biennial in 2007. Rhii currently lives and works in Seoul.