

On the duo exhibition <Quiet>

written by Kim Inseon, the director of Space Willing N Dealing

RohwaJeong and Jang Sungeun

RohwaJeong is the artist duo made up of Noh Yunhee and Jeong Hyunseok. Their practice involves the arrangement of space employing various mediums such as installation, video, and object. As two artists working together on multiple forms of media, extensive discussions take place when selecting material and forms of expression that match the theme upon completing a work of art. From a third-person perspective, the process of debate between them might seem excruciating. Developing ideas—what materials to use, why the result has to come out in a certain way, why the work has to be placed in that specific space—is not a linear process. While questioning and answering, the two artists do not hesitate to engage in fierce debates (the artists once revealed their process of discussion in the 2014 video piece, *Careful Plan*). The resulting work of art is, therefore, simple and without excess.

Chang Sungeun deals with the photography. Instead of majoring in photography, Chang extensively acquired techniques while studying visual art in general. Due to her training in color and space in advance of using photography, Chang's images reveal a process of realizing countless considerations and arrangements. Upon observing scenes where directed performance comes to the fore, one can assume that the artist has underwent numerous repetitive and failed procedures in the pursuit of the flawless expression at the moment of pressing the shutter. I once asked the artist about this as I saw a performative layer in her production process. Chang disagreed with my observation. Due to photography's time-limited character—as photographs capture a split second—Chang was wary of her works being read as mere “documentation.” Therefore, I realized that performative actions that Chang had directed did not go further than its role as the subject matter for an intended scene.

Process

Curating a duo exhibition is not easy. The artists' activities have seldom met so far. Although they knew each other before this exhibition was organized, the artists hardly conversed around a common theme of art. Both artists had solo shows at Space Willing N Dealing, respectively, yet they simply had to think about filling the space with their works back then. In this exhibition, where the two artists have to share a single space—especially when they present new work—they cannot but consider their counterparts from the beginning of the production. Normally, in a group exhibition of three or more artists, the space is coordinated according to the natural flow of viewing, while refraining from interfering with one another's

work. On the contrary, in a duo exhibition, the space divided into two sections and allocated to each artist may look awkward. The pressure of presenting disparate artists' works in a given space as a single, harmonic exhibition is especially present in duo exhibitions.

First, we held several meetings where artists could share their ideas. Before deciding which works to create, we exchanged thoughts on the arrangement of the space. In the earlier discussions, we focused on examining the artists' and curators' roles that enable a fresh perception of the "exhibition." As we rejected the idea of an exhibition that merely showed artworks and thus placed viewers in a passive position, we pondered on ways to create an intimate experience within the exhibition space. The conversation was not only a contemplation on the ultimate effect of the exhibition as a mediative form and what each artist wanted to present to the audience but also the imagination on various occasions where viewers could experience the space. Several discussions took place regarding diverse possibilities within the exhibition space; a space where one cannot find anything; a space full of texts; a space that constantly changed; a space occupied and exchanged by each artist for a certain period of time. Structural conditions of a duo show led us only to discuss prospects without a clear conclusion during these meetings.

RohwaJeong proposed to divide the space into upper and lower sections. Chang and I loved the idea. Finally, the artists were given the freedom to use the provided space. As the curator, I also felt sure to give them the freedom of artistic form and placement each artist had desired for their work. The idea of splitting the space into upper and lower parts came up a few days after Chang had talked about wanting to install her works low, near the floor, and arrange the space so that viewers could lie down or sit for a while when viewing.

Chang's interest in the floor dates back to her solo show in 2019. The artist wanted to put a yellow carpet on the ground for her exhibition, yet the carpet with the specific color and texture could not be installed due to cost issues. Chang, however, held on to her interest in arranging a space that allowed viewers to stay longer in front of a work of art, which also lead to unique actions during their viewing. RohwaJeong had found a way to coexist with this while keeping their work from disturbing Chang's works.

The artists then presented on mockups of the works to be installed at the space. These documents underwent a few modifications and were finally given shape. While the ideas developed, we had a meeting with art critic Ahn Soyeon, who wrote a critical essay for the show, and the overall outline of the exhibition was built up. The show's ideas and plans that were up to that point only talked about with the artists, expanded into the writer's imagination regarding "what cannot be seen" in the critic's essay.

Roles

As one can read from Ahn's essay, the exhibition space layout, which was to remain unknown until the actual installation was carried out, awakened a unique sense for those who used their imagination during the plan-drawing phase. Ahn begins her essay by mentioning a drawing she received, enclosed in a letter from Mongolia; she actually felt the warmth of the place, although she had never visited the site. Ahn then calls attention to the expanded senses through the imagination of movement inherent in the silent and still space instructed by the exhibition, *Quiet*.

trapeze by RohwaJeong was installed on the upper portion of Space Willing N Dealing. Two wooden bars hang from the ceiling with ropes; each bar is engraved with sentences: "words never can be learned," in English and "техника, которая повторяет неудачи (a technique that repeats failure)" in Russian. The trapeze-like structures are installed on each end of the space, with texts on the wooden bars facing each other. From this static structure, the viewer might recall a spectacular scene from the circus where two performers swing and fly through space.

Below RohwaJeong's installation, Chang constructed a photo installation of *Foot, Shoulder,* and *Neck*, which indicated parts of the body. Among them, images of the foot and neck were printed out. The sculptural work that connotes the form of a shoulder is an object that is used to expand the model's shoulder when staging a scene for her photography. Instead of a conventionally framed photograph, the viewer faces an image with wrinkles on a structure sticking out askew from the wall; a rolled-up image that can barely be seen only in its distorted form; and an object from which one can guess how it is used until reaching to the completion of photography. Viewers have to actively twist their bodies once again when confronted with the lower half of the exhibition space to look at them properly.

Lastly, I must confess that whenever I try to explain my role as a curator of the exhibition and one who facilitates the space, I hesitate. I am probably the one person who enjoys the thrill of various feelings—from joy to worries and nervousness—within the space. Here, we recorded the processes of materializing many artists' ideas and revealed the intersecting results. Upon reaching this exhibition and repeating the engraved words by RohwaJeong, I realized that I was not only a trapeze performer in this risky yet amazing circus, but also a thrilled and stunned viewer of the artists' trapeze.