

**REAL
ART WAYS**

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This exhibition is a result of Real Art Ways "Step Up" competition in 2004, which requested proposals from emerging artists living in New York or New England. "Step Up" was juried by Joe Amrhein, Owner/Director of Pierogi 2000, Artist Ellen Driscoll, and Tumelo Mosaka, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum.

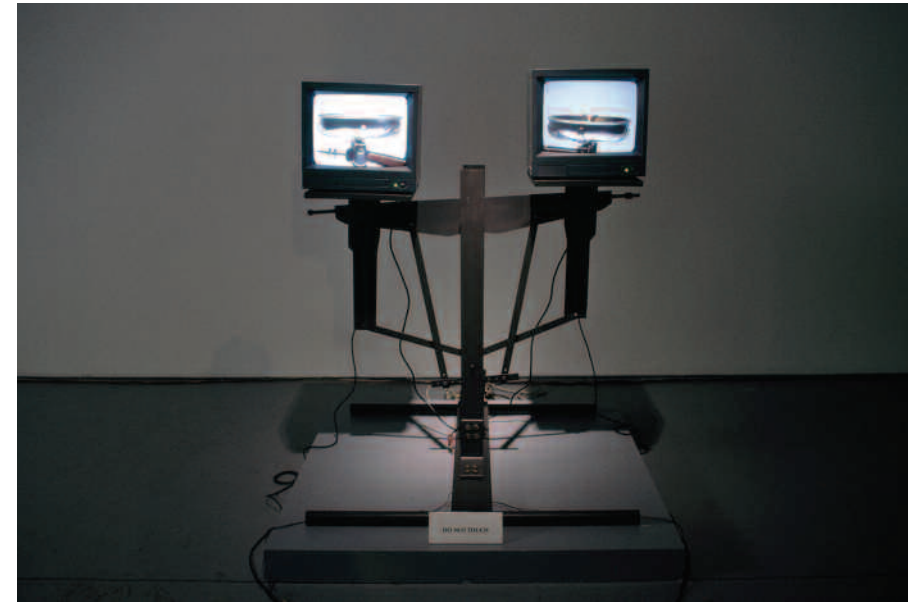
The exhibition was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.



REAL ART WAYS, founded in 1975, is a nationally recognized, alternative multi-disciplinary arts organization that presents and supports contemporary artists and their work, facilitates the creation of new work, and creatively engages and informs audiences and communities. Real Art Ways is an active presenter of different art forms, including music, performance, spoken word, film, video and visual arts. Real Art Ways has a particular commitment to supporting the work of emerging artists.

On the cover: installation views of Balance and Before After and After Before, both 2004

Joo-Mee Paik



Balance, 2004, interactive video installation

The Certainty of Things (or not); The Video Work of Joo-Mee Paik

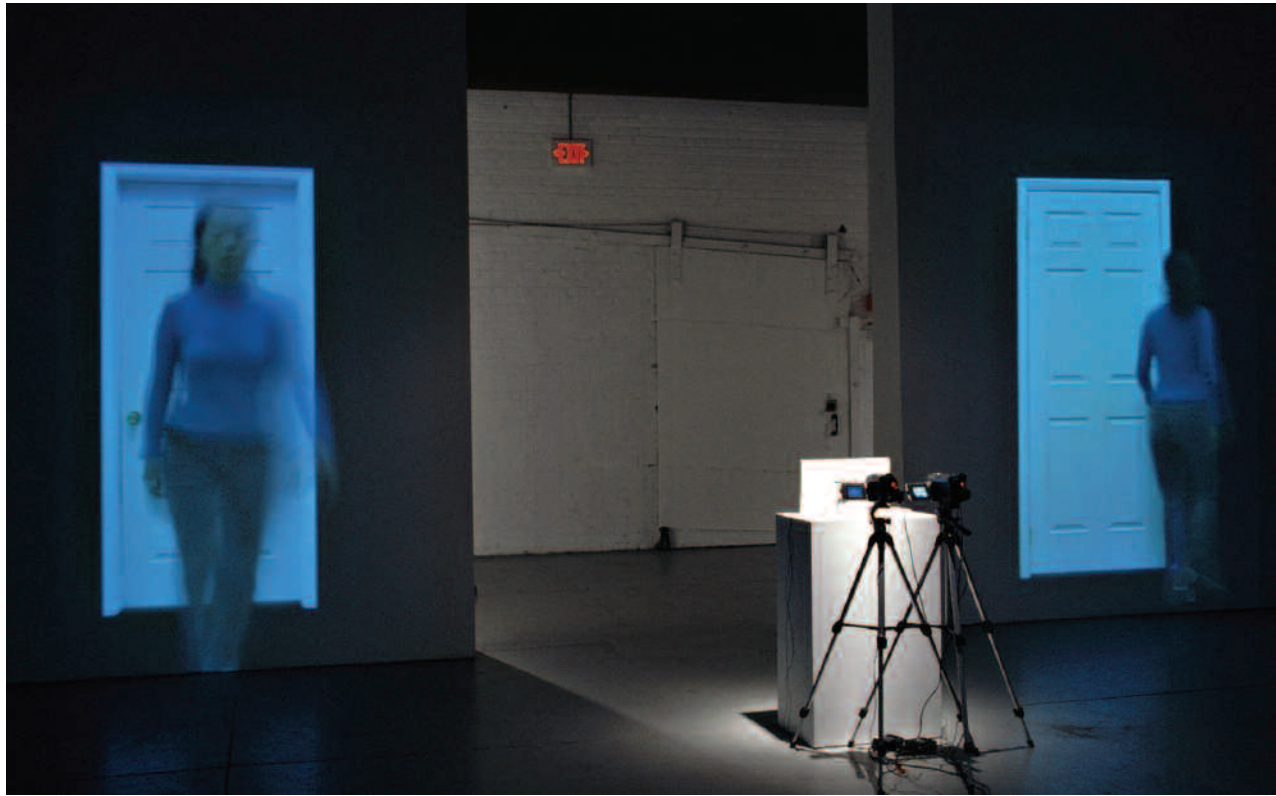
By Gene Gort

In college, my philosophy professor suggested we try an experiment: Fill two adjacent sinks, one with hot water, one with cold. Immerse one hand into the hot, the other into the cold simultaneously for a few seconds. Repeat the immersion process in reverse. Then immerse both hands into one sink, then both into the other. Throughout this process attempt to discern hot and cold sensations in each hand. Taking a thermometer reading of each sink in this circumstance would clearly indicate which was hot and which was cold independent of sensations. Fahrenheit or Celsius would provide objective systems of measurement for the temperature readings. The point of this experiment was to prompt us to think about empiricism; knowledge based on the experience of the senses. The thermometer is a technology which we trust independent of our sensorial model, the body. The phenomenon of temperature is measurable in this way too, substituting for our experience, a system to which we usually defer. Usually.

Joo-Mee Paik presents the viewer with a technology of representation, which contradicts our direct experience and our assumptions either oppositionally or by complication. Under consideration here are two projects, "Balance" and "Before After and After Before". Each invites a physical action on our part and then the technology responds, "reading" our actions, and then we, in turn,

Joo-Mee Paik is a Korean artist born in Seoul in 1976. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Seoul National University in Painting and her Master of Fine Arts Degree in Electronic Integrated Arts at Alfred University, NY. Currently she is the administrator and technical assistant for visiting artists in Institute of Electronic Arts at Alfred University. She has shown her work at the Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, and at the Carnegie Art Center, North Tonawanda, NY. Her exhibition at Real Art Ways is her first solo show.

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Before After and After Before, 2005, 2-channel video installation

read it. The results complicate the consequences of our actions through their representations.

In "Balance", a simple machine (a scale), video representation (two video monitors) and parallel machine mimicry (quasi-robotic, oversized scale) respond to the viewer's actions. The scale responds, as we would expect. Placing a weight from one tray of the scale to the other, the scales tip to reflect the placement of the weight; the scale works as a scale is expected to work. The robotic machinery, which resembles a larger version of the original scales, responds in kind but the opposite way. The closed-circuit video representation of "weight" produces an unease between the monitors on the enlarged scales; an attempt to maintain some equilibrium between the two images of the trays of the scale. This complicated response is a failure of expectations. Cause and

effect is in disarray. The empirical model is challenged; my senses interpret "X" and the objective results should corroborate. But the results are from a machine complex, that which processes information through some remote calculation, one that brings authority and objectivity and a history of faith in technology. It presents evidence to the contrary; therefore it brings doubt to my experience. "What's wrong with this picture?"

"Before After and After Before" presents the viewer with an analog to their own experience of crossing a threshold, passing through a doorway into another room. The viewer, upon entering the gallery trips a motion sensor activating two synchronous video projections of a doorway projected on adjacent walls, which flank the entrance. Once in the room, the viewer witnesses a sequence in which the artist-as-per-

former passes through a door as it opens and closes in slow motion, in multiple versions/exposures creating a ghosting effect; now you see her, now you don't. The illusion, since the two video images are synchronized and inverted left and right, confuses the sense of "in" and "out"; when she enters, she exits and definitions of location—location of the self in time—are questioned. Once the sequence concludes it returns to the static image of the door anticipating entry/exit. If another viewer enters the space, the first viewer now witnesses the video sequence again as well as the new viewer's experience of what s/he has just experienced, and on and on. This witnessing creates a dialogue of psychological projection; I am seeing you as myself attempting to unravel what I have just seen—the image of the artist representing a confusion in location and time. There is a self-reflection, self-consciousness present in the room between individuals.

The fact that we do or don't know if it is the artist's image in the video is essentially inconsequential but adds biographical content if, in fact, we do. Paik, being a Korean in the United States and multi-lingual, grapples with issues of identity, language and taxonomy. This is more obvious in her other works. Her work here is essentially philosophical, epistemological, concerning itself with questions of knowledge. The projects prompt a self-reflection, a self-consciousness, self-evaluation, and contemplation. Actions have consequences. Those consequences aren't always predictable. Uncertainty results and we question simple concepts such as weight or "heaviness", "in" or "out", "then" and "now", "here" and "there". The consequences of these thoughts are profound: "What do I know and how do I expect to come to know anything?"—questions that are asked by every thinker in history. But here, what are additionally questioned is the technology, the apparatus, its ability to misrepresent, to fail, to complicate or contradict direct experience, to influence our actions and ideology. The trust in technology and the trust in the evidence of its representation is suspect.

Paik participates in a tradition of artist-producers who question the apparatus of representation itself. Magritte's "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a pipe) is the quintessential 20th century artwork, which tells us that, in case we weren't

paying attention, representation and figuration are a construct, not the thing itself. Harun Farocki's "Ich glaubte Gefangene zu sehen" (I Thought I was Seeing Convicts) investigates ideas of surveillance technologies and observes that our behavior is contingent on the knowledge of surveillance and the representation of our actions to others. Bruce Nauman's live/taped corridor pieces present surveillance situations, which are seemingly credible. Only after closer investigation do we realize the space in which we are standing, pictured on the surveillance monitor, is actually a videotape of a previous time in that same space. The camera is a dummy, a decoy; we are physically absent from the picture.

What is generous about Joo-Mee Paik's work is that it doesn't pretend to provide answers. It is not didactic. It is playful and says, "Be considerate. Regard absolutes as suspect and consider the fluidity of definitions and states of being. In short, 'pay attention'!"



Balance, 2004, interactive video installation

Gene Gort is a visual artist, video producer, media programmer and educator who lives in Collinsville, Connecticut. He currently holds the position of Associate Professor of Media Arts at Hartford Art School, University of Hartford, a program he designed and directs.