

Folding The Edges

2022.3.17 – 4.6

Oksun Kim, Ok Hyun Ahn, Jeongmee Yoon, and Jaye Rhee

From March 17th to April 6th, Gallery Kiche holds *Folding the Edges*, an exhibition by four artists, Oksun Kim, Ok Hyun Ahn, Jeongmee Yoon, and Jaye Rhee. The exhibition will compose of a virtual reading session of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's magnum opus, *Dictée* (1982), and the four artists' reflections on the work in videos, installations, and photographs. In addition, it recreates the previously held two-day exhibition at Amado Art Space, *Dictée: Chorus*, at the end of last year in ways that best fit Gallery Kiche.

Artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, who passed away unexpectedly 40 years ago in New York City just three days after the publication of her first book, takes her book's title, *Dictée*, in the literal sense and utilizes "dictation" as a direct and symbolic guiding method in its overall structure and process of writing. In addition to herself and her mother, Cha invites multiple narrators that transcend time and space, such as Yu Guan Soon, Joan of Arc, and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, and weaves various images, texts, multiple languages (English, Korean, French, etc.), facts, and fiction to create a book that itself embodies dictation.

In this exhibition, the artists each present their "dictation" based on the artist's own life and experiences, just as Cha attempted to inspire autonomous awakening of history and experiences of discrimination and hate by adopting "dictation" as a methodology. Oksun Kim and Jeongmee Yoon record (or "dictate") the objects that compose the unique identities (or corners) that represent regions such as Jeju Island and Itaewon and bring to the surface their symbolisms. Ok Hyun Ahn uncovers the many layers of emotions and consciousness that make up her collective identity by "speaking along" the multidimensional self. Jaye Rhee weaves the gestures and music of different times and spaces and captures the quietly whispering echoes.

In Oksun Kim's *IN NOMINE*, the palm tree, a symbol of Jeju's exoticism, appears as a "palm-tree human," an imaginary organism. Peripheral subjects such as transnational couples, foreigners, and nonnative plants that the artist has captured in her previous works now expand into a "palm-tree human." This evolution further extends the space where fact and fiction are mixed against the backdrop of the palm tree forest, the coastlines, and villages and simultaneously shows a stark contrast between the natural and the heterogeneous. The many faces of women in Jeju and migrant workers whom the artist met at bus stops and street festivals overlap with the faces of the "palm-tree humans" in a video montage. Representing the desire to release the internalized oppression of those around us, a TV broadcast footage of Sherrin, an Australian who was an English teacher in Jeju, swimming 370 km across the island to raise awareness of its surrounding ocean's beauty and need for preservation is accompanied. Oksun Kim echoes the phrase, "*In nomine* (in the name of)," found in *Dictée*, and calls upon the peripheral beings around us into existence.

Ok Hyun Ahn reenacts the plural narrativity of the female figure in *Dictée*'s "Erato-Love Poetry" who is both the speaker and the object, an observer and a protagonist. In her single-channel video, *Love Poem*, a "she" who is fragmented into multiple beings and a "you" who enters into "her" space appear. The fragmented "she" speaks detached from the tactile and

visual self, invoking a sense of curious oddity. “You” who have been observing are invited to join “her” conversation as “she” slowly fades away, leaving “you” alone in the space.

Jeongmee Yoon's *Itaewon Medley* focuses on the keywords found in *Dictée* such as diaspora, hybridity, feminism, and the marginalized. In the fall of 2021, as Yoon lived in Itaewon for a while, the neighborhood became where she walked with her dog, “Mong-ee.” Her two-channel video captures the journey through the winding narrow alleys, steep and irregular stairs, streets filled with graffiti on shutter doors of shops closed due to COVID-19, exotic signboards, and shops for “big size” apparels in what feels like a walk with your dog. In the time of a pandemic and numerous forces of hate, Itaewon comes to life in another light.

Jaye Rhee's *Murmur and Resonance* plays two videos side by side - a silent video of Billie Holiday and a video of an Asian female dancer's movements. New York City in lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was in absolute chaos, engulfed by anxiety and fear and brimming with growing discrimination and hate toward people of color. Amidst the echoing ambulance sirens day and night in a city in lockdown, Rhee occasionally listened to Billie Holiday's “Strange Fruit.” A poem and music originally written by Jewish poet Abel Meeropol after witnessing the archived photographs of a black lynching site became a symbolic song used to protest against racism. The body and its movements that sing lyricless music cannot be easily defined. As it cannot be defined, it is a precarious existence. What holds a body together and brings it to existence is language. That language, however, is neither a native language that comes naturally nor a second language that one learns. Rather, it is one that is sought as it must be found, one that must be spoken as it must be done.