

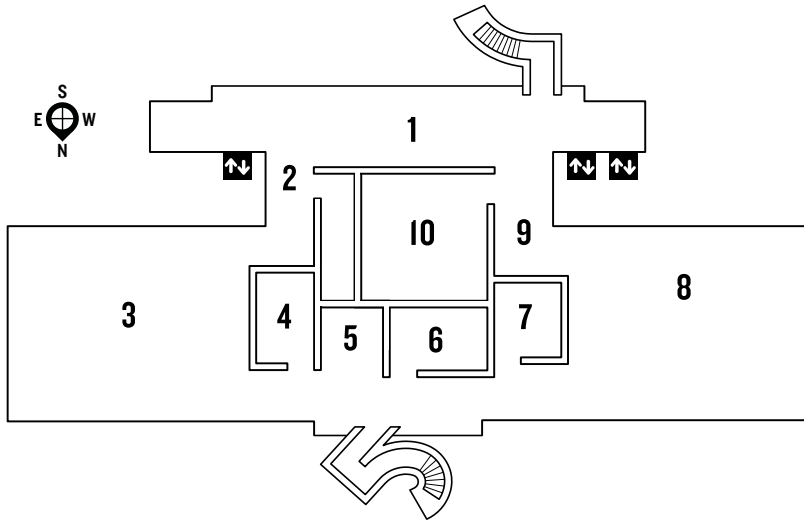
HPREGUE YPANG



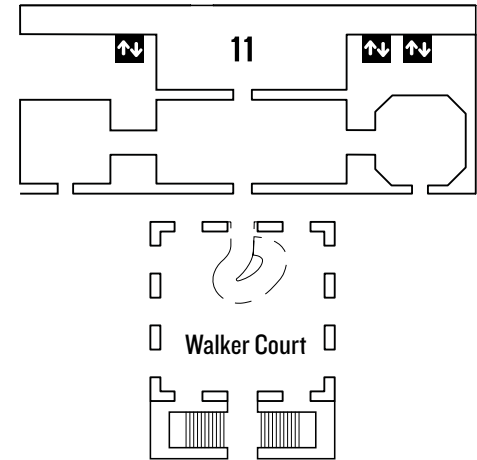
EMERGENCE

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# LEVEL FIVE



# JOEY AND TOBY TANENBAUM SCULPTURE ATRIUM



## INTRODUCTION

Haegue Yang (b. 1971, Seoul, South Korea) is a leading artist of her generation, and this survey exhibition brings together her most provocative and inspiring works from the last 25 years. The exhibition title, *Emergence*, refers to a natural, social, and economic phenomenon in which a whole entity exhibits qualities and behaviours that its individual parts do not have on their own. Here, the concept of “emergence” suggests that particular works remain loyal to their own time of creation even as they are perceived differently in the condensed history of a survey show.

Yang uses materials with domestic associations to create sculptures and installations that address historical and contemporary narratives of migration, displacement, and belonging. By incorporating sound, light, air, smell, and movement into her works, she transforms our understanding of the materiality and historical meanings of everyday objects.

# SELECTED SCULPTURES 2011–2020

This selection of sculptures made over the past 10 years shows just some of the diverse materials and techniques that Yang uses in her artistic practice. Here, her visual language transforms readymades, or commercially available objects, into sculptural compositions. Although each of these hybrid abstract forms is unique, the sculptures take on new meaning when experienced as part of a group: this is the concept of “emergence” at play. Some of these sculptures are taken from their own larger series. For example, the works in *The Intermediates* are all woven using artificial straw, and the *Sonic* sculptures all incorporate brass-plated bells that can move. Other sculptures in this selection, such as *Faceted Dancing Mask* and *Dry Spell at Villeperdue*, are completely independent, though they resonate stylistically and conceptually with the larger group presented here.



## CABINET OF FORMATIVE WORKS

In the mid-1990s, after completing her bachelor's degree at Seoul National University, Yang moved to Germany to continue her studies at an art school in Frankfurt. Yang's use of everyday materials in these formative works, as well as her playful titles, reveals the influence of her eclectic education and her fresh take on the social and material environment of Western Europe. The generation of artists that she observed, as well as the art movements that she studied, such as Arte Povera, whose adherents celebrated non-traditional materials, inspired her use of everyday language and materials as well as her humorous sensibility.

Some of these artworks are presented in a glass case, as they were originally exhibited in 1998. In *Anthology*, Yang places herself within the tradition of art history, ironically using classical museum display strategies to tell her story.



## ECLECTIC AFFILIATIONS AND PERMUTATIONS

Raised in South Korea, Yang began her career in Germany, and her artistic practice has kept her moving around both mentally and geographically. Yang's awareness of the increasingly nomadic nature of the diasporic condition has shaped her mind and her work, as has her own quasi-immigrant experience and her mobile life as an artist. This gallery includes a wide selection of works: early and more recent, two-dimensional and sculptural, acoustic and kinetic. The shifts between visible and hidden elements, as well as the various ways in which the artworks move, embody the fluidity that characterizes Yang's approach. Here, her references include birdsong recorded in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, debris from origami, and cultural figures such as artist Sol LeWitt and writer and filmmaker Marguerite Duras.

The mural-like wallpaper in this room reflects the artist's fascination with flatness and compression, and highlights her desire to play with layers. The visual motifs in *Eclectic Totemic* refer to the wide range of figures, historical and otherwise, that have influenced Yang yet have seldom appeared visibly in her work.



## VIDEO WORKS

The video essays in *Video Trilogy* are unique in Yang's body of work for their direct style and extensive narration. Here, the camera focuses on seemingly insignificant urban scenes, while the voiceover narration is a meditation on solitude and vulnerability. Inspired by the artist's personal experience of loneliness, the emotional narratives express a yearning for connection, both to people and to places.

*Holiday Story* was filmed in Seoul, South Korea, during Chuseok, the country's second-most important holiday, similar to North American Thanksgiving. In this video, Yang reflects on the idea of a "holiday" and the relationship between rest and labour, insisting that while paid labour might be suspended during holidays, love, domestic work, and time are not, since these things cannot be paused.

Yang first showed *Doubles and Halves* in her solo presentation for the Korean Pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale. It was shot in two distinct locations: Ahyeon-dong, the artist's neighbourhood in Seoul at that time, and the exhibition site in Venice, Giardini Park. On the narration track, the voice reflects on the impossibility of the anonymous inhabitants of each location ever meeting face-to-face. Fantasizing about such an encounter inevitably leads to melancholy or to a feeling of incompleteness.





# SALLIM

In Korean, the word “sallim” means “running a household.” Here, however, it suggests more than that, as Yang also engages with the private aspects of an artist’s life, such as thinking, resting, and cooking. *Sallim* was modelled on the kitchen of Yang’s Berlin home and studio, preserving the shape, scale, and spirit of the original space. The artwork was also inspired by the actual experiences of two influential figures in Yang’s life: her mother and the writer Marguerite Duras. Both harboured and fed political dissidents in their homes, transforming their kitchens into unexpected symbols of resistance against sociopolitical injustice. With these references to her mother and to Duras, Yang reimagines quiet, domestic activities as powerful public statements.



## ECLECTIC SERIAL AND COSIES

Throughout her career, Yang has remained committed to the legacy of Conceptual art, a movement that emerged globally in the 1960s, in which the idea (or concept) behind the work is more important than the finished art object. Many Conceptual artists created series of works, an innovation at the time that has since become common practice. The series of works in this room reveal Yang's distinctive and multifaceted approach to text, writing, and translation. While embracing many of the core principles of Conceptual art, these works are notably sentimental; this appreciation of feelings contrasts with the cool, contained quality of the movement's inherent minimalism.

Yang often draws on handicraft techniques like knitting, crocheting, and macramé. Inspired by traditional knitted tea cosies, her *Cosies* represent gestures of personal care for domestic objects. Instead of keeping teapots warm, however, Yang's crocheted covers swaddle unexpected objects like canned food for wholesale use and jumbo-sized toilet paper rolls. While it might seem absurd to use handmade cosies to dress up commercial goods produced for instant consumption, this work constitutes a deliberate act of care directed toward life-sustaining items. With the cosies concealing their labels, the cans become anonymous shapes, identifiable by their size alone. This erasure of commercial identity asks us to question our consumerist impulses, highlighting the fragile balance of a world built on the buying and selling of commodities.

For *Emergence*, Yang has created a new work for the *Cosies* series to fit over cans of locally produced maple syrup, in all their commercially available sizes.



## SADONG 30

Yang's first self-organized, non-institutional solo exhibition, *Sadong 30*, was held in South Korea in 2006 in an unusual location: the rundown and abandoned house that had once been inhabited by her grandparents, on the street of Sa-dong, Incheon. Regarded as a pivotal moment in Yang's career, this project introduced some of the themes and approaches that now define her work: the repurposing of everyday objects as analogies for thoughts and feelings, the inclusion of personal narrative, and the tension between private and public. *Sadong 30* also comments on the passage of time and the changes that Yang saw in the urban fabric of her country.

Realizing that it would be impossible to restage *Sadong 30* in a conventional gallery space, Yang distilled the original experience to create *Afterimage* for a group exhibition in Amsterdam later in 2016. As the title suggests, the installation reimagines certain elements from *Sadong 30*; it uses wind, humidity, scent, warmth, and lights to recreate the sensory experience of the earlier work. The only object taken directly from *Sadong 30* is a wall clock called *Dispersion in Sadong 30*, which has two notable details: its numbers are deliberately placed in the wrong order, and it hangs unusually low. This distortion of time and space suggests that the house at Sa-dong 30 existed outside of time, outside of the forward flow of progress.



## DOUBLES AND COUPLES

To Yang things often appear to be either excessive or insufficient, qualities she acknowledges and even appreciates as she contemplates different objects and phenomena. For example, Yang finds doubles and halves more interesting than singles or wholes—a perspective she explores in the contemplative voice-over narration of her video essay *Doubles and Halves – Events with Nameless Neighbors*.

*Doubles and Couples* is composed of five paired sculptural elements based on household appliances in Yang's apartments in Berlin and Seoul. Each appliance, represented abstractly as a geometric metal box filled with light bulbs and cords and covered by venetian blinds, forms a pair with its counterpart or "double" from the other city; the "couples" thus create a connection between the artist's two homes.

The sculptures are also filled with found objects such as socks, dishes, and grocery packaging, which represent domestic life in a more concrete way. The venetian blinds, meanwhile, suggest that the boundary between private and public, the home and the social world, might be more porous than we think—especially when one's sense of self is rooted in two different cultures at once.





## LACQUER PAINTINGS

Lacquer painting is a traditional art form practiced in Asia to decorate lacquerware. Historically, Asian lacquerware was made using processed tree sap, which gave the pieces their characteristic shiny finish. The *Lacquer Paintings* (since 1994) use cheap wood varnish to seal various materials such as spices, plants, seeds, dust, and found objects on common chipboard. Inspired by Yang's time in Frankfurt as an art student, these works use materials and methods that are simple; this approach stands in contrast to the fine craftsmanship historically involved in the process. The paintings dry outdoors over many months, which leaves them exposed to the weather and allows them to collect a patina of dirt, dust, and rain marks. These accidental, natural circumstances thereby leave an imprint on Yang's intentional compositions.



## BOXING BALLET

In *Boxing Ballet* six humanlike sculptures covered in brass-plated bells transform the gallery space into a stage. These works were inspired by *Triadic Ballet*, a three-act dance performance created by the German artist Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943) in 1922. Here, Yang has transformed dance, which is a durational art form (taking place over time), into a spatial installation with four murals. Although bells are often associated with tradition—for example, with the rituals of Korean shamanism—Yang uses them here to interpret an avant-garde masterpiece. Activating these sonic sculptures by pushing or pulling causes them to waver gently in a motion that echoes the floor; the tactile act creates subtle sonic effects.

Also part of this cast of dancers is *Windy Orbit – Brass Plated Second Cycle*, a Medusa-like sculpture machine made from eight fans arranged in three tiers. A portion of each fan is hung with golden bells, so that when the fan blades turn at a low speed the sculpture creates both sound and wind.

*Boxing Ballet* will be activated every Saturday afternoon between 2 and 4 pm. There will be no activation on December 26.



## WOVEN CURRENTS — CONFLUENCE OF PARALLELS

In connection with *Emergence*, the AGO commissioned Yang to create a new work for the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Sculpture Atrium. She was inspired to create *Woven Currents – Confluence of Parallels* after responding powerfully to the AGO's collections of Indigenous and Canadian art. As she learned about the contexts surrounding this work, she was particularly fascinated by the Two Row Wampum Treaty of 1613, which documented an agreement to sustain harmony between the Five Nations of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) and the Dutch government. She was also intrigued by the layered architecture of the Sculpture Atrium, where the history of the institution is visible.

When Yang encountered the Two Row Wampum Treaty, she was struck by how a visual representation could be more powerful than a written document, and how this streamlined expression could clearly convey the values, hopes, and beliefs of those who created it. In *Woven Currents – Confluence of Parallels*, Yang connects the parallel lines of the wampum belt, which represent each group's history and destiny, to the linear structure of venetian blinds. She entangles these lines, as though they are constantly interacting with each other, creating a composition that can appear both transparent and opaque, depending on your vantage point. Zigzags, crossings, and overlapping sequences of blue, purple, and white evoke the contentious history of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous people.





## PROGRAMS

### TALKS

#### **Curator's Talk: Adelina Vlas on Haegue Yang** **Wednesday, October 7 | 4 pm**

##### **Zoom**

Join Adelina Vlas, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, for an in-depth conversation on the work of Haegue Yang to coincide with the exhibition opening.

#### **Artist's Talk: Haegue Yang** **Wednesday December 2 | 8 pm**

##### **Zoom**

Haegue Yang lives and works between Berlin and Seoul. She completed an MFA at the prestigious Städelschule Frankfurt am Main in 1999. As a student, Yang was an inheritor of the ferocious and idiosyncratic use of materials that characterizes much of the best post-war German art, such as that of Georg Herold (her professor at the Städelschule), Sigmar Polke and Rosemarie Trockel. At the same time, Yang approached this legacy from a distanced, subjective position as an artist raised in South Korea and deeply immersed in questions of globalization from multiple cultural perspectives.

### ACTIVATIONS

Join us for in-gallery activations of two of Haegue Yang's works. Free with admission.

#### ***Boxing Ballet*** **Saturdays 2–4 pm** **except December 26**

**Gallery 507, Level 5**

#### ***Sol LeWitt Vehicles*** **Saturdays 2–4 pm**

on the following dates:

**October 3, 17, 31**  
**November 14, 28**  
**December 12, 19**  
**January 2, 16, 30**

**Gallery 505, Level 5**

### PERFORMANCES

#### **AGO Live | *Malady of Death*** **Friday November 27 | 8 pm**

##### **Zoom**

For the last ten years, internationally renowned Korean-born, Germany-based artist Haegue Yang has been restaging a work by the French poststructuralist icon Marguerite Duras, *Malady of Death*. The two artists, despite their unique experiences and expressions, cross paths with their shared acknowledgment of the fragility and instability of the self, a thematic juncture that has proven generative across many continents and languages. In Yang's staging, *Malady of Death* is a monodrama about an hour in length, with projections. To expand its meaning and root it in a regional context, this work is always performed by a local artist. Thus far, *Malady of Death* has been performed at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2010); Namsan Arts Center, Seoul (2010); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, (2013); and most recently at Mobile M+: Live Art, Hong Kong (2015). Join us for its Canadian premiere with Sook-Yin Lee.

### SCHOOL AND TEACHER PROGRAMS

#### **Teacher Resource: Haegue Yang** **Online Resource**

An overview of selected works in the exhibition that make connections to the Ontario Curriculum with questions and activities that deepen learning for teachers and students from JK to Grade 12.

#### **AGO Schools: An Introduction to Haegue Yang** **Wednesday, October 14 | 1 pm** **Free**

Join Interpretive Planner Gillian McIntyre in conversation with an Art Educator about selected works by Haegue Yang. For students from Grades 9–12.



## BIOGRAPHY

Haegue Yang (b. 1971, Seoul, South Korea) lives and works between Berlin and Seoul. Yang has participated in international exhibitions including the 21st Biennale of Sydney (2018), La Biennale de Montréal (2016), the 12th Sharjah Biennial (2015), the 9th Taipei Biennial (2014), dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel (2012), and the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009) in both the main exhibition *Making Worlds* and as the South Korean national pavilion representative. Yang's first survey exhibition titled *ETA* was hosted by the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany (2018) as the recipient of the 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize. She is currently a Professor at the Staedelschule in Frankfurt am Main. Her artwork is part of the AGO's permanent collection, and is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; M+, Hong Kong; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Tate Modern, London; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Her work has been the subject of numerous monographs, such as *Haegue Yang: Anthology 2006–2018: Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow* (2019); *Haegue Yang: ETA 1994–2018* (2018); *Haegue Yang – VIP's Union* (2017); and *Haegue Yang: Family of Equivocations* (2013). Recent projects in North America include *Handles* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and *In the Cone of Uncertainty* at the Bass Museum of Art, Miami.



## PHOTO CAPTIONS

### p.9

Haegue Yang, *Reflected Red-Blue Cubist Dancing Mask*, 2018. Wood, stainless steel, handles, casters, self-adhesive diamond reflective and holographic vinyl film. 186 x 118 x 107 cm. Courtesy of Greene Naftali, New York. Photo: Julien Gremaud. © Haegue Yang.

### p.11

(top) Haegue Yang, *IKEA Cup as a Self-Portrait*, 1995/2018. Signed cup. 9.5 x 12 x 8 cm. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Studio Haegue Yang. © Haegue Yang.

(bottom) Haegue Yang, *Sink with Wire*, 1995/2017. Plaster, wood, steel wire, text on foil. 57 x 73 x 49 cm. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Studio Haegue Yang. © Haegue Yang.

### p.13

Haegue Yang in collaboration with OK-RM (Oliver Knight and Rory McGrath), London, *Eclectic Totemic*, 2013. Digital colour print. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of OK-RM and Haegue Yang. © Haegue Yang, Oliver Knight, and Rory McGrath.

### p.15

(top) Video still from: Haegue Yang, *Squandering Negative Spaces*, 2006. Single-channel video (colour, sound, 27 min 57 sec). Voice-over: David Michael DiGregorio. © Haegue Yang.

(bottom) Video still from: Haegue Yang, *Squandering Negative Spaces*, 2006. Single-channel video (colour, sound, 27 min 57 sec). Voice-over: David Michael DiGregorio. © Haegue Yang.

### p.17

Haegue Yang, *Sallim*, 2009. Powder-coated steel frame and perforated metal plates, casters, aluminum venetian blinds, yarn, acrylic mirror, IV stand, light bulbs, cable, zip ties, terminal strips, metal rings, metal chains, fan, timer, dried garlic, plates, hot pad, scent emitters (*Curry, Fresh Brewed Coffee, Rosemary Focaccia, Hot Apple Pie, Vomit, Feces*). 310 x 250 x 420 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Fund for the Twenty-First Century and Gift of Agnes Gund, Glenn Fuhrman, and Jerry I. Speyer. Installation view of *Condensation*, Korean Pavilion, 53rd Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2009. Photo: Pattara Chanruechachai. © Haegue Yang.

### p.19

(top) Haegue Yang, *Social Conditions of the Sitting Table*, 2001. 9 colour photographs and 1 laser print mounted on aluminum dibond. 10 parts, each 43.7 x 55.5 cm. Ed. 3 / II A.P. Luxoom, Berlin. Private collection, Seoul. Sammlung der Stiftung Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig. © Haegue Yang.

(bottom) Haegue Yang, *Can Cosies – Jakeman's Maple Syrup*, 100 ml, 250 ml, 500 ml, 1 L, ~ 2019. 16 glass bead-filled cans, yarn. 20 x 51 x 51 cm. Courtesy of Greene Naftali, New York. Photo: Studio Haegue Yang. © Haegue Yang.

### p.21

Haegue Yang, *Non-Indépliable, azuré*, 2006/2009. Drying rack, fabric. 123 x 130 x 55 cm. Courtesy of the artist. Installation view of *Sadong 30*, in an abandoned house in Incheon, Korea, 2006. Photo: Daenam Kim. © Haegue Yang.

### p.23

Haegue Yang, *Doubles and Couples – Version Turin*, 2008. Powder-coated steel frame and perforated metal plates, casters, aluminum venetian blinds, light bulbs, cable, zip ties, terminal strips, yarn, metal rings, metal grommets, seashells, driftwood, scrubbing brush, PVC hose, dancefloor objects, sock objects (with data storage medium or grocery packaging). Boiler: 110 x 52 x 46 cm; gas stove: 105 x 70 x 65 cm; refrigerator: 150 x 195 x 61 cm; shower: 290 x 174 x 150 cm; washing machine: 105 x 100 x 65 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, purchased in honour of Lynn Zelevansky with funds provided by The Broad Art Foundation, Hyon Chough, the Korea Arts Foundation of America (KAFA), Wonmi and Kihong Kwon, The Hillcrest Foundation, Tony and Gail Ganz, Terri and Michael Smooke, Judy and Stuart Spence, Steven Neu, and other donors through the 2009 Collectors Committee (M.2009.79a–e). Installation view of *50 Moons of Saturn*, 2nd Turin Triennial, Turin, Italy, 2008. Photo: Paolo Pellion. © Haegue Yang.

### p.25

Haegue Yang, *Giggly Jumbly Constellation in Seasoning Gradation*, 2017. Chipboard, wood varnish, found plants, dust, caraway seeds, red pepper. 50 x 35 cm. Collection of Eleanor & Francis Shen, Toronto. Photo: Florian Kleinfenn. © Haegue Yang.

### p.27

Haegue Yang, *Boxing Ballet*, 2013–2015. Powder-coated steel frames, mesh, and handles; casters, steel wire rope, brass-plated bells, metal rings, and vinyl tape. Collection of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art. Installation view of *Shooting the Elephant* 象 *Thinking the Elephant*, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea, 2015. Photo: Studio Haegue Yang. © Haegue Yang.

### p.29

Haegue Yang, *Woven Currents – Confluence of Parallels*, 2020. Aluminum venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminum hanging structure, steel wire rope, LED tubes, cable. Dimensions variable. Purchase, with funds from Eleanor and Francis Shen, the David Yuile and Mary Elizabeth Hodgson Fund, Women's Art Initiative, the Janet and Michael Scott Fund, the Contemporary Circle Fund, the Richard Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund, funds from Sandra and Leo Del Zotto, the Jay Smith and Laura Rapp Fund and the Molly Gilmour Fund, 2020. Installation view inside Tanenbaum Sculpture Atrium, Art Gallery of Ontario, 2020. Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario. © Haegue Yang.

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Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario. © Art Gallery of Ontario.