



EXHIBITION PUBLICATION

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Two Faces of Time – The Work of Oh Min

Many philosophers argue that time, in fundamental terms, is repetitive or circular. Then, in a genre like music that uses the physical flow of time as a material, can we say that linear time is nothing but hypothetical? At this point we should turn our attention to Emmanuel Levinas, who argued that fundamental time is irreversible because it is “the time of the other” that transcends the identity of the self. Unlike Levinas, however, we might also say that art is an experiment that, even while revealing the fundamentality of the time of the other, is not reduced to it but constantly retrieves “different time.”

If music is to create aesthetic necessity rather than natural necessity by giving rhythms to the physical nature of time, Oh Min’s work is music. Her labelling of her work as “time-based installation” indicates that she understands music as a process of reconstructing and creating time. Interestingly, her media—video, performance, and installation—deviate from the convention of music as a genre. She makes music in a non-musical way. Oh presents silence instead of notes, using nothing more than noise even for the auditory elements of her work. Her interest is focused on activating senses submerged in daily life, instead of reproducing genre-specific rules. Her work thus awakens senses that are considered irrelevant to time, and assigns a time-based rhythm to them. Indeed, for Oh, music is not about simply organizing sounds but about activating senses and tuning the relationship between them.

Senses are activated through the activation of media. Oh uses media in unfamiliar ways, giving new polyphonic rhythms to the relationships among them. Here, video is not a tool for recording performances afterwards but plays an active role in tuning time. In *412356*, videos serve as an auditory bridge connecting objects in relationships. *Polyphony of Polyphony* takes one step further, as its videos stop being media for directly delivering sound and become pure units of time. Sophisticated rhythms are created not only through the editing of each video but also within the space-based relationship between the three video channels. In this process, space infuses time and acquires a time-based rhythm. The repetition of the scene is employed not to negate linear time but to create a play of difference within it.

The “different time” Oh creates in the flow of time is an opaque one, rather than the transparent time of the self. In *Heterophony of Heterochrony*, for example, videos serve as a screen that composes relationships between performer and camera, and audiences and performer.

Given that the camera is in an active position, while the performer is in a passive position, this relationship is asymmetrical. However, it is not one-way because the camera cannot infiltrate into the inner side of the performer and, in this sense, the time of the performer retains its opacity.