

# MIND GAME

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In her video works, Oh Min uses the camera to gaze at her subjects, as if taking a step back for a better perspective. Keeping her distance, Oh observes the relationship between the people and objects within the camera's field of vision. The static eye of the camera maintains an objective frame, such that the living characters and the inanimate objects in the videos are described at the same level. For example, in *Suite 1* (2012), a person wearing formal office attire is placed within a 1:1 relationship with the surrounding objects (i.e., chairs) through the person's choreography. At first, the person might seem to be moving according to some specific principle, but the precise details of that principle remain a mystery. Viewers can only observe the forms that, according to the rules, the person makes when stepping on the objects and trying not to fall, as well as the relationship that applies to the entire body, depending on the position of the objects. Through this process, the viewers come to understand that the person's discomfort is caused not only by the objects, but also by the formal clothing, which represents a situation where one must abide by certain rules. Oh also uses unknown rules to form an equal relationship between a person and some objects in *A Walk 2* (2013), which shows a person, shot in profile, carefully walking; we also see the floor beneath the person's black shoes, and the patterns on the wall behind the person. Through the objective gaze of the camera, the features of the person, the floor, and the wall gradually converge and even become inseparable.

The works of Oh Min may appear dry and nonchalant, but this is merely the result of the formal simplicity that is required to subtly observe the relationship between a person and objects. In *Suite 1*, the forms of the person and the objects are very linear to allow for a restrained yet zealous observation. The person in *A Walk 2* moves like a knife, cutting through space and existence according to the temporal flow. This conscious simplicity also serves to remind the viewers that the works are under the artist's strict control. Oh's control of her works can be confirmed from *Chairs* (2012), which documents the artist researching chairs of various shapes to determine which ones would be best suited for a rule to define the relationship between the character and objects in *Suite 1*. Her study of the chairs' forms is an elaborate and highly calculated act intended to influence the responses and actions of the person who has a relationship with objects.

In this regard, Oh's video works are truly defined by the objects, not simply through abstract rules based on unknown principles, but as a concrete existence. Her videos do not follow any story or narrative, nor do they constitute the abstract and visual collage of video language; instead, they are driven by the psychology of the process by which the artist transfers control to the objects. For instance, *Mother* (2011) creates such psychology using only music and the movements of objects (i.e., dishes) surrounding the protagonist. Oh's subsequent work *Daughter* (2011) further developed the scheme by seeking a more detailed description of the psychological situation that arises when a specific situation is transferred to objects. A girl is making paper cutouts of her own clothing, recalling a shaman. The objects around her begin to move and clatter by themselves, disrupting the otherwise neat and ordinary home. The girl tries to sneak away from this strange situation, but the kettles shift their nozzles in the direction of her movement. Notably, by matching or orchestrating the movements of the dishes, the girl actually controls the situation. In this work, the stop-motion animation of the dishes not only reveals the psychology of the nervous child, but also serves to amplify her anxiety. In *Banana* (2011), the sister project of *Daughter*, cut and smashed bananas cry out in pain as they are blended and served in a bowl, revealing their hidden emotion. The seemingly ordinary act of making a banana shake is depicted like a ritual, highlighting the emotional transference of the bananas. Another related project, which functions as a kind of sketch, is *Birds* (2011), which shows how Oh used the moving dishes to calculate the psychological situation.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *Daughter* is how the anxiety or the psychological situation brought on by the moving objects changes through the active response of the girl: chaos becomes order, and noise becomes music. By proactively responding to the situation, the girl creates rules, which result in control, which ultimately provide stability. Therein lies the essence of Oh Min's psychological game, a type of Panopticon that is camouflaged by objective distantiation.