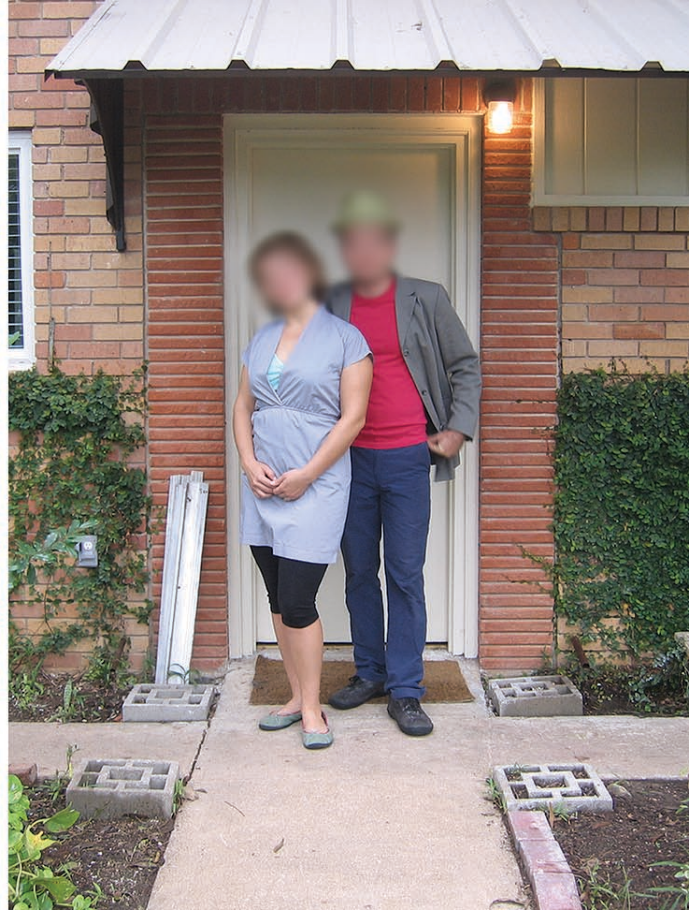


YOON CHO

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

APRIL 3 - MAY 10, 2008

AUSTIN, TEXAS

YOON CHO

Nothing Lasts Forever

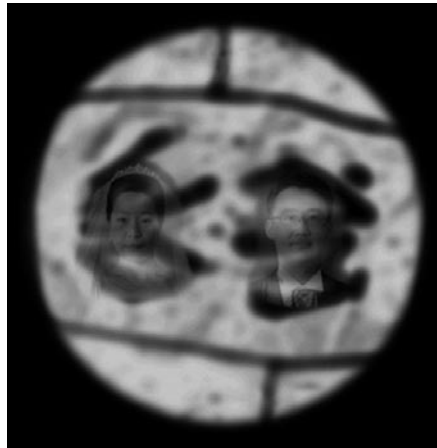
Perhaps the best way to begin to consider the work of an artist concerned with the performance of identity is with the photographs she has made of herself. In the *Texas Self-Portrait* series, six schematic images overlay six life-sized photographs of Yoon Cho. Each image posits a different answer to the question: What defines one's identity? Is it a classic marker—the thumbprint? Is it where one lives? Or is it a set of biological data—the sum of our parts?

For Cho, these universal questions have been given added urgency by one of life's most stressful experiences—moving to a new place. She has lived in Korea and the northeastern United States; she married and then moved to southwest Austin in 2004. With each new physical and social environment, opportunities arose for self-reinvention. This led Cho to consider identity as a performance, a series of assumed roles that change with one's environment and over time. Her *Persona* video trilogy reflects Cho's basic premise rather well: on one screen, the artist removes one identical mask after another, never revealing the face underneath. On another, she applies make-up. The third screen shows the masked figure bowing in greeting, a gesture that further situates her in a social realm. Taken together, *Persona* is a metaphor for the identities we assume in our everyday lives and—as the earliest work in the exhibition—sets the stage for Cho's practice over the last five years.

Much of Cho's work is autobiographical in the sense that she uses herself as the subject of her photographs and videos, but she is less invested in what makes her situation unique than in its broader implications. With her most recent move, Cho suddenly found herself living the American Dream: she arrived in Austin as a newlywed and bought a big suburban home located in one

of the city's largest developments. Now wife and suburbanite, Cho faced a new set of cultural norms—some repellant, some attractive—that she tested out as roles played in her work. Although “conformity” is commonly considered a dirty word, Cho's attitude is deeply ambivalent.

The *Nuclear Family Series* began with a Christmas card, which Cho and her husband created soon after moving to Austin. In their second year of marriage, the couple began to receive inquiries as to when they anticipated having their first child. As a joke, they dressed up in their holiday finest and posed for a photograph on either side of an empty chair, which Cho later filled with a digital image of a baby outlined in hash marks like a paper doll and colored solid yellow so as to leave the child's gender ambiguous. The card teasingly announces “our new addition” as “coming soon,” with two different dates followed by question marks.



Cell, 2007. DV, 2 min 1 sec, edition of 3.

Once the baby appeared in the Christmas card, she or he began to show up in other parts of the family album. Next Cho recorded images of herself and her husband performing routine activities: they wash an SUV, jog down the street, plant flowers in the backyard, build a new gazebo, hang curtains in the kitchen, paint the dining room walls, and

decorate the Christmas tree, all in the company of the same silhouetted yellow child. As the series progressed, Cho added baby's accoutrements to new images, including toys, bottles, and bibs. She photographed an empty room in the house and added more accessories to create the baby's room, a completely artificial environment that draws the project to an absurd conclusion.

In this series, Cho constructs two parallel worlds. The photographs show a young couple building their new life together in suburbia, an unfamiliar environment for both. With the addition of the baby, the stereotypical picture of domestic bliss becomes complete, albeit a fiction. Caitlin Haskell recently wrote of the *Nuclear Family Series*: “As a family of two, Cho and her husband may have differed from their neighbors; but by visualizing their comparative lack, they could both feign conformity and satirize the domestic standard they fell short of.”²¹ At the same time that they visualize their deficiency, however, they might also visualize their desire. In these photographs, Cho and her husband never interact with the baby; instead, he or she hangs around the edges of each image, like a thought lingering in the back of one's mind. As *Backyard Project*—an extension of the *Nuclear Family Series*—makes clear, the proverbial elephant in the room cannot go unacknowledged forever. While a gazebo rises in the Cho's backyard, so does the number of baby's toys. By the video's end, the yellow silhouetted shapes of balls, dolls, tricycles, and stuffed animals threaten to overwhelm the entire scene. Part parody and part confession, *Backyard Project* expresses the Cho's ambivalence—her simultaneous resistance to and acceptance of—a new addition to the family. Either way, the baby seems to have taken over their thoughts, as it would their lives.

Cho makes photographs, but I wouldn't call her a photographer. Rather, she is an artist who works in the medium that will most



Persona – can you see my face?, 2001- 2003. DV. 52 sec.

expediently communicate her ideas. Yet the body of work featured in *Nothing Lasts Forever* is intimately bound up with photography, especially the way that photography's strictures and conventions both reflect and sustain social controls. In the *Nuclear Family Series*, *Backyard Project*, and *Cell*, a video that overlays Cho and her husband's wedding portraits with images of a developing cell, the artist uses this fact as a springboard for her work. In her most recent project, however, Cho has turned to some of photography's more elusive problems, foremost among them the contradiction framed by Roland Barthes as that between the image's heaviness and the lightness of being.

Barthes called the photograph "a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity." For an artist interested in both, photography may be the perfect medium. When we pose for the camera we attempt to make ourselves appear as we would like to be seen, transforming ourselves "in advance into an image." But, as Barthes argued, "myself" never coincides with my image; for it is the image which is heavy, motionless, stubborn (which is why society sustains it), and 'myself' which is light, divided, dispersed.² Cho's family photographs identify her and her husband as a couple – with or without a child – but these images capture just one role that they play. If these are "heavy"

images, Cho's current project aims to represent the opposite.

The *Blurring Series* also uses the standard photographic format of the group portrait. Rather than adding to the photographs, however, Cho has taken something away. Each pair in the series consists of a posed family photograph and a snapshot taken in the moments before each group made themselves ready for the camera. The snapshot catches Cho's subjects in a moment of repose as they wait, doing nothing. In the photograph of Cho's family, her husband blows his nose, her mother and father look just past each other, while her sister stares at the ground. None of them look at the camera. The posed photograph should be the place where we see everyone's faces clearly, but Cho has blurred them, turning individual visages into masks. This effect is at once disturbing and liberating. For Cho, the moment one takes on a pose and becomes Barthes' advance image is when one loses his or her identity and creates a new one. The transitional state made visible by blurring is a condition of formlessness that reflects consciousness, which also has neither form nor shape.

With the *Blurring Series*, which also includes a video and individual portraits, Cho investigates what is behind the masks she wore in

the *Persona* series. We might anticipate a fixed image; however, Cho only provides us with a shifting one. Read against Cho's current interest in metaphysics, other projects also take on new meanings. The family photo album may be about stability and permanence – it defines who and what a family is – but it is also about change. Growing up, getting married, settling down and starting a family of one's own are all transformations that offer new roles to play. Identity can be taken to mean the sameness of a person at all times, but if there is something stable that defines our identities, it is nowhere to be found in Cho's work. Instead, she allows change to be the decisive factor.

Amanda Douberley
Ph.D. candidate in art history at
the University of Texas at Austin

¹ Caitlin Haskell, "Yoon Cho," in *20 to Watch: New Art in Austin* (Austin, TX: Austin Museum of Art, 2008).

² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*. Trans. Richard Howard. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 12.

YOON CHO

Born: Seoul, S. Korea, 1973 (Citizenship: U.S.A.)

EDUCATION

- 1999 Master of Fine Arts, Parsons School of Design, New York, New York.
1996 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2008 *Yoon Cho*, Cactus Bra Space, San Antonio, Texas. Forthcoming September.
Nothing Lasts Forever, Women & Their Work, Austin, Texas.
2007 *Yoon Cho*, Central Pennsylvania College, Summerdale, Pennsylvania.
2006 *Ivyside Exhibition*, Penn State University at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
Mix!, The Dallas Center for Contemporary Art, Dallas, Texas.
Habits and Habitations, Edinboro University, Edinboro, Pennsylvania. (3-person show)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2008 *New Art in Austin*, Austin Museum of Art, Austin, Texas. February 16 - May 11. Will travel to Blue Star Art Space, San Antonio, the Grace Museum, Abilene and DiverseWorks, Houston.
Backyard, Midwest Museum of Contemporary Art, Indianapolis, Indiana.
2007 *Combined Talents: Florida International Exhibition*, Museum of Fine Arts, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.
Design and Technology Ten Years Running, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, New York.
2007 Louisville Photo Biennial, Gallery Nulu, Louisville, Kentucky.
Invitational Salon of Small Works, New Arts Program, Kutztown, Pennsylvania.
Legacy of Photomontage, University of Texas at Dallas.
Austin City Hall Exhibition 2007, Austin City Hall, Austin, Texas.
LOUD, ALL Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.
New Art 2007, MPG Contemporary, Boston, Massachusetts. Curated by Raphaela Platow, Chief Curator of Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University.
2006 *Drawing No Conclusions*, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Curated by Dominic Molon, Associate Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.
Some Assembly Required, The LAB, San Francisco, California.
L-35 Biennial Invitational, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas.
Austin City Hall Exhibition 2006, Austin City Hall, Austin, Texas.
2005 *9x12 Works on Paper Show*, Fort Worth Community Arts Center, Fort Worth, Texas.
Cracks in the Pavement: Site-Specific Works by International Artists at Public Locations Around the World, Austin, Texas. Curated by Heather Johnson.
Now and Then, Selah Artistic Giving Center, Los Angeles, California.
2004 *Nudge Film Festival*, Austin, Texas.
1999 *close;mfadt*, *The Aronson Gallery*, The New School University, New York, New York.
Sixth Annual New York Digital Salon traveled to: *Sala de Exposiciones CAN*, Alicante, Spain. Centro de Cultura Contemporanea, Barcelona, Spain.
Sixth Annual New York Digital Salon, Visual Arts Museum, New York, New York.
Triennale di Milano, Milan, Italy.
Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid, Spain.
1998 *25th Athens International Film and Video Festival*, Athens, Ohio.
1996 *Woods Gerry Gallery*, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

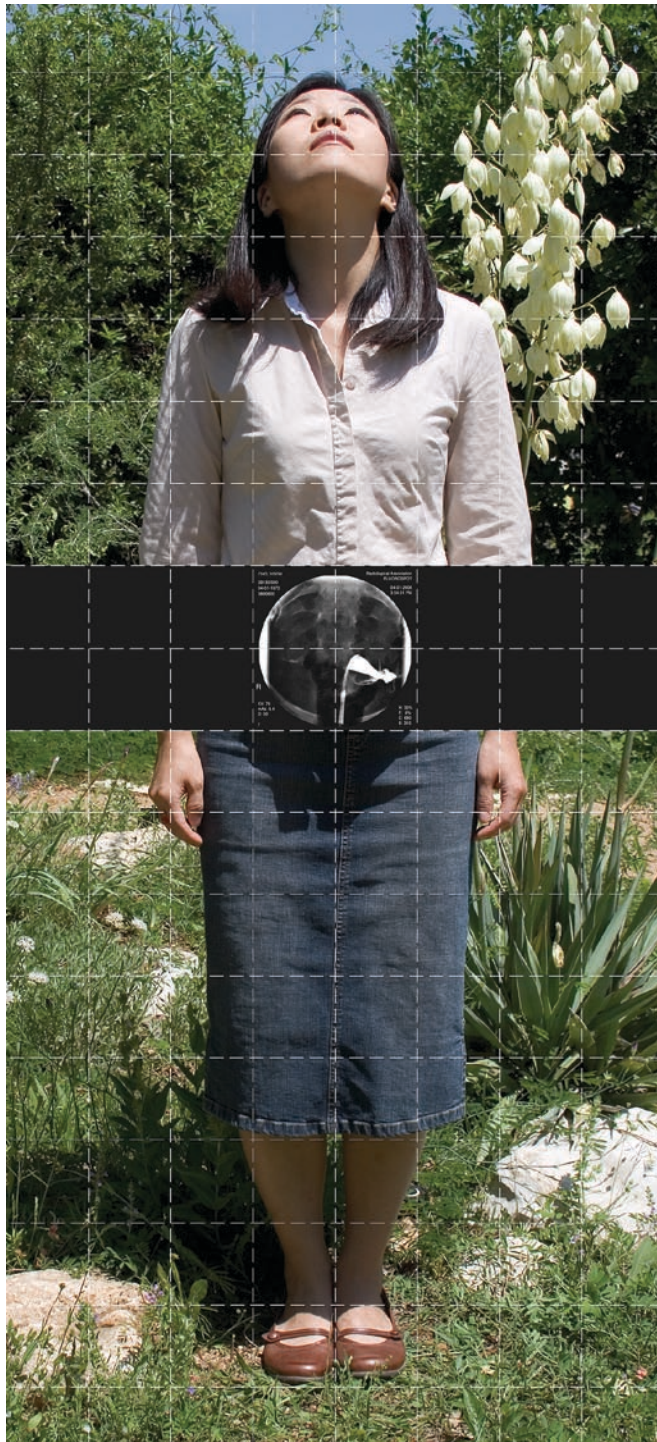
AWARDS & HONORS

- 2007 Artpace San Antonio 2009 International Artist-in-Residence shortlist
Honorable Mention for New Art 2007: A National Competition for Emerging Artists at MPG Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts.
1999 HOW International Annual. Multimedia Merit Award.
HOW International Annual. Multimedia Outstanding Achievement Merit Award.
Parsons School of Design MFA Academic Scholarship, 1998 - 1999.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Till Richter, "New Art in Austin? 20 to Watch at AMOA," *Glasstire Texas Visual Art Online*, March, 2008. Exhibition review.
"New Art in Austin 2008: The 20 to watch," *The Austin Chronicle*, October 19, 2007.
"Austin Museum of Art selects triennial artists," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 9, 2007.
Shannon McGarvey, "Catch 20 rising stars in Austin arts," *The Austin American-Statesman*, February 22, 2008. Exhibition review.
Jeanne Claire van Ryzin, "New Art Austin," *XLENT*, February 14, 2008.
20 to watch, *New Art in Austin 2008*, published by Austin Museum of Art. Catalog.
Domonick Lombardi, "Indianapolis FYI," *CultureCatch*, February 12, 2008.
"New Art in Austin 2008: The 20 to watch," *The Austin Chronicle*, October 19, 2007.
"Austin Museum of Art selects triennial artists," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 9, 2007.
Combined Talents: The Florida International, Exhibition catalogue, 2007.
Legacy of Photomontage, engineering the photograph, Brochure.
Essay by Prof. Marilyn Waligore, 2007.
Artworld Digest, *Special Edition/Seed Issue*, 2007. Printed exhibition.
Curated by David Cohen.
DISASTER3, A journal of visual art, experimental poetics and radical politics, 2007, Published by Marcus Civin.
6th WISH! Auction, 2007. The Dallas Center for Contemporary Art auction exhibition catalog.
Galleries feature new artists for the 2006-2007 Ivyside Juried Exhibitions, Penn State Altoona News, October 30, 2006.
Janet Kutner, *Gray and green*, The Dallas Morning News, July 3, 2006. Exhibition review.
Phoebe Moore, *Austin City Hall Opens People's Gallery*, Daily Texan March 23, 2006. Exhibition review.
Reena Jena, *Hotwired*, May 1999.
HOW, April 1999. Catalogue.
Yoon Cho, *Art, Technology and Education part II*, NY Arts Magazine, International Edition, Issue 28, January 1999.
Sixth Annual New York Digital Salon, Leonardo (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), Volume 31/Number 5, 1998. Catalogue.
Martha Zuk, *Sixth Annual New York Digital Salon*, Uno Mas Uno, November 12, 1998. Exhibition review.

ARTIST TALK & TEACHING EXPERIENCE
2008 Gallery Talks, Austin Museum of Art, Austin, Texas. April, 10, 2008.
2007 Artist Talk for the Austin Museum of Art Docents, Austin City Hall, Texas.
2002 Part-Time Faculty, Hanyang University, MFA & BFA, Seoul, Korea.
1998/9 Part-Time Faculty, Parsons School of Design, BFA, New York, New York.
1998 Part-Time Faculty, Parsons School of Design, CE, New York, New York.
Teaching Assistant, Parsons School of Design, BFA, New York, New York.
1996 Teaching Assistant, Rhode Island School of Design, BFA, Providence, Rhode Island.



This Panel: *Hysterosalpingogram*, 2007. Archival inkjet print. 32" x 70". Edition of 5.
Cover Panel: Details of *The Kitteltons*. 2007. Digital C-print. 20" x 16" (each photograph). Edition of 5.



Gazebo Assembly, 2005. Digital C-print. 36" x 24". Edition of 6.

Women & Their Work

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women and
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