

## Q&A

WITH *GO ON BEING SO* CURATOR FLORENCE SILBY  
AND EXHIBITING ARTIST  
YOUNG IN HONG

NEWLYN  
ART GALLERY  
& THE  
EXCHANGE

*JS: Have you always been interested in producing political art, or was there a specific event that sparked your interest?*

*YIH:* I don't consider my work to be 'political art', but I am interested in how art can have a political role. I'm interested in revisiting specific historical moments in South Korea and reinterpreting them through means that are more familiar to the younger generations, such as social media, flash mobs, etc. I'm particularly interested in doing this from a female perspective, from the position that South Korean history has evolved under authoritative, male-dominated regimes until very recently.

*JS: Do you have a favourite medium? Is there a medium you've never used but would like to try?*

*YIH:* I like working on machine sewing. I like the sound of the machine and the process of machine sewing is meditative when you repeat it. I also enjoy working collaboratively with people I haven't met before when I produce performance work that allows some unexpected processes to happen. I would like to work more with sound composition by using more unfamiliar ways of sound making that I haven't fully explored yet.

*JS: What are you working on now?*

*YIH:* I have recently been interested in looking at the hierarchy between animals and humans. I've been exploring bird sounds and movements based on my research at Bristol Zoo last year, which has become part of a new installation called, *To Paint the Portrait of a Bird*. During the lockdown I've been doing more stitch work from home, embroidering images of animals. I read the novel *Ishmael* written by Daniel Quinn, where a gorilla was looking for a pupil who would like to save the world. In my work, gorillas are represented as sacred and auspicious beings.

*JS: How did you first get your work seen when you were just starting out?*

*YIH:* After my MA studies at Goldsmiths, I had my first solo exhibition at a small alternative space called Proof Gallery in Southwark in 2001 which led to a group exhibition at Taipei Fine Arts Museum the following year where my work was first shown in an international context. Back then, the MA Fine Art course allowed us to meet interesting and influential artists, curators and writers through frequent one-to-one tutorials that really helped me to present work in public exhibitions as a natural part of my practice.

*JS: What would you tell your younger self?*

*YIH:* I'd encourage my younger self to allow myself to feel free and not to worry about things that are outside my control.

JS: *Is there another form of art that inspires you (films, books?)*

YIH: My work is often inspired by music, as well as the performing arts. The works that left long-lasting and significant impressions on me that influenced my works are *Einstein On The Beach* directed by Robert Wilson, John Cage's collection notes and Arvo Part's album *Tabula Rasa*.

JS: *Why did you use sewing in 'Burning Love'? You also use performance, sound and drawing to create artwork - how do you decide which medium to use for each piece?*

YIH: After learning Western art at a South Korean art institution, I gradually sought a way to express my own cultural background. Machine sewing has been a key trade for working-class women in Korea and it has also been behind the textile industry that boosted the economy. There was always this hidden labour done by female sewers. I learnt the skill myself and I've used it throughout my art career ever since. I was trained as a musician as well as a sculptor, so skill-wise I'm pretty confident using whatever medium is needed. I tend to decide on the medium depending on the context; this process happens very organically.

JS: *Are there any people in particular that inspire you?*

YIH: I've been lucky to have had many people give me crucial input throughout my career; the list is inexhaustible. Among them, Hyunjin Kim is a curator who encouraged me to start working on performances for the first time in 2012, which brought about a turning point in my work. In recent years, I've been inspired by the writings of Oxana Timofeeva and Sara Ahmed. My encounter with Sacha Craddock last year and our dialogue on my practice has been very important too.

JS: *Do you prefer working on a larger scale? Do you think scale changes the impact of a piece?*

YIH: I like my work to be 'experienced' before being conceptually understood. Often the scale of the work does support this. For embroidery work, I try to push the limits of the techniques that are usually applied to make small decorations for garments, etc. When embroidery is explored more to make larger-scale drawings and paintings, it becomes something other than just embroidery.