

Instant replay

Multimedia artist June Pak explores identity through movement

ARTS PREVIEW

RE: PLAY

June Pak

Runs until April 17

Truck Gallery (815 First St. S.W.)

WES LAFORTUNE

Video-photo-sound artist June Pak is in transition and whether she'll ever arrive is still an open question.

Her three multimedia installations entitled *re: PLAY*, currently featured at Truck Gallery, raise questions about self and "the other."

Born in Korea and now based in Toronto, the 34-year-old artist uses her ethnicity as a starting point to probe the formation of identity and the spaces in between.

Her piece *Moving Stills* includes two projection screens on opposing walls. Each screen features a video image of a bench set in a snow-filled park. One bench remains empty, while on the other side of the room an overcoat-wearing Pak is seated on the bench staring blankly from the screen. Without warning, she stands up and walks toward the middle of the screen where she disappears.



Inner tension — Korean-born Toronto artist June Pak in a scene from her video work *Moving Stills*

"The reason I create this split screen where I disappear to is to illustrate the endless attempt to reach the other side," says Pak. "The same act is repeated on the other side of the projection, and that emphasizes the tension which is created within myself to fulfil the impossibility."

The visual metaphor that Pak employs in *Moving Stills* could be seen as overly contrived if it wasn't for the look on the artist's face as she peers out at the viewer, obviously sincere in her attempt to find a place in the world. Paradoxically, her earnestness transforms the work, delivering a

message of universal struggle that many immigrants will understand.

Pak's next piece, *I'm Sorry (I can only give you three seconds)*, employs a continuous soundtrack of unidentified, disembodied voices saying in one form or another "I'm sorry." Carrying over a theme of endlessness that permeates the

entire exhibition, we hear snippets of individual apologies before each voice fades away and another regretful statement begins: "I'm sorry, I sometimes make these.... I'm sorry, I apologize.... I'm sorry, I never saw.... I'm sorry for being such an ass...."

While the apologies continue, a video projection of the Atari game Pong is shown, with its fuzzy white ball batted back and forth, over and over, completing a milieu where viewers are thrust into their own history of infinite failures.

"I'm trying to create a dialogue within the work, between myself (as an artist) and you (as a viewer)," says Pak. "It is within the exchange of unexplained apologies (that) I see how the type of perpetual circle of emotion from *Moving Stills* continues in this piece."

If you haven't guessed already, this exhibition is a brooding collection that should probably be viewed on a day when you are in a particularly sound frame of mind. Albeit dark, Pak's *Weitanschauung* engages the viewer and heightens a connection to her work that many video installations fail to achieve.

Without venturing into self-indulgence, Pak uses her life experiences as the raw material for her art and lets those events replay in her mind and ours.