

inreview

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Reviewed by Alison Gates

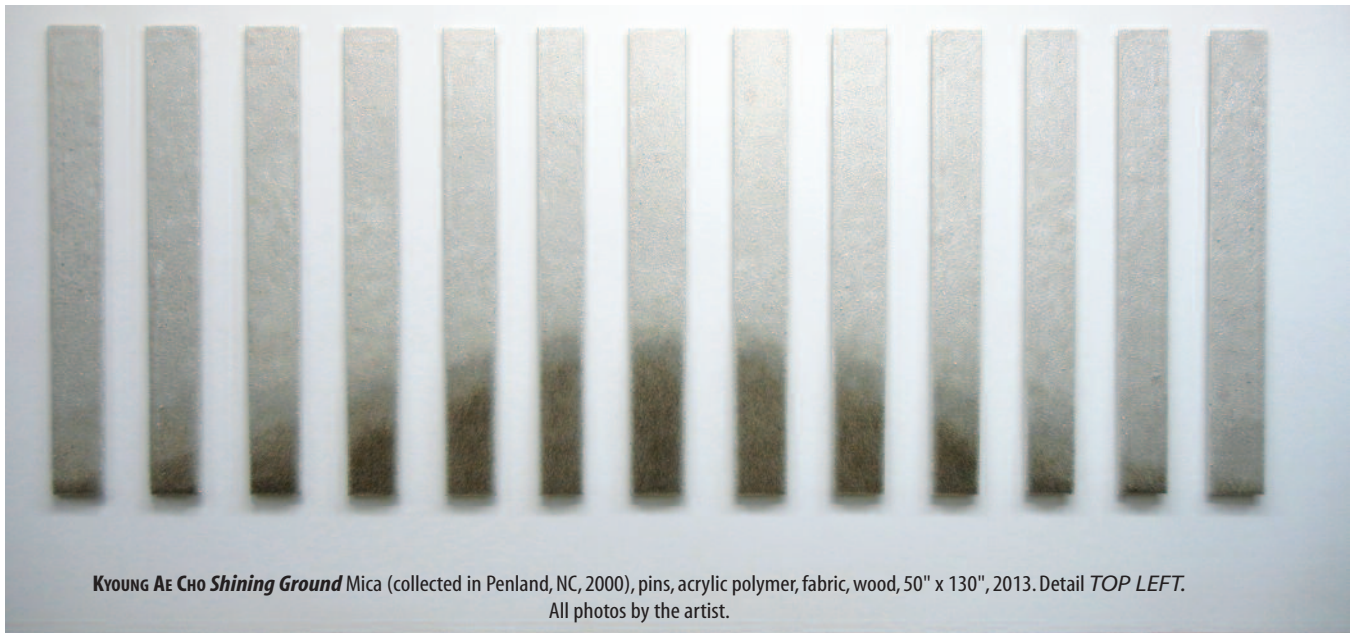
Kyoung Ae Cho: *One at a Time* Lynden Sculpture Garden

Kyoung Ae Cho speaks of her process as a collaboration between herself and her materials, which are drawn mostly from nature. Following a classic set of parameters that define and distinguish textile processes from others (repetition, building a greater whole from small components, intentionality in mark-making, and exploitation of materials' inherent cultural baggage), she crafts surprising connections between formal elements. "Nature" in this case includes actual material from the outside environment but also fake flowers, burn marks, the passage of lunar and solar time, and her own hair.

The work in *One at a Time* at Milwaukee's Lynden Sculpture Garden (April 13-July 13, 2014) is varied but connected through this theme of nature and collaboration. The largest of the works is a series of grids. *M-a-r-k-i-n-g* includes the artist's hair collected between April 2011 and March 2013, placed within the context of abstracted calendar grids of layered silk cloth with stitches marking the days as passage of time. Calendars and time are prominent in the exhibition in conjunction with hair, a connection dictated by Cho's Korean heritage. Korean hair

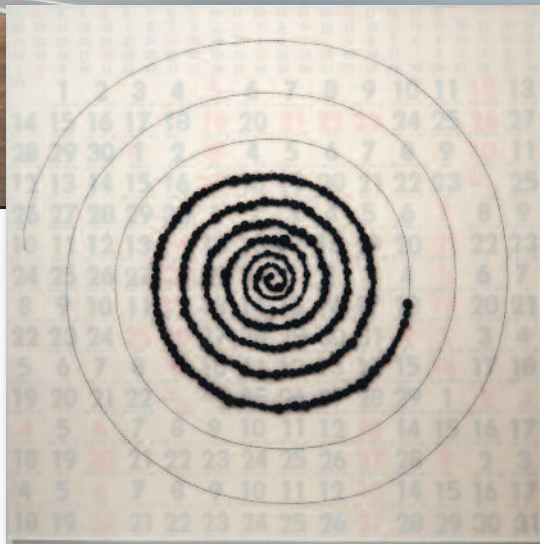
was considered of very high quality for wig making before the advent of synthetics. Cho recalls that, during the 1960s, a woman would come to the small town where they lived and collect hair for wigs. The grandmothers made pocket money by saving up all the stray hairs from the combs of the women and girls in the house, including Cho herself.

As a young girl, she also remembers a plethora of calendars. It is still common in Korea, she says, to receive free calendars from various commercial places at the end of each year. These calendars always contain lunar dates, which Koreans continue to use for many occasions.



KYOUNG AE CHO *Shining Ground* Mica (collected in Penland, NC, 2000), pins, acrylic polymer, fabric, wood, 50" x 130", 2013. Detail TOP LEFT.

All photos by the artist.



TOP: **KYOUNG AE CHO *M-a-r-k-i-n-g*** (Installation view) The artist's hair (collected from April 2011- March 2013), silk organza, muslin, thread, hand felting, hand stitching, series of 24 pieces, each 30" x 24", 2013. Detail ABOVE INSET.
 The floor piece is ***Resonance I*** (wood, burn marks, gravel, 15" x 96" x 48", 2008-2014).
 LEFT INSET: **KYOUNG AE CHO *052010-032011*** Hair (collected from May 2010-March 2011), silk, organza, muslin, thread, calendar, hand felting, hand stitching, collaging, 36" x 36", 2014.

When Cho came to the US in the 1980s, she had to rediscover her own birthdate using a solar calendar. Many of her older family members continue to celebrate birthdays in the lunar calendar. In *052010-032011*, she uses a spiral as the central motif, overlaid with hair rolled into little balls and backed with a Korean calendar. The numbers have notations below in Korean and Chinese, underscoring the notion of a culture in transition and Cho's identity within historical context.

Cho seems to be something of a saver. Ten years before she used it, she gathered the mica for two works, *Resonance II* and *Shining Ground*, while at Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. Invited to return, she eagerly anticipated gathering more of the silicate sand but no one could direct her back to the powdery trove she first discovered. It was finally suggested that the first cache may actually have been industrial waste. Thus, pollution possibly becomes an environmental collaborator within these formal works, which, in place of more mica, now feature thousands of shining straight pins that cast

shadows. Visually intriguing, these tiny glittery elements simultaneously invite and discourage touch, while the pin shafts and points again recall hair.

Taken as a whole, the exhibition's 20 or so new works comprise an overview of the way dots, sparks, stitches, and hair can come together in a myriad of surprising combinations. The collection of Cho's process documentation photographs (mostly from her garden) on display in the foyer guided an understanding of each piece on both a micro and macro level. This work should be viewed slowly and appreciated for what it offers in its multitude of tiny individual gestures.

www.lyndensculpturegarden.org
www.kyoungaecho.com

—Alison Gates is the Art Program chairperson at the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay, where she teaches Textiles and Women's Studies courses. She holds an MFA in Studio Art/Fiber from the University of Washington.