



TEXTILES IN PERFORMANCE AWARD

Jayoung Yoon

Beacon, New York, US

MY work draws upon the mind-matter phenomenon, exploring our thought systems, perception and body sensations. Human hair is intimately corporeal, tactile and focuses the viewer's attention on the body. Since hair doesn't decay until long after death, it is an especially appropriate symbol of remembrance. I use the hair sheared from my head, then transform the hair into wearable sculptures, which I have personally worn or performed with as a tool for perceptual awakening. The hand, the feet and the dress are made to the human scale to give a bodily experience that transcribes a feeling of intimacy and envelopment to the viewer.

Each strand of hair is hand-knotted or woven into forms that can be seen through, conjuring invisible thoughts and memories. Such forms are often used in my video and performance works. In the videos, I connect the "invisible thoughts" to my head,

often lifting slowly into the air and disappearing as a cleansing gesture. The videos become ritualistic meditation ceremonies. My head is shaved, as monks do, representing a detachment from materialist identity. I meditate with my back to the camera, embodying a detachment from gender, culture and thought. The immersive quality of the videos, in conjunction with my androgynous appearance, invites viewers to inhabit my body, and experience the process of clearing the mind.

I make stand-alone, non-wearable sculptures that I sometimes use in video and performance, or collectively they become an immersive installation. Weaving and knotting the hair by hand instead of using machinery creates unique, organic shapes, both in the details and in the larger form. The weightless hair sculptures move from the airflow created by a viewer's movements and from the environment. Those small movements

in space, on an intricate scale, shift the viewer's awareness toward subtle perceptions that are often taken for granted.

In my two-channel video, *Watching the Mind*, each video shows a duration of time and a specific single moment. I filmed the light changing from sunrise to sunset in an empty space for almost 13 hours. I also filmed myself unwrapping the garment made of human hair, which represents invisible thoughts at the same space in a few seconds. I compressed the first video and expanded the second video and made both approximately one minute. I then could compare “(the illusory nature of) Time” to “(each moment of the) Now.”

For *Listening to the Mind I*, I constructed a white space in a huge field. The stage size was 18 by 12 feet. I cut a hole in the ceiling,

Left page: **Jayoung Yoon** *Watching the Mind* 2009, video documentation. All Images Courtesy of the Artist.

Right page: **Jayoung Yoon** *Listening to the Mind I* (video still) 2009, human hair, resin, hand knotting, 8'. Top right: detail.





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allowing natural light to come in from sunrise to sunset. I set up a hair sculpture in the middle of the space and connected it to my ear to visualize thoughts coming out from my body. I laid on the floor for 10 hours in silence. I compressed the 10 hours of performance into a nine-minute video. During the performance, by feeling the subtle movements of the hair sculpture connected to my ear, listening to the bird and insect sounds, and feeling the changing wind and temperature over my whole naked body, I entered into the present.

Umbicality (*A close or intimate connection*) is a live performance where two performers are connected by a funnel-shaped organic web made of human hair. The web represents an invisible, symbiotic spiritual connection. During the performance, the performers' bodies describe the essence of oneness. The intimately quiet and slow movements invite viewers to feel their body through the image of the performers' bodies. Their hidden faces also give them anonymity, since we often differentiate identity based on the face. The performers function as a "universal body" instead of identifying with an ego.

In *Crown of Thoughts*, according to the Bible, during the crucifixion of Christ, a crown of thorns caused him pain. And yet Jesus was willing to endure the pain and embrace the rejection. In Buddhism, suffering comes from humans' own deluded states of mind. In order to realize the nature of mind, first we need to accept the fact of suffering and observe it without reacting. I decided to make a crown of thorns out of human hair that represented the impurity of mind, which causes our pain. In the video, I show a process of enduring and letting go as a way to purify the mind.

Web of Life is a 9-foot in diameter sculptural installation made for the **Peekskill Project** in 2015. The project is a public art festival organized by the **Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art**. When I installed the web in the empty building, I installed it high enough for people to walk under it freely. It converted the public space into an intimate and contemplative space. I did a live performance with the web during the opening reception. Like a spider drawing the thread from its own body, the hair comes from my body and is made into thread. I used my body to hold the proper tension to the hair and circled around the spindle for two hours. The rhythm of spinning is so calming that it can be a form of meditation.



Jayoung Yoon's upcoming solo exhibition, *Seeing the Threshold*, will be on display at the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles in San Jose, California (October 19, 2018–January 13, 2019). sjquiltmuseum.org

—Jayoung Yoon is a New York-based artist born in South Korea. She was awarded the BRIC Media Arts fellowship and the Franklin Furnace Fund, and received her MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2009. jayoungart.com

Left page, top: **Jayoung Yoon** *Umbicality (A close or intimate connection)* 2012, performance documentation.

Left page, bottom: **Jayoung Yoon** *Crown of Thoughts* 2014, video documentation.

Right page: **Jayoung Yoon** *The Hand* 2008, artist's hair, hand knotting, 8" x 5" x 3".