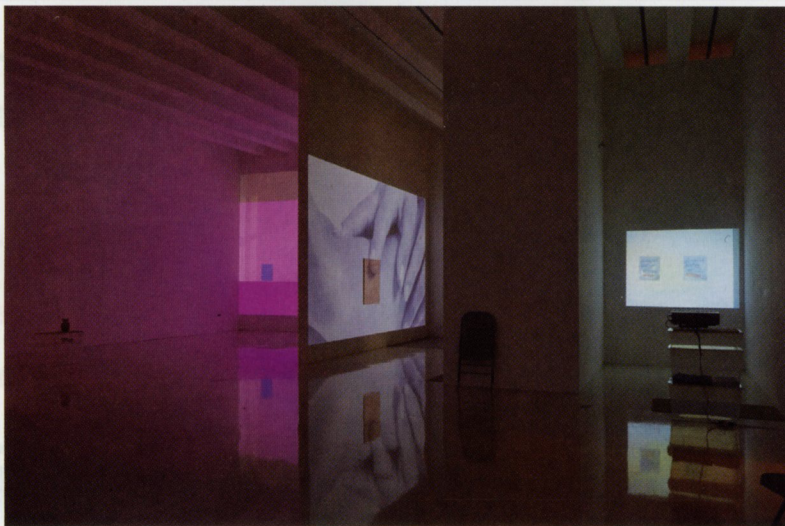


LEE KIT

HOLD YOUR BREATH, DANCE SLOWLY



The saccharine-sweet, instrumental melody of Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love" (1961) greeted viewers at the entrance of Lee Kit's exhibition at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, "Hold Your Breath, Dance Slowly." The tune was the soundtrack for Lee's 2012 work of a similar name, wherein an "I" interjected at the beginning of the title further personalizes the song's clichéd romanticism. Though the ambitious 13-channel video installation, which the Walker purchased in 2014, was displayed one room away from the entrance, the song haunted and grated at one's eardrums throughout the exhibition. Analog television monitors, organized across multiple shelves of a metal storage unit, each featured a video focusing on one of several consumer skincare products that make frequent appearances in Lee's paintings, videos and sculptural installations. A bottle of Johnson's Baby Oil, a tin of Nivea Crème, a jar of Vichy Aqualia Thermal Lotion—all personal-care products that have an intimate relationship with the skin and are found at drugstores worldwide—are shown sitting on shelves, beds and sink counters. Subtitles identifying each of the products by its brand-name are occasionally interspersed with a generic moniker of an American woman. Though the identities of these women were uncertain, it was clear that "Hold Your Breath" was a carefully composed treatise about entanglements between people and products, and form and feeling—a commentary on capitalism mediated through poetics.

Cumulatively, the individual objects, videos and paintings featured in the first room of the exhibition appeared to connote a hastily abandoned former office building or squat: too sparse to imply an inhabited space, IKEA lamps and plastic storage containers were interspersed among projectors and paintings. Such a reading

was encouraged by the title of individual works, such as *There used to be a lamp and a painting on the wall* (2015), wherein both referenced objects were presented via a static video image projected high up on a wall. A doorframe in the gallery created a notch in the corner of the projected image, which indicated the latter's partial nature—that it offered merely a suggestion of the original objects.

Also on view was *Skin (a secret)* (2014), a video that zooms in on a blue plastic storage container. The ensuing close-up image of the object resembles a monochrome painting in International Klein Blue or blue chroma key, the latter of which is a stock placeholder color for when digitally adding backgrounds in video. Only a sliver of light that bends around the bottom left-hand corner of the container reveals it is neither a painting nor a digital interface, but an object. With a subtitled narrative about secrets and spaces of containment, Lee casts an emotional pallor on the otherwise banal, readymade plastic bin.

Other works also triangulated painterly, sculptural and digital concerns. In *Cocoon* (2016), light from a projection curved around and through a clear-plastic storage bin, refracting it into a rainbow before the surface of a gallery wall stopped its movement—a meditation on surface and color without the use of paint. Elsewhere, in *Johnson's Baby Oil (125 ml)* (2016), a life-size image in true color of a painting depicting a Johnson's Baby Oil bottle was projected next to the work it was modeled after. In three other light installations, the gallery wall became the canvas for a display of color and texture, and small-scale text paintings served as platforms for various projections.

With subtle humor and a tender hand, Lee's pared-down solo exhibition focused on the last five years of his practice, which ultimately contextualized the Walker's purchase of his work rather than the artist's oeuvre. Absent were the artist's renowned works involving household linens, which he hand-paints and then uses in social settings to accumulate stains and patina as part of the project. But these works weren't necessarily missed. The spotlight on Lee's most recent works successfully presented a view of the artist as one who probes the understated psychology of the quotidian through arrangement and mitigation.

RISA PULEO

Opposite page

CHUNG SEOYOUNG

Ghost Will Be Better

2000–05

Linoleum, paint, and wood, 400 x 180 x 50 cm.

Photo by Jeremy Haik.

Courtesy Tina Kim Gallery, New York.

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Installation view of LEE KIT's exhibition "Hold Your Breath, Dance Slowly," at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2016. Courtesy Walker Art Center.