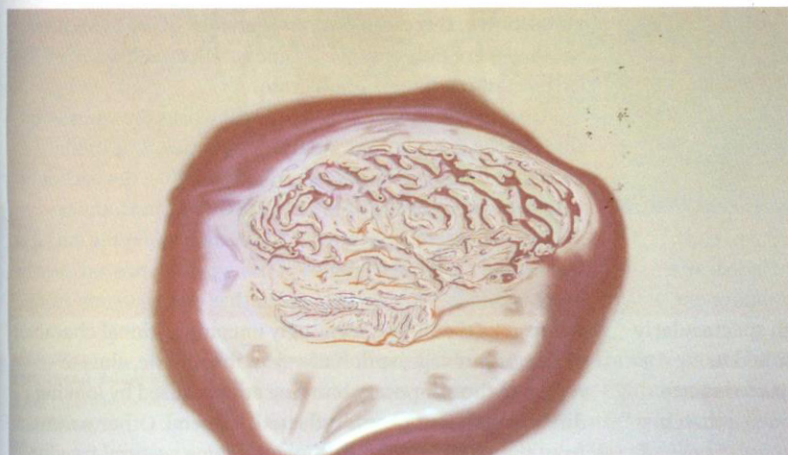
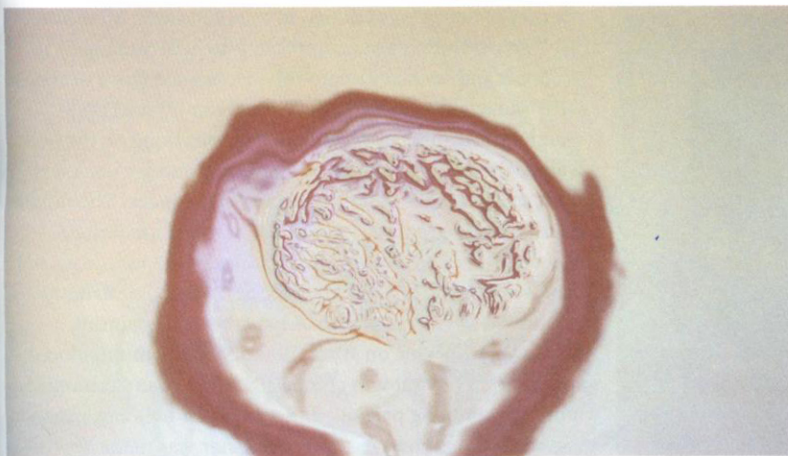


Shin Il Kim

Into



SHIN IL KIM,
Dual Beat, 2009,
video stills.

In his second solo exhibition at the Galleria Riccardo Crespi in Milan, Seoul-born, Brooklyn-based Shin Il Kim continued his criticism of the passivity that our media-saturated world has generated. “Anesthesia is a dominating force, which occurs mostly because we passively take in information dictated to us by the media,” Kim explained to *ArtAsiaPacific*. In his first solo show in Italy, “Active Anesthesia” (2007), Kim attempted to activate what he deemed passive by transforming images from commercials into moving light abstractions. “Into” followed these motivational lines with 14 works in different media, including two installations. What characterized this show was the pervasive image of the human brain in drawings and sculptures that recall a minimalist aesthetic with their smooth surfaces and boxy shapes. “I use the image of the brain,” the artist stated, “as a metaphor for finding activeness and awakening our perception.”

Kim investigates his own thinking process in a pair of drawings, displayed on the gallery’s ground floor, entitled *Inner Waves—Composure* and *Inner Waves—Impedance* (both 2010). In the latter, the silver-foil shape of a brain appears to float on a background of bright blue gel.

Engraved in the gel is a pattern of messy, jagged lines, formed by drawing with an inkless pen on the surface. These lines are copies of a neuroscientist’s EEG (electroencephalograph) scan of the artist’s brain waves, formed under stressful conditions as he watched a moving object on a monitor. The same test was repeated while the artist was concentrating on a calm thought; the lopping lines resulting from the brain at rest are etched on the background of *Inner Waves—Composure*. These mental self-portraits deftly visualize Kim’s versions of “active” versus “passive” thinking.

An active brain is also the subject of *Dual Beat* (2009), which the artist describes as “an attempt to harmonize the concept of real time and spiritual time.” The work consists of a stop-motion animation of 180 drawings, projected on a wall, showing a brain slowly and steadily revolving counterclockwise. A flickering light accompanying the projection gives the impression of energy flowing through the organ. The brain is superimposed onto an image of a sped-up clock with an ominously deformed appearance, ticking at an uncomfortably loud volume. Moving at different speeds, the hulking brain-clock conveys discord rather than harmony, suggesting that spiritual and real time are ultimately irreconcilable.

Although intellectually engaging, Kim’s cerebral metaphors on the gallery’s first floor are difficult to relate to the idea and act of awakening perception. Kim achieved this more successfully in the gallery’s basement, with a video installation entitled *Into* (2009–10), a series of three rectangular plastic boxes hung at eye-level on adjacent walls. Inside these open, television-like boxes are monitors showing still pictures of rundown cityscapes and ordinary objects. The pictures are “activated” by rapid zooms, which magnify them until they are transformed beyond recognition into giant, luminous pixels. At this point, the process reverses, the camera zooms out and the pixels reclaim their use as contributing specks forming a larger image. The effect is slightly dizzying, yet it is this dynamic quality that makes Kim’s point that even passive activities such as looking at still images can be made active.

Although Kim’s objectives were clearly illustrated in the displayed works, it was curious that his critique of inactivity came in an art gallery, which intellectually sloth-like people tend not to frequent. Still, it is admirable that his most recent body of work remains varied yet cohesive, and one hopes that he will apply his artistry and resourcefulness to a more incisive issue in the future. ● **Alessandra Allietta**