

SELF-EXAMINATION

Video Show captures the ethereal elements of identity

BY FELICIA FEASTER

SALTWORKS GALLERY'S *Video Show* featuring Korean artist Shin-il Kim is a handsome, beautifully installed exhibition that investigates

Video Show
Saltworks Gallery
Through Nov. 16
Wed.-Sat. noon-6 p.m.
635 Angier Ave.
404-876-8000
www.saltworks
gallery.com

self in the most ethereal, delicate terms.

The show is a spiritual companion piece to the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center's recent meditation on the

transient and ephemeral, *Gone Tomorrow*.

Both shows are moving, deeply felt responses to the vicissitudes of self in our frenzied modern times. That difficult attempt to assert one's presence amidst the world's cacophony and the certainty of death infuses Kim's video piece "The Hardest Struggle." In "Struggle," grim words like "fretfulness," "nothingness" and "darkness" are typed methodically and laboriously using an antiquated typewriter and then placed, like nihilistic cookie fortunes, into tiny pill capsules.

Though it's hard to think of a less warm, fragile medium than video, Kim brings an intensely tender, human element to his work. The most striking piece in the show is "Bow," an animation of the artist's body moving from a standing position into a bowing one. Kim created the piece by translating himself bowing into embossed "drawings" on plain white paper (also displayed in the gallery), which were then used to create an animation of that gesture projected in the gallery. The utter delicacy with which Kim renders his own body as a fluttering "tracing" somehow captures the spiritual element in an act about sublimation of self.

An equally ethereal sense of self comes through in "My Lines" in which a video of the artist's face is projected onto a curtain of shimmering synthetic filaments. In heavily accented English, Kim speaks in a manner as labored as the fractured pecking at the typewriter in "The Hardest Struggle." With the slightest breeze, Kim's image is scattered and fractured, creating an assertion of human impermanence and fragility that gives this installation an incredibly meaningful, moving dimension.

Gifted artists like Kim are able to somehow make their individual struggles convey universal ones. The second video artist in this show, Atlanta-based Robin Bernat, tends to do the opposite, taking the universal and making it suit her individual concerns. Bernat's

VISUAL ARTS

"Lamentations" is a typically fussy, melodramatic affair in which the artist is shown, with the help of two men, lifting a man's body out of a river while she reads her self-penned poetry on the soundtrack. Bernat uses tropes of river and fountain to convey a one-note mood of teary "sadness" over a friend's death.

Grappling for a lofty metaphor for her own grief, Bernat links her friend's death with Christ's crucifixion (by visually referencing Raphael's "Deposition") and ultimately trivializes both men's deaths in her prolonged exercise in self-absorption.



FACE OFF: "My Lines" by Shin-il Kim

Also on display is a small but cogent arrangement of work by women photographers that address a sense of self deformed by culture. The pop culture view of women appears profoundly warped and grotesque when reflected through Anna Watson's large color images of a pretty blond child whose grown-up makeup and hair carries an impression of violence. A large 40-by-60-inch photograph of the girl's face tilted back in a rictus of torture or ecstasy captures her grown-up mien, but also her delicate, uneven baby teeth in a disturbing collision of baby and sexualized adult.

Even more violent are the sampled rap lyrics silkscreened on T-shirts and then photographed on friends in Hope Hilton's provocative "Isolated Rap Lyrics." The smiling faces and general sense of party girl insouciance of these women, however, raises the question of whether Hilton is offering commentary on women's complacency in the face of such virulent hatred or perpetuating misogyny by presenting women who smile to the same beat that degrades them. Anya Liftig's "Slippage" series features blurry, ghostly images of the artist posed in front of the ugly, bleak and perfectly focused strip malls that dominate the American landscape and can seem like the bright, insistent lights that draw fluttering moths to their doom. ♦

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