



KANG CONTEMPORARY

**Viewing Room: Zeroes & Ones**

**Hara Shin, TZUSOO, Jazoo Yang**

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If the Viewing Room sees itself as a digital continuation of the historical Showroom (Schauraum), why should it be relocated to the exhibition rooms of a gallery? Isn't the appeal of the Viewing Room primarily based on the fact that we can enter it from anywhere with our smartphones - effortlessly, without having to lug our bodies to remote locations?

Bringing the world closer and being digitally mobile at the same time has an undeniable appeal. The global use of social media, online shopping and home office are clear indications of this. However, the fact that participation and involvement have been important social factors in public places for many centuries - in the agora, assembly halls, fairs, exhibitions and on the street - is psychosomatically deeply rooted in humans. We value seeing and being seen, interaction and the sensory perception of our environment and fellow human beings.

In contrast to the Showroom, the viewing room may be spatially and temporally infinite and not subject to any physical laws, but due to its immateriality it can only be experienced visually. Because we do not visit it with our bodies, we withdraw from the visibility that is constitutive of the viewing room. Anonymity prevails in the Viewing Room. We see, but are not seen, at least not as bodies, but as avatars or data sets. While our digital profiles offer unlimited scope to recreate ourselves, most of our desires remain unfulfilled dreams. After all, like most mammals, we physical beings remain dependent on physical closeness and the warmth of touch. The importance of a physical and sensual experience as a collective process became particularly tangible when our lives were almost entirely shifted to the Viewing Room due to the pandemic.

Nevertheless, the Viewing Room's participatory nature means that it favours participation and involvement to a remarkable degree: The most prominent examples of this are social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and co. While the viewing of paintings, for example, was historically reserved for only a few and their reception in the churches and monasteries of the Middle Ages as well as at the royal courts up until the end of the eighteenth century took place in many different stages and hierarchically mediated, the opening of galleries to a wide audience has opened up the possibility of open reception. In the viewing room, content is not only received and commented on, but also (re)produced, as it were. This new circumstance raises questions about adequate quality criteria, contemporary art criticism and mediation and the current role of physical showrooms. It also



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raises the question of the extent to which Viewing Rooms actually involve the participation of collectives in the production of art, culture and society.

Despite its expansion and affinity for a digital feed of the material world, the viewing room does not cause the physical world to disappear, but continues to refer to physical spaces. It is dependent on physical entities and material resources. At the same time, the viewing room and the products exhibited in it have a massive influence on the material world: election campaigns and socio-political discussions conducted in the Viewing Room decide how we live and experience the world, shitstorms threaten our social integrity, computer games and simulations train us for our work, internet archives and databases preserve the blueprints of cultural achievements and histories in order to "revive" them when the occasion arises. The Viewing Room can therefore be used to show that we live in the age of digital materialism, in which analogue and digital worlds, organic and technological components have always intermingled and are increasingly interdependent. Where we operate as cyborgs at the interface of physical and virtual space beyond defining categories and dualisms. This is emphasised by the relocation of the Viewing Room to the gallery's showroom, where the complementary qualities of the spaces merge. The aesthetic experience of immersion opens up a reflection on the new relationship between body, space, virtuality, politics and art. TZUSOO, Jazoo Yang and Hara Shin carry out this reflection on the basis of themes such as digital archives, digital activism, artificial intelligence, virtual transformation and conservation:

Jazoo Yang deals with the traces of our globalisation and searches for ways to artistically lift the evidence of destroyed buildings and entire settlements in her works. In two works, Yang dedicates herself to archiving and preserving these testimonies in artificial space: once in digital space and once in epoxy resin ("Immanence"). In "House in Motgol", Yang has recreated a house in Motgol that is threatened with demolition in the creative mode of the computer game Minecraft. Here, the house and the history of the village became accessible to 140 million monthly active users: The small village of Motgol in Korea was facing a regeneration crisis, threatened by urbanisation that endangered both its traditional architecture and the livelihood of its inhabitants. In the reconstruction process in Korea, the thumbprint "Jijang" is traditionally regarded as a legally binding force, comparable to a signature. A single thumbprint can leave entire communities to destruction, bankrupting families and quickly changing millions of dollars. Jazoo Yang covered a house slated for demolition in Motgol with her "Jijang", expressing a public emotion about promises, contracts, obligations or order in the region. This was the first time Yang was able to realise her project goal after two houses were demolished prematurely in 2015. As she resurrects the destroyed



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house in Minecraft, a virtual space without time and space constraints, Yang recovers memories of an old community in Motgol.

Hara Shin gives voice to the non-human, combining artistic work, philosophical reflection and environmental activism through a combination of hauntingly beautiful video footage and poetic expression. By irritating perception, Shin experiments with subverting and dissolving the hierarchies between nature, humans and technology with post-colonial and anthropocene perspectives. "Spiral Slime and Oblique Ellipse" guides the viewer through a VR realm. When the viewer puts on the VR headset and explores the space created by an artificial intelligence, they question their sense of reality and explore the possibilities of an alternative dimension. In "Tender Territory and Micro Reality", Shin discusses materials and phenomena that occur in a land of transition, constantly shifting between the realms of the virtual and the real. The fictional characters in this work (The Wanderer, The Woven, The Melted, The Nameless and The Taxidermised) reveal both individual and group value systems in the midst of habitat loss, migration and confrontation, not to mention the appropriation of customs and the hierarchical relationship between nature and humans. They trace their past through the symbols they have found around them, while predicting their imminent symbiosis, which will take place where they can survive. The precarious beings, caught between the realms of living and disappearing, hover in space as organism, matter, natural phenomenon, bodily organ, language, network system and artificial device, pondering their probable habitability.

TZUSOOs deals with the question of the existence of digital entities. In "Schrödinger's Baby", TZUSOO transfers the famous Schrödinger paradox to the realm of her individual existence by creating or having a virtual infant created. Based on her inner reflections on future motherhood, TZUSOO procured a digital prototype of a growing embryo and moulded it according to her own ideas. She has the option of specifying the sex, skin colour and other attributes of the infant, or to dispense with all information and evade the boundaries of conventional classification. In "Review", the infant has grown into Aimy, who has become a prominent K-pop singer and well-known virtual influencer. Taking her cue from Donna Haraway's cyborg manifest, Aimy critically examines her digital being and embarks on a quest for the prospect of liberation from her earthly, physical limitations. "Dalle's Aimy" is a joint work by TZUSOO and the OpenAI programme DALL-E2. In contrast to the Aimy created by TZUSOO, the Aimy created by DALL-E2 raises the question of the role of the contemporary artist as a being at the interface between past and future. The neon tube, an invention from the 19th century, merges here with an AI-generated portrait.