

Koo Jeong A was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1967, and studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Since 1994, her work has been shown internationally, including solo presentations at Kunsthalle St. Gallen, Switzerland (1994); the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1994); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1998); Secession, Vienna (2002); CCA Kitakyushu, Japan (2002); Portikus, Frankfurt (2004); and Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2008). She has participated in the Venice Biennale (1995 and 2009); the Gwangju Biennial (1997); the Echigo Tsumari Art Triennial, Tokyo (2000); *Manifesta 1*, Rotterdam (1996), and *Manifesta 3*, Slovenia (2000); the Biennale of Sydney (2004); Performa05, New York (2005); the Torino Triennale, Italy (2008) and the Aichi Triennale, Japan (2010). Her work has been presented in group exhibitions at such venues as the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1998), the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2000), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2009) and is on view until February 2011 at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2010). In 2004, she was invited, along with Urs Fischer, to create an inaugural in situ installation of new works to launch the exhibition program at the Centre Pompidou's Espace 315 gallery and in 2007 Centre International d'Art et du Paysage, Ile de Vassivière, France, mounted a major exhibition of her work. She also participated in the internationally touring exhibition *Cities on the move*, curated by Hou Hanru and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (1997–1999). She now lives and works in London.

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checklist

Hispanic Society of America

- 1. Before the Rain**, 2010
Scent oil
- 2. Bridge**, 2010
Carbon steel
- 3. Diamona**, 2010
Paint
- 4. Mystral**, 2010
Painted wood
- 5. Ousss Sister**, 2010
Black-and-white video, silent; duration 5:09 min
- 6. Tanamontana**, 2010
Monofilament line
- 7. Tornado**, 2007/2010
Water, charcoal

The Dan Flavin Art Institute

Dr. Vogt, 2010
Ink on photographic paper

Dia:Beacon

A Reality Upgrade & End Alone, 2003/2010
Rhinestones

All works courtesy of the artist

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Cover: Koo Jeong A, *Writer's Observatorium*, 2010. Print on plywood. Courtesy the artist.

Koo Jeong A
Constellation Congress



Dia at the Hispanic Society of America
Broadway between 155th and 156th Streets New York
November 5, 2010–June 26, 2011

The Dan Flavin Art Institute
Corwith Avenue off Main Street Bridgehampton New York
November 5, 2010–September 4, 2011

A Reality Upgrade & End Alone (2003/2010) at
Dia:Beacon, Riggio Galleries
3 Beekman Street Beacon New York
November 5, 2010–June 26, 2011

www.diaart.org

Koo Jeong A Constellation Congress

Since the early 1990s, Koo Jeong A has made works that are seemingly casual and commonplace, yet at the same time remarkably precise, deliberate, and considered. Her reflections on the senses incorporate objects, still and moving images, audio elements, and aromas within site-specific environments that question the limits of fact and fiction, the imaginary and actuality of our world. In realizing her spaces and images, she draws from a wide spectrum of concerns which she developed over the years, ranging from human cognition to the philosophy of Taoism, and from the science of Qi to the interaction of natural elements such as earth, fire, metal, water, and wood. In her environments, nothing is merely ordinary; on the contrary, any material or phenomena—be it a mound of charcoal, a shaft of iron, or a glare of sunlight—is endowed with dignity and reverence and incites the surprise of a discovery. To venture near Koo Jeong A's work is to travel unreservedly through a cosmos of unassuming large and small forms, mysterious dwarfed spaces, and perilous landscapes of memories. The exhibition *Constellation Congress* comprises a gathering of works in three different locations, which, though placed at considerable distances from one another, establish an ensemble of visual and conceptual relationships in a cosmology of characters, materials, and forms.

A Reality Upgrade & End Alone, installed in a two-acre grass field behind the main building at Dia:Beacon, manifests Koo Jeong A's long-standing preoccupation with the phenomenology of perception and the complexities of consciousness, concerns she has addressed metaphorically and literally throughout her practice. In its third rendition, this site-specific installation, composed of five thousand rhinestones, takes place outdoors in an environment that is immersive as much as it is expansive. The installation employs the peculiar lattice structure of the crystal, capturing the prismatic glow of sunlight to create an ephemeral and impermanent shimmering blanket where lights appear, morph, and disappear as the sparkles capture the spectator's gaze. The viewer's experience rests on a chance operation resulting from a three-fold interaction between the location of the sun, his or her own physical position and movement, and the field of stones.

Inside the East Gallery of the Hispanic Society's Beaux-Arts complex in Manhattan, sixty miles south of Beacon, is the second site of *Constellation Congress*, a multisensorial installation where Koo Jeong A has transformed the gallery space into a

multilevel structure and organized it into zones that reconfigure the architecture; staggered heights and obstacles systematically predetermine the viewer's route. A large wooden platform, similar to a stage, is elevated fourteen inches from the ground; it delimits vantage points and reduces the distance from floor to ceiling, thus adapting the proportions and physical experience of the room. Visible only through small gaps, charcoal is piled against the wall underneath the platform, conjuring the material's customary use in East Asia, where it is placed underneath floors to regulate humidity and absorb moisture.

Koo Jeong A is a mastermind of intricate disassociations, fugitive symbolism, and installations replete with puzzling references often impossible to decipher. In walking through this three-thousand-square-foot space, one encounters an ensemble of seven distinct pieces that stimulate varied sensorial responses. The artist's playful riddles pose perceptual questions as much as they evoke poetic materiality and otherworldliness. *Bridge*, a colossal quill-like steel sword, hovers into the space with lyrical lightness, alluring us with shiny majesty while the threat of its sharpness alarms us. Across the room, two large, seemingly levitating cubes serve as projection screens for the video *Oussss Sister*. The word *Oussss*, invented by the artist in 1998, lacks precise meaning or definition. This recurring motif in her repertoire carries a mischievous child-like humor that, like the exhibition's other titles, charges *Constellation Congress* with a sense of fantasy and inexplicability.

If mystery and ambiguity are primary characteristics of Koo Jeong A's work, the aromatic piece *Before the Rain*—the third odor the artist has conceived since 2007—inverts this notion with a meticulously designed olfactory microworld. Working in collaboration with perfumer Bruno Jovanovic, she distilled memories and associations of the steamy air of various cities into a palette of ingredients: dry woods, minerals, fern, musk, tars, and lichens, among others. This collision of contrasting references combines personal recollections with the cacophony of smells in an urban setting—a deliberately crude association—to render the feeling of anticipation before a light summer rain.

The third part of *Constellation Congress*, installed one hundred miles east of New York City at the Dan Flavin Art Institute in Bridgehampton, New York, consists of

a series of works on paper titled *Dr. Vogt*. In these simple line drawings, Koo Jeong A walks personal and cultural grounds to record relationships and comical encounters within landscapes and interiors. A furtive narrative thread actively works its way through an episodic journey, which reveals a meditative contemplation of intimate reflections on bodily functions, isolation, and mundane events. It is within this conjoining of light-hearted informality and self-deprecating humor that we might begin to comprehend Koo Jeong A's drawings, which, like her environments, blur fact and fiction and celebrate the unimportant and impersonal while emphasizing subjectivity and private psychological impulses.

The paths in Koo Jeong A's *Constellation Congress* are unanticipated and open-ended, reflecting the artist's attitudes towards the creative process. Deliberately unconventional and unmistakably daring, her ephemeral installations are dependent on location as much as they are completed by the viewer's own coincidental, variable, and unexpected engagement. In this aspiration, Koo Jeong A escorts us through a terrain of wide-ranging possibilities, where one may shift roles from that of a questor to a witness, then further from an accomplice to the narrator of a self-governed story.

Yasmil Raymond, Curator, Dia Art Foundation

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