



Sun K. Kwak installing *Enfolding 280 Hours* at the Brooklyn Museum, March 2009

Educator packet for the special exhibition
Sun K. Kwak: Enfolding 280 Hours
on view at the Brooklyn Museum, March 27–July 5, 2009

Sun K. Kwak

Enfolding 280 Hours



Sun K. Kwak, 2009

About the Artist

Born in 1966 in South Korea, Sun K. Kwak received her MA in Studio Art at New York University (NYU) in 1997. She currently lives and works in New York City. Her site-specific installations have been exhibited in South Korea, the United States, and Europe.

Kwak began her career as a painter, but she felt locked into the shape of the canvas and frustrated by the distance she felt between herself and the materials. She began to experiment with different artistic media: wire, performance art, and wearable sculptural pieces. It was not until she attended NYU that she found her preferred medium. "I wanted to find a material that is direct," she says. "One day, black masking tape popped into my mind. I went to the store to buy some. On my way back to my studio, I walked up a staircase going up to the roof that not many people used, and I began to tear and draw with the tape freely, with great enjoyment. It felt like black ink pouring out of my fingers. It felt so fresh, alive and free, for me."

Kwak refers to her work as "sculptural drawing" because it incorporates two-dimensional drawing on three-dimensional structures. "Architects have so many limitations in order to create a viable structure," she notes, "but as an artist, I have freedom to re-create the space through the line." These sculptural drawings respond to the existing architecture and visually represent the energy that Kwak feels in a space. According to Kwak's artist statement, "Through the series of these drawings on space I visualize previously unseen space and time that existed only in our imagination and subconscious realm."

About the Artwork *Enfolding 280 Hours*

"My first reaction to the visual and emotional qualities of a given space is rendered through my spontaneous tape drawings."

—Sun K. Kwak

When Kwak first visited the Brooklyn Museum to research the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Gallery, where she would install *Enfolding 280 Hours*, she noticed that the space was "like a square enfolding a circle" with "two concentric opposing circles of energy." On the basis of these initial impressions, she created a digital rendering to indicate the lines she envisioned in the space and the direction in which they would flow.

During the installation process, which began two months before the exhibition opened, Kwak used rolls of masking tape to create the sculptural drawing. Estimating that it would take 280 hours to install the work, she titled it *Enfolding 280 Hours*.



Audience interaction is an essential component of the work. Kwak was inspired by the diversity of the Brooklyn Museum's visitors and its mission to act as a bridge between the collections and the experience of each visitor: "When I go to a gallery or museum, it often feels like a dead space. I want to create work that has life, vitality. I don't want to produce another dead body. I don't want people to stare at my work, but to feel it by walking into the picture. The space changes as the work and audience interact together." She says that she chose abstract imagery for the installation "so that everyone can relate to it. Everyone sees something different through their unique interaction with the space."

At the close of the exhibition, the tape will be pulled off the walls and discarded. According to Kwak's artist statement, "This process of emptying the space is a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of life and my acceptance of the emptiness of that nature. Yet the drawing lives on in viewers' memories as an imprint that leaves the space forever altered."

Description of the Artwork

Graceful forms encircle the gallery space in a horizontal band. Black forms flow across the white outer walls, creating a sense of rhythm and movement. Thick black bands wrap around each of the four pillars in the center of the room, creating negative space by revealing the white wall beneath. The undulating forms are reminiscent of natural elements: water, flames, wind, layers of earth. The sinuous lines on the walls and those on the pillars travel in opposite directions. As you walk through the space, the forms seem to pull you forward and back, as if you are caught in two opposing currents of energy. Although the images are still, there is a sense of motion.

Enfolding 280 Hours calls attention to the circular architecture of the gallery and the concentric arrangement of the pillars and surrounding walls. The work is composed of opposites: black and white, positive and negative space, movement and stasis, physical and spiritual.

Questions for Viewing

What do you see? Describe the lines, colors, and forms you find in the work.

Where do you see movement? What type of movement can you find?

How could you move like the space drawing?

How does it feel to be in this space? What gives you that feeling?

Where do the lines begin? Where do they end?

What is the relationship between the forms on the pillars and those on the surrounding walls?

What materials did the artist use? Why might she choose to work with this material?

Can you find examples of opposites in this work?

Do the forms remind you of anything?

Sun K. Kwak creates installations that are based on her reactions to specific spaces. What do you think inspired the artist about the installation space?

Activities

Movement Activities

Look carefully at *Enfolding 280 Hours*, either on site or using a reproduction. Create a movement and a word to express an aspect of the work. Then form a circle with a group of people. Perform your movement and pass it on to the next person until the movement wave is complete. Pass the wave forward and backward, moving at different speeds.

Find examples of opposites in *Enfolding 280 Hours*. In pairs, explore these opposites using your bodies. One person makes a shape or movement with his or her body, and the other creates the opposite of that shape or movement. Examples: Fast/Slow, Moving/Still, and Positive/Negative.

Create a dance inspired by *Enfolding 280 Hours*. This dance can be performed as a class. First, form two concentric circles with equal numbers of people. People in the inner circle should face those in the outer. First, each person in the outer circle steps forward and makes a shape with the upper body. In response, his or her facing partner in the inner circle steps forward and creates a shape with the upper body. Then the partners separate, returning to their original circles but holding their shapes. Finally, the inner and outer circles move in opposite directions. How does it feel to dance in response to this artwork? Does your movement express the feeling of the work?

Art Activities

Imagine that you have been commissioned to design a work of art for the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Gallery at the Brooklyn Museum. The only requirement is that the work has to respond in some way to the gallery space. What do you envision in the space? Create a design for the space (refer to the photograph of the gallery below). Think about how Kwak's interpretation compares with your own. How are the interpretations similar or different?



Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Gallery, Brooklyn Museum

Experiment with masking tape as an artistic medium. Using a long piece of tape, take time to discover the possibilities of the material. What techniques can you discover? What are the strengths and challenges of the medium?

Roll out a long scroll of paper. Use your entire arm to create gestural drawings. How many different types of lines can you make using your whole arm? Now turn the paper over. Have a small group of people line up along the scroll. The person on the end will begin to draw a line and pass the pencil to his or her neighbor. Each person will continue the line or change it, and then pass the pencil on again, until everyone has contributed. What was it like to work spontaneously and to react to the person who went before you? How did the line change as it progressed?

Create an installation proposal for a public space. Use a photograph or a printed image of a space familiar to you. Draw your proposal directly onto this image. Share your ideas with the individual responsible for the space and possibly install your work.

Sun K. Kwak works with masking tape, an everyday material. Create art using other everyday materials such as paper clips, newspapers, cardboard boxes. What materials lend themselves to different forms?

Find other examples of art that are specific to the place where they were made (subway mosaics, memorials, public sculpture, etc.). What is the relationship between the art and the space it inhabits? How does it respond to the existing space? How does it change the space?

Quoted remarks by the artist are from an interview with Sun K. Kwak conducted by Nicola Giardina at the Brooklyn Museum on February 17, 2009.

Resources

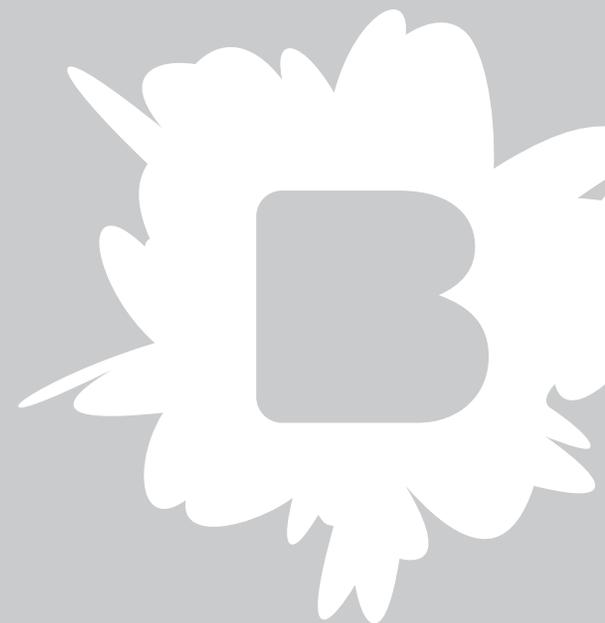
www.chicontemporaryfineart.com/dynamic/artist.asp?artistid=19

Sun K. Kwak is represented by Ch'i Contemporary Fine Art. The gallery's Web site includes an artist statement, biography, and bibliography.

www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/sun_k_kwak/

This page of the Brooklyn Museum's Web site is devoted to *Sun K. Kwak: Enfolding 280 Hours* and includes photographs documenting the installation.

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