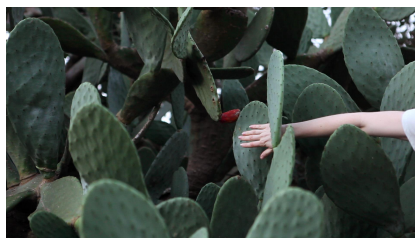


## YI GALLERY



Sun Young Kang  
Jenny Rafalson

*(Im)possibly Connected*  
Jan 21 - Mar 11, 2023

Yi Gallery is pleased to present a two-person exhibition featuring works by Sun Young Kang and Jenny Rafalson. *(Im)possibly Connected* frames a conversation between two artists, each immersed in her own philosophical, material and technical world, who find numerous points of dialog through the shared meditation on the nature of time and change, belonging, tension between past and future and longing for home.

*6973 miles of force in 1 cm*, an immersive and interactive installation, stems from Kang's reflection on the weakened connections to, and longing for, her homeland. The number "6973" refers to the physical distance between Kang's current residence in Buffalo, NY and her home country, South Korea. The distance "1cm" symbolizes the invisible force, as well as the invisible boundary in between, depicted in the gallery space by the use of a hidden magnet. The magnet pulls the needle up in the air and holds it in a fixed position, but it does not drop, nor do the two elements fully connect. "I feel emotional distance and tension can be found in every relationship – personal, interpersonal and beyond," says Kang. "Despite an increasingly technologically-connected world, the emotional distance among our connections seems to be greater due to the fragility of virtual relationships. Religion, culture, politics, language and, indeed, all human relationships and social creations involve boundaries. This creates tension inside of us – a longing, a desire, a dream, a gap between imagination and reality, between past and future, in which we exist."

Filmed at various locations in Arizona, Indiana, Chicago and Israel – a vivid tapestry of images and sounds – *Sunset's Burning Late* is a poetic love letter to an important relationship in the artist's life – her relationship with Israel. The different locations, all together, simulated this relationship for Rafalson. She asked her younger brother to participate in the video to illustrate the similarity and the difference that they share in their respective relationship with Israel. In a series of tableaux that blend the tactile with the abstract, *Sunset's Burning Late* invokes familiar landscape and botanical metaphors.

Growing up in Israel as an immigrant from the former USSR, Rafalson had to adjust to becoming part of Israeli society, almost completely relinquishing the culture and identity from her native home. When she moved to the US for grad school as a young adult, the physical and the emotional distance from her home made her rethink the identity she had fought so hard for, but did not acknowledge: "What it truly means to be Israeli," says the artist, "to be a 'sabrah.'" Sabra – a Hebrew word, with Arabic origins, refers to a Jewish person born in Israel. However, the Sabra cactus, or Prickly Pear in English, is not a native plant in Israel and was transplanted from the Americas in the 16th century by the Spanish. To Rafalson, it is ironic that both Israelis and Palestinians see the Sabra as a national symbol with ancient roots and connection to their native land. "Growing up with the Sabra myth, I knew enough to change my identity, but not enough to understand the depth of history behind it, and now I question my belonging to the culture and place."

In the *Impossibly Connected* series, Kang explores her feeling of being marginal, living between and attempting to painfully bridge two cultural realities. Formed by two primary materials – bricks and the artist's own shed hair – the work explores temporal and spatial relations, a theme of persistent interest for the artist. A brick, broken in half, represents a split self, two identities and the space between the past and the future. Shed hair symbolizes the detached self and memory loss, suggesting the weakened connection between the artist's current and past selves and between her and her home country. Kang's process starts with repeatedly hammering on the brick to create a crack, eventually splitting the brick into two pieces. She stains the broken pieces with house paint, photographs them and then, again, in a repetitive movement, embroiders her own shed hair onto the two-dimensional photograph. Kang sees her work as an experiment to visualize the impossible attempt to reconnect the two broken pieces. The repetitive action reflects the concept of ourselves as the embodiment of time passing between the past and the future. One cannot connect two heavy objects, such as bricks, with delicate human hair; the connection is made possible only on a two-dimensional rendering – a photograph of the brick pieces.

## YI GALLERY

**Sun Young Kang** is a book and installation artist. Originally from South Korea, Kang resided in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, PA for over a decade and currently lives in western New York. From small intimate books to room-size installations, she uses paper, with its duality of strength and delicacy, to create physical and conceptual space. As an immigrant who bridges two cultures, Kang feels she belongs to neither but, rather, resides on the edge of each. Her work reflects that space in between, a boundary both separating and connecting the two through a personal, emotional resonance. Visually, Kang's work is minimal, delicate and obsessively repetitive. "The repetition in my practice symbolizes, or is even the embodiment of, the passage of time – time made spatial," the artist states. "My art has always focused on the duality fundamental to human existence: of different realities, both in space and time, and the tension between them; the co-existence of contrasting ideas, how death implies life, how the material realm implies the intangible and how absence implies presence. To explore this, I create physical and symbolic spaces, ranging from large installations to small, intimate books. I see the audience as a critical component in completing my work. When the result is an installation, audiences not only immerse themselves in the experience of the space, but they also become a part of what others experience, thus contributing to the work's interactive aspect." In 2007, Kang received her MFA in Book Arts/Printmaking from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA and her BFA in Korean Painting from Ewha Woman's University in Seoul, Korea. Kang was named the 2021 UAH Contemporary Art Fellow, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) American Community Grant Program, at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. She is a recipient of the West Collection LIFTS Grant and Acquisition Award, 2020; the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYSCA/NYFA) Artist Fellowship in Architecture/ Environmental Structures/ Design; Vermont Studio Center Fellowship, 2019; Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant Award, 2017-2018; the PRIX WHANKI 2017 from Whanki Museum/ Foundation in Seoul, Korea and the Center for the Emerging Visual Artists Fellowship in Philadelphia, 2013-2015. Kang's work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions, nationally and internationally, at venues including Whanki Museum, Seoul Korea; Queens Museum, NY; Whatcom Museum, WA; Carnegie Museum of Arts, Pennsylvania State Museum; Susquehanna Art Museum, PA; Pittsburgh Center for the Arts and Mainline Art Center and Philadelphia Art Alliance, PA. Her work resides in the West Collection, Pennsylvania State Museum, Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art Franklin Furnace Artist book collection and numerous libraries' special collections.

**Jenny Rafalson** (b. 1986, former USSR) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY and Tel Aviv, Israel. A trained photographer, her artistic practice has evolved to incorporate time-based media, including video and installation. As an immigrant and alien, Rafalson's detachment and yearning for home led her to question and explore the narrative and memory of belonging in contemporary society, often through the use of plants. Rafalson photographs subjects that are a part of her life and have strong ties to her existence as an immigrant woman, both in Israel and the US, such as daily moments and memories and life events, which she appropriates into a yearning of belonging and home. She works on the border between directed studio work and documentary photography that aims to perpetuate a memory that may not have existed ever before. Rafalson graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (MFA, 2020) and Hadassah College (BFA, 2013). Rafalson is the recipient of the James Weinstein Memorial Fellowship (2019-2020) and the NARS residency (2022) and Open Portfolio Review: Outstanding Project Award at the Israel Photography Festival (2017). Rafalson's work has been exhibited at international venues and festivals, including Expo Chicago (2022), Filter photo Chicago (2021), Mana contemporary Chicago (2021), 062 gallery in Chicago (2020) and The sixth Israel Photography Festival in Tel- Aviv (2018).

Based in Brooklyn, **Yi Gallery** produces five exhibitions annually. Guided by the commitment to provide an open and well-informed platform for conceptually rigorous and formally inventive projects, the poetic and critical program prioritizes context and discovery. Informed by the founder's international experience and interest in interdisciplinary inquiries, Yi Gallery aims to present a true reflection of the vitality and diversity of contemporary practices today. Through building a nurturing support structure for a focused roster of emerging artists, the aesthetically-oriented program fosters ongoing dialogue between local and international artists. The gallery is situated inside Industry City, on the Brooklyn waterfront.

For additional information, please contact Cecilia Zhang Jalboukh at [cecilia@gallery-yi.com](mailto:cecilia@gallery-yi.com) or call / text +1 (917) 617-6561.

GALLERY – YI.COM

@YIGALLERYNY