

Jennifer Flinn, Imagining reality at its most unreal: The Art of O-Sang Gwon, *Asia Pacific Arts*, March.24.2005

Cutting-edge Korean photographer/sculptor O-Sang Gwon knows that a picture is worth a thousand words. Especially after he's done deodorizing it...

South Korean artist O-Sang Gwon has just completed a showing of his works here in L.A., *The Flat and Deodorant Type* -- which represent the first American exhibition of his works. Los Angelinos were able to view his works first at the Andrewshire Gallery in Koreatown and then at the 4-f Gallery in Chinatown. The unique arts were on display from December 18th of last year until the 22nd of February of this year. Gwon has previously had his works exhibited not only in Asia but also in Europe. Based in Seoul, Gwon is a graduate of the arts program at the prestigious Hongik University.

Gwon's works are a unique combination of both photography and sculpture and he works in both the second and third dimension. Some of his works, such as the striking "The Flat 6" are two-dimensional, but make the eye work hard to perceive a process of photography that confuses and blurs the perception of depth and dimension. The work features dozens of pictures of jewelry from advertisements and magazines, but is not a collage in the traditional sense. Instead, the pictures were painstakingly cut out and then affixed to wires so that each individual piece of jewelry could be propped up and stand on its own. Gwon then carefully arranged the pieces together on the floor of his apartment and photographed the "collage." The movement from two-dimensional pictures to three-dimensional sculptures to two-dimensional photo-collage is Gwon's attempt to remove the "odor" of photography, and bring new understanding to the art. The strangely flattened images confuse the eye and unsettle the viewer. Only careful examinations of his large photographs reveal the wires and methods by which he created the piece.

The other kind of work on display this winter was one of his peculiar sculptures, entitled "On the languishment of 340 pieces". The sculpture is almost a reverse of "The Flat 6". This life-sized human figure was created by photographing a real person from every conceivable angle. Gwon then created a wire frame and attached the hundred of photographs of his subject onto the corresponding spots on his sculpture, taking an object from the third to the second and then back to a three-dimensional representation. The result is an arresting piece that once again reinterprets the idea of dimension in photography and pushes the boundaries of what the medium traditionally does.

Gwon's art not only bends the rules to reflect the changing status of photography and sculpture in modern art, but also shocks viewers out of their perceptions of objects in daily life through his manipulations. Depth and dimension form an integral part of our assessment and experience of the

world around us, and these pieces take away our traditional judgments and insights. Our identification of objects is destroyed and then rebuilt, and subtly, Gwon asks us to feel below the surface and understand human emotions and pathos. Unfortunately, only three of his works were actually on display at the galleries, and the sculptures in particular are not his most recent works. But with any luck, Gwon will soon send more works to the States to challenge not just our eyes but our perceptions of identity, art, and emotion.