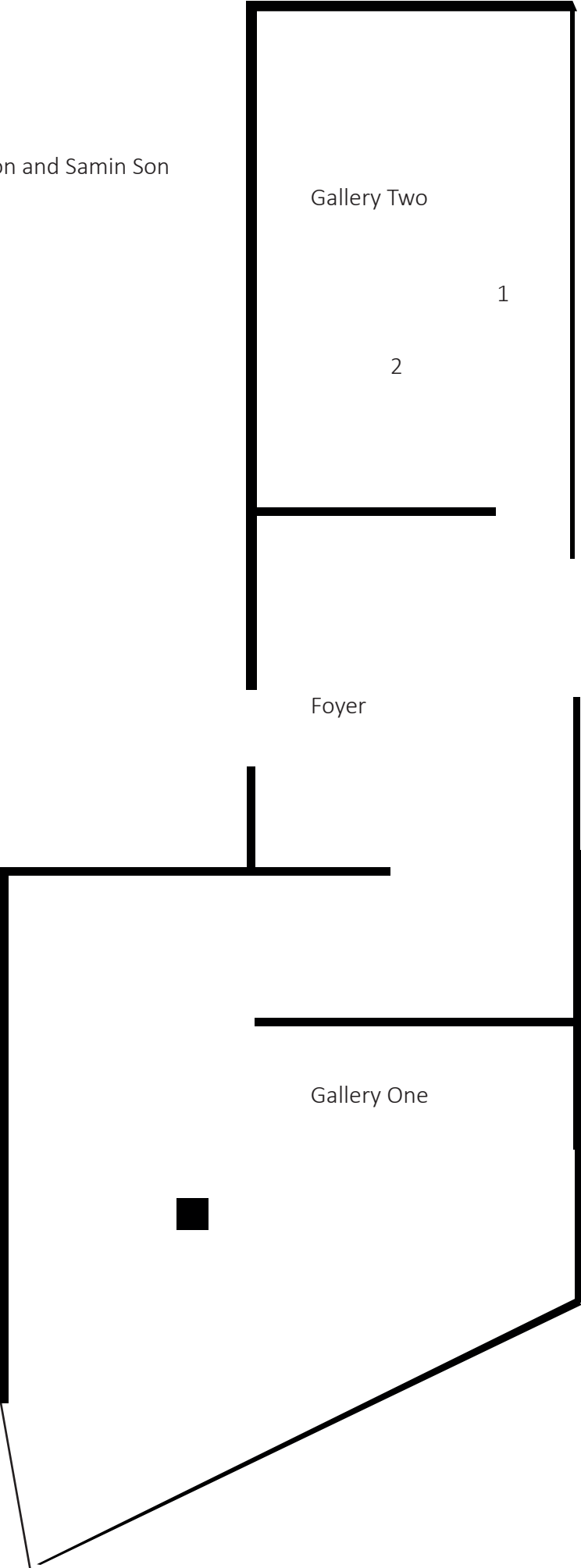


1. Audio by Samin Son

2. Installation by Clara Chon and Samin Son



Everything is Determined by Everything Else: Clara Chon and Samin Son

ST PAUL St Gallery Two, 13 June – 14 July 2014

This exhibition takes its name from an essay by Gean Moreno and Ernesto Oroza, 'Generic Objects' (e-flux, 2010). The text focuses on objects of mass-production – shipping containers, scaffolding, cinderblocks – as concrete signifiers within an infinitely vast system of global trade. While such ubiquitous objects are not recognised as 'designed', they are in fact shaped with unparalleled precision by the constant and de-centralised circuits of production within which they move. A shipping container must be the exact dimensions to fit across a specific width of deck alongside identical units, to be picked up by a specific scale of crane; its metal must have a specific level of resistance in order for the crane which picks it up to retain its grip. If any of these factors change, even minutely, it enacts an infinitesimally small shock wave that resonates across an entire system. Everything is determined by everything else.

The artists were interested in Moreno and Oroza's idea of the visual "frequency" transmitted by generic objects, and that simple units of materials – the nails, leather, scaffolding and steel rivets that each make use of in their work – might operate not just as discrete entities but as the physical materialisations of a much larger, and largely invisible field of effect. It's this sense of the charged relationship between objects and systems of production and consumption that the installation seeks to evoke, with Son's sonic work effecting a kind of currency through the space. A durational composition (39:59 minutes) of choral and synthetic material, its impact is physical.

Visual merchandising is another point of reference in this installation. The fashion industry in particular, and principles of high-end retail display in general inform the ways Chon and Son have worked with the space. The gallery's large shop-like window, the catwalk-runway lighting setup, and the inclusion of Chon's handmade leather bags which are saleable fashion items in their own right all position the gallery as a space of conspicuous consumption, where everything is on display, including ourselves. The installation becomes a meditation on consumer culture, within which fetishised objects take on a narrative role.

Narrative tension is heightened through the clash of juxtaposed materials: hide hammock with aluminum scaffold, galvanised nails with slackly slung leather straps. This appears to be a deserted performance scene, a debauched site of spectacle without protagonists. Such oppositions are central in both artists' work. In this installation minimalism – whether in reference to spaces of luxury shopping or the necessarily spare formalism of a military aesthetic – is a point of connection for collaboration. Chon and Son each bring elements from their individual practices to this project. For Chon these are the wearable items from her fashion label Blue Blank; for Samin – habitually a live performer – it's a sound piece which samples a number of earlier performances. The installation is developed in tandem.

Clara Chon is a Korean born, Auckland based artist. In 2011 she completed a Master of Fine Arts at Elam School of Fine Arts, The University of Auckland, and began Blue Blank. Samin Son, who gained a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Massey University of Wellington in 2012, currently moves between Wellington and Melbourne and is shortly to move back to Seoul, Korea. This project was initiated by Vera Mey, previous Assistant Director, ST PAUL St Gallery.