

Art in America

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CHICAGO

Myungkeun Koh at Andrew Bae

Korean artist Myungkeun Koh's laminated-photo sculptures are unusual and magical. His show of recent work, "Stone Body," played on the dichotomy between the solidity of the stone sculptures Koh photographs, which date from classical antiquity through the 19th century, and the translucent sculptures he has constructed from the images. The photos are printed on transparent film and laminated between Plexiglas sheets that form the basis for the containerlike structures: four-sided boxes, two-sided bent panels and various other configurations. Koh uses a heat gun to melt the edges of the plastic. One can see inside and outside the sculptures at the same time. The colors tend to be gray, sepia and/or flesh-toned.

In *Stone Body 39* a complicated, near-abstract arrangement of shapes is created by the repeated image of a woman's torso and arm on the sides of the box. The bodies face each other at one joint while their backs connect at another. The images continue onto the bottom and top of the work, the complexity increasing the piece's

appeal. Here, as one looks at the inside and outside of the sculpture, one sees positive and negative spaces that are more powerful than the figures themselves.

Stone Body 36, the most elaborate and challenging sculpture, is a staggered arrangement of panels with a narrow one at front and center that creates a faceted image. The panels are joined on the sides to create a single volumetric form, which from the side presents a watery effect.

The photos show a female figure standing in contrapposto, her arms reaching up to arrange the curly hair on her head. The background is dark and the body a light color, so it seems to exist in indefinite space. This piece, with its many surfaces and angles that cannot be taken in at once, creates a complex view of a woman who seems to reveal different parts of herself at different moments.

In these works, Koh has transformed solid, heavy forms into works that are light and ethereal.

—Claire Wolf Krantz

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66 by 72 i

Myungkeun Koh: *Stone Body 36*, 2007, photograph on film and acrylic panels, 36 by 18 by 14 inches; at Andrew Bae.



ST. LOUIS

Erik Spehn at Schmidt Contemporary Art

St. Louis artist Erik Spehn's breakout exhibition, his third at this gallery, consisted of 12 deceptively simple-looking but intensely detailed paintings (all works 2007). In each one, thin, not-quite-perfect horizontal and vertical stripes mimic the warp and weft of weaving.

The exhibition was highly engaging formally, and it was impossible to resist wondering how the paintings—ranging from 39 inches square to 75 inches on a side—are made. Spehn gained increasing control over his labor-intensive technique while developing his process experimentally over 32 progressively complex works on paper. He uses eyedroppers to apply thin stripes of diluted acrylic over an opaque or transparent base coat, usually holding the dropper at an angle to the canvas