

Yong Sin and Barry Markowitz at AndrewShire Gallery

The lift of a finger, the slump of a shoulder, the tilt of a head: These small but vital details distinguish us, one from another, delineating each person or experience against a background of similarity be it crowd, culture, classroom or moment. Artist Yong Sin, born in Seoul, Korea, and educated in California at Otis College of Art and Design, deftly bal-

ances a Western celebration of individuality with a primarily Eastern emphasis on community or group over any single member. Sin's fascinating and labor-intensive drawings and collages simultaneously embrace blending in and standing out through the use of repeated, slightly altered, motifs. Her work gives a nod to assimilation, even as it adds credence to the ultimate impossibility of merging with the crowd. The faceless figures and lively squares pulse with activity not through an exaggeration of motion or character, but through a careful, one might even say loving, observation of nuance and detail.

In *this is the same, but different*, Sin's in-depth investigation is paired with a playful impulse to experiment which makes for a compelling and thoughtful exhibition consisting of two types of work: collaged grids of squares on brightly painted grounds and groupings of figures that have a surprising degree of character given their lack of a face, typically the signifier of individuality and expression. From family photographs Sin selects figures to people her delicately rendered paintings and drawings, altering the figure slightly each time it is repeated. The squares, too, are relatively the same size yet vary slightly with each repetition creating a grid that defies typical associations of the form. They are more lively, animated and playful than strict, geometric or industrious (though the works' paint layers and, in some cases, tiny strips of tape do have an industrial dimension).

Throughout, the works are installed more or less separately allowing for more subtle comparisons. But hung together, a collage of squares, *Square No. 43*, and a figure painting, *Group Photo: Visit No. 17*, emphasize the obvious, if uncomfortable, relationship between squares and figures in Sin's work. The ease with which figures morph into the squares is alternately alarming and calming, the individual sucked into abstraction. Yet, they also share a dusky, almost fleshy, palette and together highlight similarities between the two series.

In some works, figures and patterns commingle with varied and interesting results. In a particularly compelling image, *Visit No. 23*, doll-like figures wearing black tuxedos stand in diagonal lines amid a sea of pale flowers, at times disappearing into the background. As if armored by their clothing, the figures hold their own. But, one senses that, without this sheath of darkness, they might be overtaken in a poetic death of identity, a drowning by flowers further complicated by the fact that the figures appear to be male. Sin's work does not shy away from gender, but resists simpli-



Yong Sin, *Visit No. 23*, 2006, ink on paper over panel, 20-1/2" x 21-1/2", at AndrewShire Gallery, Los Angeles.

fication into binaries. *Sticker Sample: Bowing Man (Blue)* is not, like most of the others, mounted on board but rather is pinned to the wall, its frail tracing paper doubled for added strength. The quiet melancholy and varied metaphors of the man, a figure in a suit repeated in rows in varying shades of light blue, is like a microcosm of Sin's sophisticated body of work; its straightforward presentation of nuance invites layers of reflection.

Paired with Sin's work are six new drawings by Los Angeles-based Barry Markowitz who entered names into a computer search engine, then collected and traced the twenty top photo matches. The resulting layered portraits, drawn one atop the other with marker on panel, oddly resemble renaissance-inspired blobs that, with observation, reveal themselves as faces. The multiple features and blurred lines approximate a person in motion, whether over years or the course of moments, pointing to the seemingly fluid and collapsible nature of time and identity in the digital era.

—Annie Buckley

This is the same, but different: Yong Sin and Barry Markowitz:20/20 closed in April at AndrewShire Gallery, Los Angeles.

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