

## Tim Lee

*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*

3-channel video installation,  
Edition 2 of 3  
4 minutes, 48 seconds

Purchased with the financial support  
of the Canada Council for the Arts  
Acquisition Assistance Program and  
the Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition  
Fund  
VAG 2005.16.1



# Tim Lee

*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*



Image source: Tim Lee, Duck Soup, The Marx Brothers, 1927, 2002. C-print, 102 x 127 cm.

## Artist's Biography

Nationality: Korean-born Canadian

Born: 1975, Seoul, Korea

Tim Lee was born in Seoul, Korea in 1975. He was educated at the University of Alberta, where he obtained his Bachelor of Design degree in 1999, then went on to complete a Master in Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia in 2002.

In Lee's practice, video and photography are used to integrate seminal art historical moments with seminal moments in popular culture. His practice references High Modernism and Conceptualism and is influenced by Robert Smithson, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris as well as conceptual photographer Christopher Williams. Locally, the photo-based works of Rodney Graham, Jeff Wall, Ken Lum and Roy Arden provide a context for understanding Lee's work. Lee simultaneously draws upon a wide variety of pop culture sources in his practice, including Steve Martin, the Beastie Boys, Ted Williams, George and Ira Gershwin, The Kingsmen, Harry Houdini and the Marx Brothers. By using his own figure as the central performative character in his work, Lee conflates high and low culture, and simultaneously highlights the issue of translation. Lee is concerned with the way in which a disjuncture or gap occurs in the reenactment and reinterpretation of events or images by contemporary artists. In his recent work, Lee has used the strategy of the sight gag to play on the notion of the amateur comedian and musician.

Source: Acquisitions Justification

## Artistic Context

Nationality: Korean-born Canadian

Training: University of Alberta; University of British Columbia

Peers: Robert Arndt; Myfanwy MacLeod; Geoffrey Farmer

Group: video; photography; Conceptualism; 20th century; 21st century

Provenance: purchased from the Tracey Lawrence Gallery; the artist

Subject: popular culture; re-enactment; translation; cultural identity

## Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Tim Lee

*The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998, 2003*

4-colour silk screen on paper

Purchased with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisitions Assistance Program and the Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund VAG 2005.16.2

Tim Lee

The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001



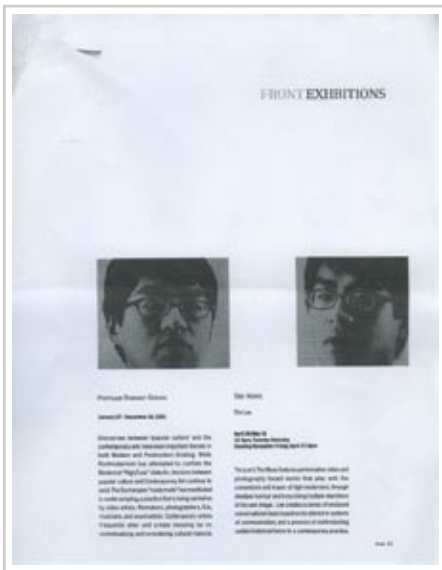
## Bibliography

Front Exhibitions  
Publication

[transcription]

In 1998, the Beastie Boys released *Hello Nasty*, a pur laine hip hop album loaded with old school sentiment, nostalgic street hymns and a type of retro rhythm and rhyme that was strongly coloured by a fondness for a nascent era when hip hop was at its peak. With the topic of their race no longer a question, the Beastie Boys have emerged from the debate of their legitimacy — as three white, upper-middle-class Jewish New Yorkers fronting black culture — with enough cultural currency to be considered respected members of the hip hop vanguard. Dispatching with the New York hardcore they started out with as young bourgeois punks and brought back to dubious effect on their previous 2 albums, the great aesthetic shift with *Hello Nasty* came in its rhyme style. A standard trope of early 80s hip hop, the tag-team was the lingua franca of B-boy utopia. With practitioners that included the Treacherous Three and Run DMC, it articulated a complicated multi-vocal rhyme pattern, whereby one person began a verse, abruptly stop[ped] in mid-phrase, and another continued to complete the sentence. Showcasing a mercurial logic of group dynamism and the organic interaction among three musicians in the studio, "The Move" is a song that exemplifies the aesthetic of the tag-team with an engaging frisson of fun phrase, buoyant cadence and verbal precision.

Equally enmeshed in pleasure and nostalgia, *The Move* encapsulates a reverie for a lost past. Acting as both aesthetes and historians, the Beastie Boys rejuvenated the practice of an aesthetic past in order to reinvigorate the standards of a contemporary present. All of a sudden, hip hop — as a medium of relative newness — began to rehistoricize itself, and by bringing back the tag-team, the Beastie Boys made the aesthetic history of hip hop more and more apparent.



The history of video art is just as short as that of hip hop, and until very recently meant performance. In the seventies, artists like Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman used video to primarily capture and render a performance on tape. For them, video was a new way to enact their psychological closet-dramas, so they filmed themselves in the studio by dramatizing simple behavior. They mainly performed for the camera using small gestures, experimenting with their bodies. What emerged from this was a rhetoric of presence that coerced the viewer towards the artist and his machines. Narcissism was at question, and when Acconci and Nauman placed themselves in an enclosed loop of their equipment and selves, they did it partly to displace the viewer outside of it. What's most interesting is that the priori of an "I" inherent in their videos intersects with an "I" prevalent in hip hop. In the lyrics for "The Move", the massive pronoun usage of "I", "me" and "my" is indicative of the testimony, self-aggrandizement, and simultaneous ownership and projection of self that matches the rhetoric of hip hop with the performative tropes of Acconci and Nauman's videos.

*The Move* is an attempt to align the standards of old school hip hop with the early practice of video art. A video installation that consists of 3 separate monitors and VCRs, each screen features the artist assuming the identity of a Beastie Boy (Mike D, Ad-Rock and MCA) and his rhymes. Comprising a circumnavigational left right and centre perspective of the artist's head, the installation splits the self into 3 separate entities and is connected visually by an eyeline match that faces a fixed central axis, and audibly by an oral phrasing of the song that jumps back and forth between the three. An ersatz reproduction

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that mimes the process of karaoke singing and the look of early video, the patterned call-and-response of the three heads rhyming with and opposite each other supplies an aural, visual and physiological counterpart to the multiple dynamism of the tag-team and the strategies of performative video.

Yet no matter how the Beastie Boys have managed to make matters of their race incidental, the installation attempts to make cultural identity central to the discussion. In *The Move*, a simulacrum of race is being made indistinguishable — visual Asianess conflates with white text and coded black grammar to the point where no one race is experienced as dominant. Here, the artist adopts minimalist tactics—in a reduced, deadpan and mechanical look and performance—as a process of deracination that conflates a triple stage of racial identities. Minimalism acts as the great leveler. In the video everything gets reduced; the production is mathematical, the rhyming made deadpan, the "I" gets extinguished. By systematically rehearsing the tag-team to mechanical effect, the performance attempts to defeat a complex pattern of language by trying to articulate it. And paradoxically, the monotone delivery makes the charged giddiness of hip hop strangely rational and 'foreign'.

### FRONT EXHIBITIONS

#### POPULAR FORMAT SERIES

**January 27. December 16, 2001**

Discourses between "popular culture" and the contemporary arts have been important themes in both Modern and Postmodern thinking. While Postmodernism has attempted to conflate the Modernist "High/Low" dialectic, tensions between popular culture and Contemporary Art continue to exist. The Duchampian "ready-made" has manifested in media sampling, a practice that is being carried on by video artists, filmmakers, photographers, DJs, musicians, and sound artists. Contemporary artists frequently alter and create meaning by recontextualizing and re-rendering cultural material.

#### THE MOVE

Tim Lee

**April 28-May 31**

**12-5pm, Tuesday-Saturday**

**Opening Reception: Friday, April 27 8pm**

Tim Lee's *The Move* features performative video and photography based works that play with the conventions and tropes of high modernism, through deadpan humour and irony. Using multiple depictions of his own image, Lee creates a series of enclosed conversational loops based on his interest in systems of communication, and a process of reintroducing certain historical forms to a contemporary practice.

# Tim Lee

*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*



## Hello, Nasty

Publication  
2001

[transcription]

HELLO, NASTY

CHRISTOPHER BRAYSHAW

Though UBC MFA Tim Lee's first solo exhibition includes three different works, I will focus here on only one, the video installation *The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998 (2000)*, which in many respects is emblematic of formal and thematic concerns addressed by the exhibition as a whole. Three video monitors on plinths depict three different close-up views of the artist's face, clipped just above the neck, as he flatly recites the lyrics to the Beastie Boys song "The Move"—the first cut on their bestselling album *Hello Nasty*—with each "screen self" taking the vocal part of a different Beastie Boy. Lee's flat, almost deliberately atonal inflection dampens the original song's peppy exuberance, but in no way eliminates it. Rather, the installation's overlapping monotones echo, in an oddly endearing way, the original's crisp vocal play and lush production values. The installation's ostensible musical utopianism resides in its implication that, at least for the duration of the song, Lee, or you, or I, or anyone at all can be Ad-Rock or Mike D., an imaginative dislocation from the shower, car stopped in heavy rush hour traffic, or university MFA hut to a Brooklyn studio, East Coast soundstage, or heavy rotation on MTV. Every man or woman an artist! *B-boys to the early morn B-girls be rockin' on and on!*

In this sense, at least, Lee's performance is not so much a copy of an original as it is a translation of a *de facto* "popular standard" from one context to another, much as a jazz player like Pharoah Sanders might radically translate a jazz standard like "Body and Soul" in the course of a live performance.

Lee likely picked "The Move" not so much out of respect for what the Beastie Boys mean to him personally, but as a result of the song's dissemination through culture. In summer 1998 it was hard to turn on a radio and not hear "The Move." I recall driving late one night outside Seattle in a rental car and scanning the stations preprogrammed into the car radio, only to find "The Move" pumping out on each one.

The *amateurism* of Lee's performance (by which I mean the verbal tics and hesitations that creep in despite how objectively the source material is presented) distinguishes his work from works of seamless appropriation, like Walker Evans' restagings of Joseph Beuys' lectures or Sherrie Levine's copies of Walker Evans' photographs. With these works, only the presence of a curatorial essay, wall label, or other kinds of directional signage distinguishes between the source work and its copy. Lee's work, on the other hand, exaggerates its deviations from its ostensible source—3 identical Asian faces in place of 3 different Caucasian ones, video in place of audio, and so on. These exaggerations bring about the recognition that Lee's project is not really about appropriation at all, but is rather connected to an older aesthetic bordered, on one hand, by Bruce Nauman's staged studio performances and video works, and, on the other, by early Robert Morris works like *2.13*, a performance masquerading as an art history lecture, whose point resides in the delay between a taped audio component and Morris' out-of-synch performance of the actions the audiotape describes. The critical interest in Morris' (and Lee's) work resides in the degree of deviation between an audio component and its source (whether the Beastie Boys' studio performance of "The Move" or the taped

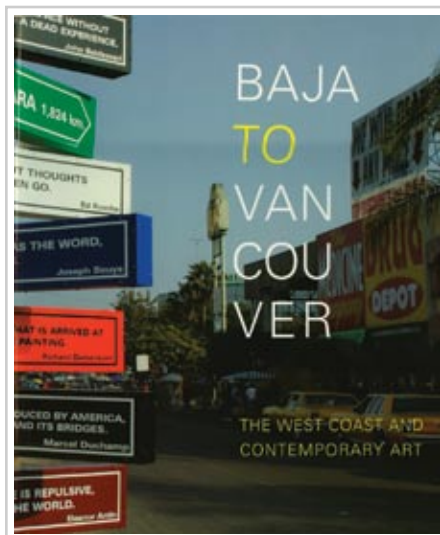
## Tim Lee

*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*

performance that Morris' mimed actions deviate from).

My insistence on this reading is a result of Lee's work's overwhelming sense of *determinedness*, of complete formal and technical control. Lee's work is knowing in the sense of flaunting the artist's considerable art historical knowledge. One consequence of the work's hyperreferentiality is that *The Move* seems to deliberately anticipate the contexts in which it will most likely be positioned by critics. But the complexity of Lee's almost neurotic involvement with past art is sufficient on its own. What grates most about the work is the patina of cultural analysis cloaking it, as represented by, for instance, the artist's claim in conversation that he found it interesting that, as an Asian male, his access to African-American culture had been mediated by three middle-class white kids from Brooklyn. In this respect, Lee's title refers to the powerful feeling of social displacement underlying all contemporary artistic experience, a sense of not being-at-home in the world. But works that foreground this condition by telling us that everyone is always on the move often amount to special pleading for the artist's own era. I think Lee's work is more resonant when it drops its pretense of overt social analysis and focuses on its self-conscious and highly intellectualized relationship to past art. This process, to be sure, makes Lee's involvement with the Beasties seem more calculating than charming. I respect this approach. But it will probably not play well with the crowd, who now demand that art with a "political" or socially conscious component somehow make its politics visible not as form, but as theme, or content. Lee's chilly reply to this demand is bracing. So long playful, sensitive, and "politically aware." Hello, nasty.

TIM LEE  
*THE MOVE*  
WESTERN FRONT  
APRIL 28-MAY 26, 2001



**Baja to Vancouver**  
Publication  
2003

[transcription of excerpt]

**Tim Lee**

At the heart of Vancouver-based artist Tim Lee's practice lies the complex issue of translation: how an event, image, or musical score is transformed (and corrupted) through the process of being restaged or reinterpreted. Lee's work is also underpinned by a questioning of ethnicity and cultural identity, in particular the artist's own hybrid identity as an Asian Canadian. Lee himself is, invariably, the central subject of his works, which take the form of quasi-documentary accounts of staged performances and roleplaying actions that typically reference iconic moments in North American popular culture.

Lee followed this strategy in a 2001 four-channel video work for which he taught himself the vocal, guitar, bass, and drum parts of the mid-1950s Richard Berry standard, "Louie, Louie." (Like a one-man garage band, Lee appears on different monitors playing each part.) Making reference to the song's numerous incarnations and The Kingsmen's popular 1963 cover version, Lee calls attention to the song's status as a translation of a translation of an original, a process that acutely brings into focus questions of authorship, authenticity, and identity.

Similarly, in the three-channel video installation *The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*, Lee reenacts the intricate tag-team rhyming of Beastie Boys Adam

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*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*



Yauch, Mike Diamond, and Adam Horovitz's performance of their 1998 song "The Move," creating a video triptych in which he "raps" all three parts. Echoing the formal restraints of much early video art—fixed camera positions, shot in black and white—Lee fills each monitor with a closely cropped image of his face as he deadpans the original lyrics without musical accompaniment. Lee, of course, is aware of the irony of an Asian-Canadian artist aping white American Jewish rappers, who themselves are mimicking African-American hip-hop styles; but, as he sees it, this process of cultural fracturing and assimilation simply adds yet another layer to the song's already convoluted Buddhist-flavored humanist rhetoric.

The just barely competent nature of his "performances" is a crucial part of Lee's work. Like a Walter Mitty of the information age or a stand-in for obsessed fans, Lee reenacts rituals of pop culture that are usually the domain of acknowledged practitioners or experts. He accepts that there is a degree of "stupid heroism" in what he does—because he is neither a performer nor a musician—and that it is only through his own conviction in his endeavors that he is able to transform the ridiculous into something that simultaneously suggests the sublime. TK

Tim Lee was born in Seoul, South Korea, in 1975. He received a BDes from the University of Alberta in 1999 and an MFA from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, in 2002. He has had solo exhibitions at Or Gallery (2002) and the Western Front (2001) in Vancouver. His works have also been included in group exhibitions such as the Prague Biennial (2003); *Soundtracks*, The Power Plant, Toronto (2003); and *Vancouver Video*, Folly Gallery, Lancaster, England (2002).

Tim Lee  
*The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998, 2000*  
(detail, right)



## When the Serious is Tinted With Humour, it Makes a Nicer Colour.

Publication  
2004-04-21

### [transcription]

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## When the Serious is Tinted with Humor, it Makes a Nicer Color, A conversation with Tim Lee by Jens Hoffmann - April 21, 2004

Jens Hoffmann (JH): Since we are going to talk about art and humor I would like to start our conversation with a quote by Marcel Duchamp that I always liked very much: "When the serious is tinted with humor, it makes a nicer color." Your work seems very connected to this thought and I [would] like to know about this particular aspect of your practice. You once spoke about the idea of humor as an agent for social commentary. Could you elaborate on this a little, maybe also in relation to your own work?

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Tim Lee (TL): Duchamp's line is interesting, mostly because the carefree analogy so easily expresses what could possibly be regarded as an urge for a large moment of transformation in art. His association with color makes a distinction — in his typically oblique way — to art's distillation towards essentials. For Duchamp, to make art a different color would correspond as some sort of fundamental gesture, or small formal action that might grandly alter the way we make, look at, and experience art.

This sea-change in perspective — to make art humorous — marks what I always think of as the question of an artistic struggle over affect. I think mainly, a lot of this stems from my interest in Modernism, particularly in the notion of the gap that exists between artist and viewer. How can one bridge or accommodate that divide? In Modernism, the equation became simple: to affect someone creates effect. For instance, by turns, Jeff Wall wants to make beautiful pictures and his photographs are indeed very striking in their explicit beauty. For Agnes Martin, her chosen vehicle of affect is serenity, whereas for Bruce Nauman it's aggression, and for someone like Christopher Williams its confusion. I'm not sure how, but in some roundabout way, when I started to make art, Comedy became my mechanism. The reasons for this are various, but partly it emanates from how I think that Comedy is, in many ways, a social leveler. I always liked the idea that you can be anyone, and it wouldn't matter who you are, and you would find my work funny. Laughter in art becomes its own experience, and the immediate response of humor would lead one to speculate on or think about the work further. This could be seen as an egalitarian response — where the motivations to make something funny can be judged as some sort of democratic or political act and this is where I think my interests could possibly intersect with Duchamp's. But it was only after some time that I came to realize that humor could indeed be very political. That to make something a joke is to signal some sort of upending, or rupture of a belief, system, pattern or tradition.

JH: It would be good if you could maybe give me a concrete example in regards to what you said. Can you tell me for example more about your piece "Duck Soup, the Marx Brothers, 1927" (2002)? I am particularly interested in your idea of how humor could be political and how this manifests itself in this work for instance where you bring together Dan Graham and the Marx Brothers.

TL: I think a lot of my work comes out of an urge to relative certain traditions, especially with what we normally associate as the hardedged rhetoric of classical conceptualism. "Duck Soup, the Marx Brothers, 1927" was partly realized with Dan Graham in mind. I guess you could call it a double-entendre on the "mirror-stages" of the Marx Brothers famous routine and of Graham's 1977 work "Performer/Audience/Mirror". My photographs originated as a partial attempt to make a

sight gag out of Graham's concerns with optics and his interest in American behaviorism and European phenomenology. Yet the sight gag is one of the lowest forms of humor, right down there with puns and one-liners. But I liked the circularity of the joke: that if my photographs [sic] was about the sight gag, then it was about the double-take, and if it was the double-take then it meant to look again, and if it was about looking again then it was about basic perception. In the end, the adoption of an askance viewpoint is what Graham was trying to do all along.

JH: This is interesting what you say about Graham as he really comes across as very serious and not amusing at all. Someone who I think is very political and at the same time extremely funny is US artist Martha Rosler. I do not think that her mechanism is comedy though, in her case it is probably really politics expressed in an often humorous but still sincere and serious way. It is more this idea of Aristotle that humor is educated insolence.

TL: Yes, Rosler's "Semiotics of the Kitchen" is a very funny piece. Funny, because

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it is so serious — "Deadpan" is probably the most appropriate word. I think that her work, like the particular strain of performance and video art that arose in the seventies, often has a dark, mercurial edge to it. This can be partly attributed to the way conceptual art at the time engaged with social subjects in both explicit and covert fashion, almost as if to simultaneously point to and conceal its importance. Hence how the Deadpan became such an underlying strategy; to be overtly political was to be dead serious, but the comedy allowed [sic] to take some of the edge off a little. Rosler's satire, like Vito Acconci, Dan Graham and Bruce Nauman's, is indeed very humorous, but often not in a way that is very comforting.

Graham, like Rosler, was very political, and it's interesting to note that he has criticized Duchamp in the past for being too aristocratic; that he didn't have a social conscience. My interest in politics is likeminded with them in a certain way, except I initially wanted the social ambitions of my work to be more subdued. The danger of dealing with politics in art is pedantry. So I took this as an operative challenge to avoid the obvious. It's a question that has often been repeated in my head: how can one make polemical art that does not look or appear to be overtly polemical? Comedy just seemed to offer itself as the most willing example.

JH: Who else comes to your mind in regard to art and comedy/humor in the field of visual art? John Bock I think could be seen in this line but again his humor comes also from another angle and is more connected to notions of absurdity and nonsense. Maybe Maurizio Cattelan could be the closest to what we described, he certainly has a connection to Duchamp. Also there is Andreas Slominski who is incredibly funny, maybe also related to the idea of the absurd.

TL: John Bock is indeed a very good funny artist. I'm not sure if I could ever make some real sense out of his nonsense, but that's almost the point. His absurdity functions in that rupturing I talked about earlier, about upending established conventions in order to realize new forms of social, political and aesthetic freedom. This abject quality also finds its forbears in Mike Kelley and Fischli and Weiss, who are also very good at positing strange new forms of art while dramatizing different ways to behave: through playful slapstick, what these artists aim to observe is how absurdity can evade the responsibilities of meaning until it becomes something else. Cattelan also has that playful recklessness, but he's probably more interesting in that he uses humor as psychotherapy — especially in the way his objects act as ersatz self-portraits that personify his anxieties. Charles Ray is another great example of the comic neurotic. Unlike Bock or Kelley, he treats humor with a very clean aesthetic, but if there's any mess to his work, it's in his psyche. The

joke of Ray's work is that he trades personal trauma for sculpture and hides his anxiety beneath the slick veneer of Minimalism. If Minimalism suppresses anything, its emotion, and Ray further succeeds by inserting personality into the archetype while simultaneously giving it a laugh.

JH: I found this line of Ludwig Wittgenstein that I think fits very well here: "A serious work of philosophy could be written entirely of jokes."

Particularly Conceptual art was responsible to bring the idea of a good-natured laugh back into the arena of art. Here we are back at Duchamp, just think about "LHOOQ" (1919) or a very late piece "With My Tongue in My Cheek" (1959). Think about Baldessari's "I am Making Art" (1969) for example. I like it when artists make fun of themselves in such a sharp, ironic and witty way. Humor is the enemy of authority and Baldessari was clearly parodying Nauman. Later he did this hilarious version of Lewitt's "Sentences on Conceptual art." But let us talk more about your work, somehow I see some parallels to Baldessari early strategy of parody. Tell me more about pieces such as "Untitled (Number 4, 1970)" (2002) or "Louie Louie, The Kingsmen, 1963" (2002).

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TL: By itself, the idea of Baldessari singing Lewitt is pretty funny, but the actual footage of Baldessari singing Lewitt is made even more humorous because he does it in such a straight, literal tone. Again, it is a return to the deadpan — here realized through a very emotionless read of an intellectual text. "Louie Louie, The Kingsmen, 1963" was achieved in a similar way. It was born of the idea that I wouldn't be singing as much as I was reciting lyrics which were incomprehensible in the first place — that words, emptied of context, are treated like pure, formal props used to articulate the autonomy of the artist and signal the dematerialization of conceptual art towards text. "Louie Louie" came as a furtive attempt to defeat a regressive form of language — here as sixties garage rock — by trying to articulate it, and because it was also the first time I ever tried to play any musical instrument, I only had the initial suspicion that the work might end up being funny (it probably ended up being more ridiculous than I imagined). Maybe this is what Wittgenstein was trying to suggest with his idea of the language game — although I always thought the joke of Wittgenstein was that the language game could be about anything, therefore opening up the possibilities of intellectual free agency. Nauman, of course, learned a lot by reading Wittgenstein, and part of my interest in Nauman is that he engages humor with such an archly serious and dramatic intensity. Like Samuel Beckett, his humor-noir approach was very intellectual, and it resulted in scenarios that were so overtly rational they became absurd.

Nauman's 1966 photograph "Failing to Levitate in the Studio" best illustrates this example, and my diptych "Untitled (Number 4, 1970)" is partly a parody of Nauman's strange and self-imposed situation. I guess in terms of generally trying to out-do him — of actually levitating in the studio — I was trying to reverse his standard of failure into achieved success while also transforming the index of pain in his picture towards something more humorous. Again, it was through the relativizing of conceptual art history that I was able to make Nauman's problems my own. In the end, I guess you could say that I was trying to ironize his irony. And as David Foster Wallace observed, isn't this an implicitly sincere act?

I like that Wittgenstein quote. It reminds me of Benjamin when he said that history could be measured by its discontinuities. And how else to rupture tradition than through a joke? To look at humor as a way to both philosophize and articulate history is appealing because it means that the strategy serves a purpose other than its own excuse for being. I guess I identify with this notion, because the thing with me is that I take comedy very seriously.

### Further Reading

Burnham, Clint. "Tim Lee is a Joke," *YYZine*. October 2003.

*Dogwood*. Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2002.

Godmer, Gilles. *L'Envers des Apparences*. Montréal: Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, 2005.

O'Brian, Melanie. "Louie Louie, The Kingsmen, 1963," *D'Or*. January 12, 2003.

*Video Heroes*. Montreal: Centre des Arts Saidye Bronfman, 2004.

Tim Lee

*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*

## Exhibition History

### Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

*Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art.* June 5, 2004 - September 6, 2004.

*75 Years of Collecting: Portrait of a Citizen.* September 23, 2006 - January 1, 2007.

### Selected Exhibitions Outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery

Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton; Blackwood Gallery, Mississauga; Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina; Ottawa Art Gallery, Ottawa. *Replay.* 2003 - 2005.

## Archival History

### Acquisitions Justification

Acquisition Record  
2005

[transcription]

**Tim Lee**  
**b. 1975, Seoul, Korea**  
**Lives and works in Vancouver, BC**

***The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998***  
2001

3-channel video installation, Edition 2 of 3  
4 minutes, 48 seconds

*The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998*

2003

4-colour silk screen on paper, Edition 3 of 10  
28 x 20 inches

**Vendor:** Tracey Lawrence Gallery

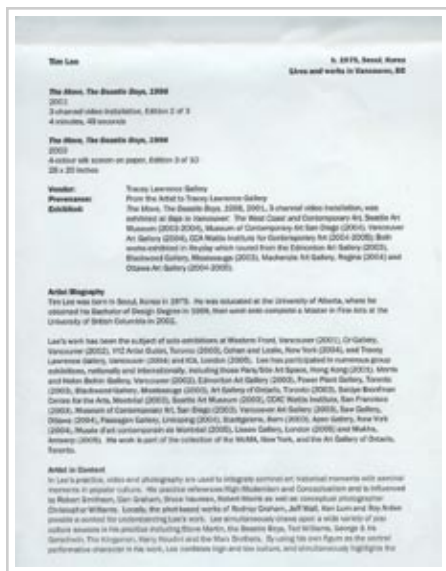
**Provenance:** From the Artist to Tracey Lawrence Gallery

**Exhibited:** *The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*, 3-channel video installation, was exhibited at *Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art*, Seattle Art Museum (2003-2004), Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (2004), Vancouver Art Gallery (2004), CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art (2004-2005); Both works exhibited in *Re-play* which toured from the Edmonton Art Gallery (2003), Blackwood Gallery, Mississauga (2003), Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina (2004) and Ottawa Art Gallery (2004-2005).

### Artist Biography

Tim Lee was born in Seoul, Korea in 1975. He was educated at the University of Alberta, where he obtained his Bachelor of Design Degree in 1999, then went onto complete a Master in Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia in 2002.

Lee's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Western Front, Vancouver (2001), Or Gallery, Vancouver (2002), YZ Artist Outlet, Toronto (2003), Cohan



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and Leslie, New York (2004), and Tracey Lawrence Gallery, Vancouver (2004) and ICA, London (2005). Lee has participated in numerous group exhibitions, nationally and internationally, including those Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong (2001), Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, Vancouver (2002), Edmonton Art Gallery (2003), Power Plant Gallery, Toronto (2003), Blackwood Gallery, Mississauga (2003), Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2003), Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, Montréal (2003), Seattle Art Museum (2003), CCAC Wattis Institute, San Francisco (2003), Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (2003), Vancouver Art Gallery (2003), Saw Gallery, Ottawa (2004), Passagen Gallery, Linköping (2004), Stadtgalerie, Bern (2003), Apex Gallery, New York (2004), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2005), Lisson Gallery, London (2005) and MUKHA, Antwerp (2005). His work is part of the collection of the MoMA, New York, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

### Artist in Context

In Lee's practice, video and photography are used to integrate seminal art historical moments with seminal moments in popular culture. His practice references High Modernism and Conceptualism and is influenced by Robert Smithson, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris as well as conceptual photographer Christopher Williams. Locally, the photo-based works of Rodney Graham, Jeff Wall, Ken Lum and Roy Arden provide a context for understanding Lee's work. Lee simultaneously draws upon a wide variety of pop culture sources in his practice including Steve Martin, the Beastie Boys, Ted Williams, George & Ira Gershwin, The Kingsmen, Harry Houdini and the Marx Brothers. By using his own figure as the central performative character in his work, Lee conflates high and low culture, and simultaneously highlights the

issue of translation. Lee is concerned with the way in which a disjuncture or gap occurs in the reenactment and reinterpretation of events or images by contemporary artists. In his recent work, Lee has used the strategy of the sight gag to play on the notion of the amateur comedian and musician.

### Work Under Consideration

The works under consideration are both entitled *The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998* and are interrelated pieces.

The video installation consists of three separate video monitors. Each monitor depicts a different close-up headshot of Lee, rendered in black and white, reciting the lyrics of the Beastie Boys' 1998 song 'The Move.' The Beastie Boys, comprised of Adam Yauch, Mike Diamond and Adam Horovitz, tag team their rendition of the song, meaning they pass along the main delivery of the lyrics amongst themselves in rapid-fire fashion. Lee mimics this tag-teaming in his video triptych in which he performs all the parts of all three of the Beastie Boys. In his performance there is no musical accompaniment and Lee recites the lyrics stoically, without any of the energy and enthusiasm typical of the Beastie Boys. By restaging a performance of 'The Move,' Lee explores the multi-layered issue of translation and he questions how an event is changed and given different meaning by being reinterpreted. He is also concerned with issues around ethnicity and cultural identity: Lee himself is Korean Canadian and he performs the work of American Jewish Rappers, who have appropriated African-American hip-hop forms.

The silk screen relates directly to the video installation. The text is the lyrics of the song *The Move* that Lee deadpans in the video. Each colour corresponds to the lyrics rapped by one of the Beastie Boys and therefore one of the three video personas Lee adopts. The text in black represents where all three figures rap in unison.

These works are of particular importance as they are representative of many of

# Tim Lee

*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*

the concerns that permeate Lee's practice. In both works, Lee appropriates standard art historical forms and infuses them with subject matter derived from pop culture. By recontextualizing cultural material, Lee creates new meaning.

## Justification

The Vancouver Art Gallery does not have any work by Tim Lee in its collection. Lee is a significant emerging Vancouver-based artist and his work has connections to works by his peers including Robert Arndt, Myfanwy MacLeod and Geoffrey Farmer, already in the Gallery's collection. Lee's practice has also been heavily influenced by the important tradition of photo-conceptualism in Vancouver and his work has strong links to work by Rodney Graham, Ken Lum and Jeff Wall, all of who are represented in the Gallery's permanent collection. Lee's 3-channel video installation, *The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001* was part of the exhibition at the Gallery entitled *Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art*, making it a part of the Gallery's exhibition history. Acquiring this work would be in line with the Gallery's acquisition goals that place emphasis on including works by emerging Vancouver-based artists. The works are in good condition.

Recommend acceptance.

Bruce Grenville  
Senior Curator

Research: Emmy Lee  
Assistant Curator

The image shows a document titled "SCHEDULE 'A' Works Recommended for Acquisition" with a sub-header "Acquisition Meeting: October 5, 2005" and "Board Meeting: October 5, 2005". It is page 1 of 4. The table has four columns: "Description", "Financial Comments", "Qualification Requirements", and "Board Approval". There are four rows of entries, each with a "Description" column containing text and a "Board Approval" column with a date and a checkmark.

## Board Minutes

Acquisition Record  
2005-10-05

[transcription of excerpt]

## SCHEDULE "A"

### Works Recommended for Acquisition

**Acquisition Meeting: October 5, 2005**  
**Board Meeting: October 5, 2005**

## Submission

PURCHASE

1. *The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*  
3-channel video installation  
edition 2 of 3  
4 minutes, 48 seconds

*The Move, The Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*  
4-colour silk screen on paper  
edition 3 of 10  
28 x 20 inches

Artist: Tim Lee  
Vendor: Tracey Lawrence Gallery

Tim Lee

*The Move, Beastie Boys, 1998, 2001*

**Curatorial comments:** Recommend Purchase

**Committee Disposition:** Approved unanimously

**Board Approval:** [APPROVED OCT -5 2005]

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