

# Jin-me Yoon

*Intersection 2*, 1998

azo dye print

diptych each component: 143.5 x 109.2

Collection of the Vancouver Art  
Gallery, Gift of the Artist

VAG 2001.48a-b



# Jin-me Yoon

## *Intersection 2*, 1998



Image source: Jin-me Yoon, *Souvenirs of the Self*, A project of six post cards, 1991.  
Vancouver Art Gallery Library Canadian Artist Files

## Artist's Biography

Nationality: Korean-born Canadian

Born: 1960, Seoul, Korea

Jin-me Yoon was born in Seoul, Korea in 1960 and moved to Vancouver with her family in 1968. She received a B.A. (liberal arts; psychology) from the University of British Columbia (1985); a B.F.A. from the Emily Carr College of Art and Design (1990), and an M.F.A. from Concordia University (1992). She is currently Assistant Professor at the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University.

Since the early 1990s Yoon has used photography to explore such issues as cultural identity, history and memory, and how such things are constructed and maintained. Early works such as the postcard project *Souvenirs of the Self*, in which the artist photographed herself in typical (and ironic) tourist fashion in various sites in Banff, Alberta, questioned ideas of belonging and the constructed relationship between landscape and identity. In a more recent work, *Intersection* (1996), which was included in Presentation House's exhibition *Urban Fictions* and reproduced in the accompanying catalogue, Yoon expanded her visual vocabulary to explore the artist's experience of motherhood. In that diptych the artist photographed herself with her back to the camera against a blood red background: in one photograph the artist wears a suit and is "armed" with a breast pump, while in the second, she wears a dress and holds her baby in front of her so we can only see a small leg around the mother's waist. A stream of milk drips from the child's leg onto a large bag, which sits on the floor.

Source: Acquisitions Justification

## Artistic Context

Nationality: Korean-born Canadian

Training: University of British Columbia; Emily Carr College of Art & Design; Concordia University

Peers: Sharon Yeun

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

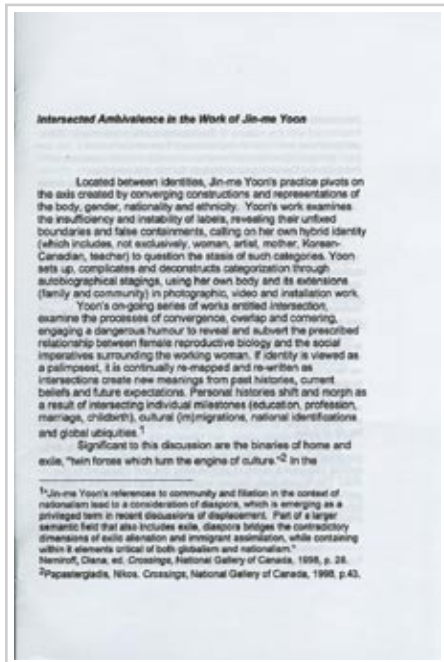
Provenance: the artist

Subject: history; memory; language; cultural identity; self-portrait

## Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Jin-me Yoon  
*(In)authentic (Re)search*, 1990  
Duratrans, Mylar, light box  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 95.5 a-i

Jin-me Yoon  
*A Group of Sixty Seven*, 1996  
chromogenic print  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 97.2 a-eeeeee



## Bibliography

### Intersected Ambivalence in the work of Jin-me Yoon

Publication  
2001

[transcription]

### Intersected Ambivalence in the Work of Jin-me Yoon

Located between identities, Jin-me Yoon's practice pivots on the axis created by converging constructions and representations of the body, gender, nationality and ethnicity. Yoon's work examines the insufficiency and instability of labels, revealing their unfixed boundaries and false containments, calling on her own hybrid identity (which includes, not exclusively, woman, artist, mother, Korean-Canadian, teacher) to question the stasis of such categories. Yoon sets up, complicates and deconstructs categorization through autobiographical stagings, using her own body and its extensions (family and community) in photographic, video and installation work.

Yoon's on-going series of works entitled *Intersection*, examine the processes of convergence, overlap and comingling, engaging a dangerous humour to reveal and subvert the prescribed relationship between female reproductive biology and the social imperatives surrounding the working woman. If identity is viewed as a palimpsest, it is continually re-mapped and re-written as intersections create new meanings from past histories, current beliefs and future expectations. Personal histories shift and morph as a result of intersecting individual milestones (education, profession, marriage, childbirth), cultural (im)migrations, national identifications and global ubiquitousities.

Significant to this discussion are the binaries of home and exile, "twin forces which turn the engine of culture." In the

*Intersection* works, the ideas of home and motherhood are intertwined with the notions of displacement and banishment. The geographical and cultural displacement Yoon experienced in her own past (emigrating to Vancouver when she was a child) contrasts with the notion of Canada as a birthplace for her children, their motherland, or at least their geographical, if not psychological, home.

*Home is an appropriated space; it does not exist objectively in reality. The notion of 'home' is a fiction we create out of a need to belong.*

The search for home in a world which has gone economically and culturally global calls attention to the binaries which concern Yoon and are reflected in her exploration of the professional working woman/mother binary. Crossroads can be sites of simultaneous dislocation from *home* and discovery of *home*, places where the self (as artist, professional, etc.), finds opportunity to be reborn.

Yoon's *Intersection* works are contained within a conceptual and formal axis, playing with converging binaries around maternity. Mothering has its own history, contained within other histories such as feminism, and has its particular social arrangements which problematize the sense of self. Contained within the structure of motherhood are binaries such as poison and nourishment, the experience of lack and of plentitude, power and powerlessness, and a desire to protect one's children, while at the same time wanting to be rid of them.

# Jin-me Yoon

## *Intersection 2, 1998*



Giving rise to exilic concepts around the ego, the body and geography, the child initially finds home in the mother, while the mother can lose a sense of individuality, the self displaced by the child. The female body houses another life, then banishes it into the world where the ties that bind mother and child become increasingly psychological rather than physiological. A sense of home is both created and destroyed in the process of motherhood and birth, and home takes on geographical and cultural import as the mother and child (re)gain separate senses of self.

The terms intersection, ambivalence and binary hold within them the key concept of the *encounter*. The *Intersection* works identify crossroads, wrestle with the psychological implications of ambivalence — in which opposite feelings such as love and hate coexist toward the same object or situation — and recognize that binaries, like ambivalences, are mixed notions in which positive and negative components sit side by side while remaining also in opposition. For *Intersection*, Yoon has employed the photograph as a material idiom, referencing advertising tactics, the history of photo-conceptual practices in Vancouver, as well as photography's documentary nature to illustrate the encounters found both in content as well as in formal and aesthetic communicators. Two of Yoon's recent works are large scale photographic diptychs of staged scenes on saturated colour backgrounds. The third is a video projection/installation which marks a departure in Yoon's approach to the *Intersection* project. Extending notions of maternity, these new works play with (mis)identity, inserting an element of volatility and venom into the scenes, finding humor in the tensions of potential hormonal violence.

*Intersection 3*, a deep blue diptych, focuses on the working mother, posing a conflation of traditional masculine and feminine roles. Set into a corner, as are all the *Intersection* works (crucial to the idea of convergence and cornering — the corner being both a crossroad and a trap), the cropped hair, make-upless figure in this work is essentially androgynous. The left image depicts a testily unsexed Asian figure seated on an office chair in a plaid bathrobe. The figure holds an incongruously Caucasian infant, while clutching a computer mouse — the cord trailing up between splayed legs, slippered feet resting in small puddles of milk. In the dark scene, the figure's face is dramatically illuminated as he/she stares glaze-eyed

past the child to some unfixed point. The child is grabbing the figure's robe as if wanting to feed, putting the physical and psychological sex of the figure blatantly into question. In the accompanying photograph, a figure is dressed in a dark suit, striving toward a seriousness of androgyny. The figure's arm is raised in a blurred gesture of anger and implied violence (a la Jeff Wall's angry factory manager in the 1989 *Outburst*) and from her mouth spews an angry stream of milk. Complete with severe glasses, briefcase (left on the ground in a pool of spilled milk), and hand-held slide projector changer, she epitomizes the professional mother.

In *Intersection 5*, a potent pink diptych, the intertangling of sexes is left behind and the poison of motherhood is explored. In the prone image on the left, the artist is portrayed as octopus/mother, multi-limbed, housing squirming children beneath her "little black dress." Wearing a stunned look, milk seeps out of her dress neck, oozing past her collar and bourgeois pearl necklace. The accompanying image is of two topless children seen from the back. They sit in an expansive milk puddle while one of them spits forth a fountain of milk. The spout harbours both charm and danger, ominous in that the children may have sucked life from the prone octopus figure and in spitting it up into the air are frivolously wasting it. Lying in the pool of milk are the pearls, a final sign of the consumed mother.

## Jin-me Yoon

*Intersection 2*, 1998

Moving away from billboard-esque photographic stagings which use the graphic language of the consumer world, *Intersection 4* explores the issues at hand using video, both found footage and staged performance. The silent video projection has three components which include a dominant scene of floating jellyfish, a smaller projection of the artist's head as she struggles to stay awake, and on the joining wall, a shockingly visceral projection of kimchi-making. Yoon's move to video marks a new direction, video serving as a freeing device in process, cost, methodology and conceptual result. Artist and critic Catherine Elwes writes about a freedom found in video: "...I was free to evolve a more poetic visual language embracing ambiguity, contradiction, and the still unresolved ethical question of exploitation in relation to the imaging of other — in my case the object of my maternal gaze..."

The slow rhythm of the jellyfish projection sets the tone for the piece and anchors the three new *Intersection* works. The opening and closing of these seemingly unsexed floating creatures enhances the idea of unstable boundaries and categories, while the watery scene formally picks up on the dominant colours of the two other images. Despite their androgeny, the jellyfish are sexual in movement and form. Seemingly soft and sensual, they are, in fact, potentially deadly, which works to push the binaries crucial to the parameters of the project as a whole.

Projected beneath the jellyfish is staged footage of a figure's head and shoulders fighting sleep. The figure's eyes shut, slowly reopen, tilt to one side, attempt to focus and circulate in a free-floating rhythm. In this staged exhaustion the ethnic identity of the figure becomes important as the viewer focuses on the eyes, whereby a narrative begins to unfold. This narrative could include tiredness as a result of motherhood, cultural assimilation, or from sleep deprivation caused by professional demands, whether artistic or otherwise.

The most hard-hitting of all the images in the *Intersection* project to date is the projection of hands in latex gloves making kimchi (a Korean staple — a common comfort food that is eaten as a significant condiment). There is a sharp viscosity of color and movement in the imagery, yet the rhythm of the kimchi production relates to that of the jellyfish and closing eyes. The gloved hands caress and open the layers of cabbage, coating the vegetable in a

chili paste the colour and texture of fleshy blood which, in short, recalls a birthing experience of sorts.

The *Intersection* project converges masculine and feminine domains within the content of the work while the form — the large scale photographs and video — complicate the artistic preserves of the sexes. Technologically complex works have been a male domain and Yoon works from within this masculine territory to defeat the performed femininity traditionally seen in advertising, on television, etc. Interestingly, video has become a low-tech domestic medium, present at family functions to capture both the momentous and trite details of daily life, giving new voice to the mantra that the personal is still political. In her subversion of societal sex roles, her use of technology and problematized binaries, Yoon speaks to the psychology of motherhood, to its unstable ambivalences and to the new voice found in the potent encounter.

-Melanie O'Brian  
Vancouver 2001

# Jin-me Yoon

## Intersection 2, 1998



**Yoon Makes Amazing Images of Motherhood, Milk, and Kimchi**  
Publication  
2001-05-10

[transcription]

**Yoon Makes Amazing Images of Motherhood, Milk, and Kimchi**

VISUAL ARTS  
**Jin-me Yoon**

Intersection  
At the Catriona Jeffries Gallery until May 26  
**By ROBIN LAURENCE**

A house finch is singing in the bright sun outside my window, his rosy breast pulsing in the spring sunshine. My cat sits on the windowsill inside, his tail twitching in vexation. Sun, song, and cat hairs drift over the open book in my lap, Sharyn Rohlfsen Udall's *Carr, O'Keefe Kahlo/Places of Their Own*. I'm struck by the ways in which each of these early modern artists deflected domesticity. I'm also struck by their common childlessness.

Having just returned from viewing Jin-me Yoon's exhibition *Intersection*, I can't help wondering what the impact of motherhood would have been on the creative lives of Emily, Georgia, and Frida. Certainly, motherhood has profoundly altered Yoon's art practice, not simply in her current choice of subject matter—maternity—but in the way she shapes her images. Yoon's sensibilities have clearly shifted, as has the creative power she now extends to evocation, imagination, and humour.

The formidable intellect and theoretical models familiar from Yoon's earlier bodies of work continue to inform her explorations of the theme of identity. But an intuitive engagement with the unknown has also been seamlessly knit into her art-making. There's a new ease here, a new latitude of access for the viewer, too. You don't need to be versed in Lacanian psychoanalysis, for instance, to get Yoon's images.

Upstairs at the Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Yoon is exhibiting three new works in the "Intersection" series she began in 1996, after her first child was born: two large photo diptychs of staged scenes and a three-part video projection. The title of the series seems to refer to the intersection of different and sometimes conflicting identities inscribed on the body.

Humour is much in evidence, especially in *Intersection 5*, two large C-prints whose scale and rich colours call up both advertising and the Vancouver school of photography. In the left-hand panel, a maternal figure lies supine arid staring, dead or comatose, on a bright-pink ground. Milk flows like blood from the neck of her elegant black dress and through her pearl necklace, and the legs of two small children extend below her hem, as if they were feeding under her—or inside her skin. Although the image is at first suggestive of a six-legged octopus, it is also strongly evocative of an insect being eaten alive by its ravenous young, of parasites devouring their hapless host. Milk appears in puddles, streams, and clouds in the right-hand panel, too. Here, the mother has disappeared and her young are left to play delightedly in what remains of her—milk and pearls.

In the diptych *Intersection 3*, the colliding constructions of gender, ethnicity, vocation, arid maternity are most explicit. With a background of midnight blue, the left-hand panel both mimics and critiques the Madonna and Child of European painting tradition. Yoon's contemporary Madonna (she uses herself as

Jin-me Yoon  
*Intersection 2, 1998*

her primary model) is an image of exhausted disengagement from the fair-haired baby she holds in her arms. She looks bleakly away from the child, while clutching a computer mouse whose cord is suggestively umbilical. Is she a working parent, sleep-deprived to the point of catatonia? Or is she an automaton, a cyborg whose dual roles are too demanding for a mere mortal? The metal foot of an office chair glints dully at her slippered foot, beneath which is the murky trace of a puddle of milk.

The social and cultural traditions of mother and child are further disrupted by confusions of gender and race. The sexless, plaid dressing gown, short hair, arid lack of makeup of the mother figure contribute to an unsettling sense of androgyny rather than a socially sanctioned image of femininity. And the contrast between the mother's Asian features and the baby's apparent European ancestry causes us to question our assumptions about the "natural" bond between mother and child.

In the right-hand panel, Yoon brings forward the woman's professional persona: a university lecturer with a slide changer in her hand. Again, androgyny is imaged in the woman's hair, clothing, and aggressive stance. (Like motherhood, professionalism seems to demand the desexualizing of women.) The darkness here is that of a slide lecture rather than a midnight feeding, and the puddle of milk on the floor is consigned to a spot beneath the lecturer's notebook. More obviously, milk is being violently expelled from the lecturer's mouth, spat out as if it were foul, rank, poisonous. Milk drips, splatters, gushes, and pools throughout the "Intersection" series, suggesting another opposition: toxicity versus nurture.

Projected at the back of the gallery, Yoon's silent video work again calls up toxicity in the context of the maternal body, although here the body is evoked by surrogates, by found and documentary images of nonhuman subjects. *Intersection 4* juxtaposes a head shot of Yoon, attempting to keep her eyes on the viewer as she drifts off to sleep (her eyelids slide shut and snap open, her head nods and bobs), with a dreamy sequence of jellyfish undulating past the camera and, on the adjoining wall, a close-up view of a pair of plastic-gloved hands making the Korean dish known as *kimchi*.

Yoon's bobbing head seems to speak not only to a condition of exhausted maternity but also to a state of altered awareness, while the jellyfish, transparent, membranous, insubstantial, suggest otherness or alienation. Their transparency, however, is poisonous; their gorgeous undulations, dangerous.

It's in the images of kimchi production, however, in which thick chili paste is applied to layer after layer of cabbage leaves, that viscerality, childbirth, and the interior of the maternal body are most powerfully evoked. The folds and layers of the cabbage are metaphoric of female flesh and tissue, the bulbous end of the cabbage of the crowning head of a baby, and the chili paste of blood and gore. The rhythmic application of the chili paste to the delicate cabbage leaves is almost sexual, while the gloved hands suggest something surgical, invasive, almost violent. Instead of being inscribed *on* the body, maternity and otherness are simultaneously conjured from *within* it. It's an amazing conjunction of images.

Jin-me Yoon  
Intersection 2, 1998

## Further Reading

*Across the Pacific*. Queens: Queens Museum of Art, 1993.

Cho, Charlie. "She/Me/You: The Intersections of Jin-me Yoon," *Rice Paper Magazine*. 7.1 (2001): 12-14

*(Inter)reference, Part II: (In)authentic (Re)search*. Vancouver: Vancouver Women in Focus Society, 1990.

*Jin-me Yoon: Between Departure and Arrival*. Vancouver: Western Front, 1998.

*Jin-me Yoon: Touring Home From Away*. North Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 2003.

*Social Subjects*. Toronto: YYZ Artists' Outlet, 1993.

## Exhibition History

### Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

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

## Archival History

### Acquisitions Justification

Acquisition Record  
2001

[transcription]

### Jin-me Yoon

b. Seoul, Korea, 1960  
Arrived in Vancouver in 1968

### Intersection II 1998

diptych, 2 framed cibachrome photographs  
Each 143.5 x 109.2 cm

### Promised Gift

**Donor:** The artist  
**Appraised Value:** tbd  
**Provenance:** The artist  
**Exhibited:**

Jin-me Yoon was born in Seoul, Korea in 1960 and moved to Vancouver with her family in 1968. She received a B.A. (liberal arts; psychology) from the University of British Columbia (1985); a B.F.A. from the Emily Carr College of Art and Design (1990), and an M.F.A. from Concordia University (1992). She is currently Assistant Professor at the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University. Since the early 1990s Yoon has exhibited her work in solo exhibitions at the Western Front (1997), Rhode Island School of Design (1996),



Jin-me Yoon  
*Intersection 2, 1998*

Artspeak Gallery (1996) and The Edmonton Art Gallery (1991). Her work has also been included in a number of important group exhibitions including *New Republics* (Canada House, London, England, 1999); *Crossings/Traversees* (National Gallery of Canada, 1998) and *Before the Land, Behind the Camera* (Touring — organized by the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 1996) as well as exhibitions in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, the U.S.A. and across Canada. Her major work *A Group of Sixty-Seven* was included in the Vancouver Art Gallery's 1996 exhibition *topographies: aspects of recent B.C. art* and was subsequently purchased for the Gallery's collection.

Since the early 1990s Yoon has used photography to explore such issues as cultural identity, history and memory, and how such things are constructed and maintained. Early works such as the postcard project *Souvenirs of the Self*, in which the artist photographed herself in typical (and ironic) tourist fashion in various sites in Banff, Alberta, questioned ideas of belonging and the constructed relationship between landscape and identity. In a more recent work, *Intersection* (1996) which was included in Presentation House's exhibition *Urban Fictions* and reproduced in the accompanying catalogue, Yoon expanded her visual vocabulary to explore the artist's experience of motherhood. In that diptych the artist photographed herself with her back to the camera against a blood red background: in one photograph the artist wears a suit and is "armed" with a breast pump, while in the second, she wears a dress and holds her baby in front of her so we can only see a small leg around the mother's waist. A stream of milk drips from the child's leg onto a large bag, which sits on the floor.

*Intersection II*, offered as a promised gift, continues the artist's exploration of motherhood. Like *Intersection*, this second series is comprised of two staged studio photographs. In one the artist is seen lying on the floor with her day planner in a pool of spilt milk. In the second photograph the artist's child is seen seated and crying in a pool of milk. Both tableaus are shot against a brilliant violet background.

The Vancouver Art Gallery's collection has two works by Jin-me Yoon — *Inauthentic Research* and *A Group of Sixty-Seven*. The addition of *Intersection II* would be the most recent work by Yoon in the collection and would represent a new direction that this important, local artist is exploring. The work of Jin-me Yoon relates to work in the collection by other artists who deal with issues of identity and/or feminism including Sharyn Yuen, Dana Claxton, Gu Xiong, Kati Campbell, Allyson Clay and Anne Ramsden.

Recommend acceptance.

Daina Augaitis  
Chief Curator / Associate Director

Research: Linda Sawchyn  
Assistant Curator

# Jin-me Yoon

## Intersection 2, 1998



**Press Release**  
Miscellaneous History  
2001

[transcription of excerpt]

CATRIONA JEFFRIES GALLERY

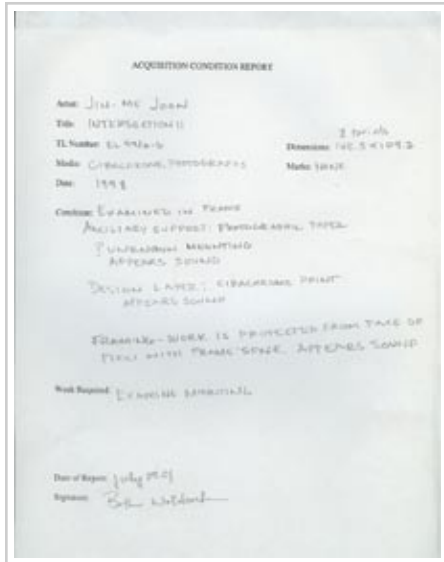
**Jin-me Yoon**  
*Intersection*  
April 20 - May 26, 2001

Jin-me Yoon's *Intersection* project is to-date comprised of four photographic diptychs which use humor to reference, uncover and subvert the prescribed relationship between female reproductive biology and the social imperatives surrounding working women. In past works the mother-child dyad has refused stasis, marginalization and isolation by subverting a socially enforced rift between mind and body, between performance of labor within the work place as well as within the family. For the exhibition at Catriona Jeffries Gallery two works will be from the past body, and two will be new.

Originally inspired by Yoon's experience as a nursing mother, the *Intersection* works discuss the social values and binary logic of western culture (mind vs. body, culture vs. nature, public vs. private...) which positions the nursing mother as a disruptive presence in society. Motherhood's complexities are discussed through the duality of the physical and the psychological, bringing up culturally taboo issues such as maternal ambivalence. Yoon's juxtaposition of motherhood's ties and the necessity of the (working) mother's mobility are referenced through the language of commercial imagery, employing the seductive slickness of advertising. The new *Intersection* works continue to examine the role of the female artist. In doing this, Yoon recalls the history of the woman artist, perhaps most strongly linked to Mary Kelly's *Post -Partum Document* and her process of incorporating documents of motherhood into her practice.

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Jin-me Yoon  
*Intersection 2, 1998*



**Acquisition Condition Report**

Conservation  
2001-07-09

[transcription]

ACQUISITION CONDITION REPORT

Artist: JIN-ME JOON

Title: INTERSECTION II

TL Number: EL 99.1 a-b  
Dimension: 2 prints 143.5 x 109.2

Media: CIBACHROME PHOTOGRAPHS  
Marks: NONE

Date: 1998

Condition:

EXAMINED IN FRAME  
AUXILIARY SUPPORT: PHOTOGRAPHIC PAPER

? UNKNOWN MOUNTING  
APPEARS SOUND

DESIGN LAYER: CIBACHROME PRINT  
APPEARS SOUND

FRAMING — WORK IS PROTECTED FROM FACE OF PLEXI WITH FRAME SPACE.  
APPEARS SOUND

Work Required: EXAMINE MOUNTING

Date of Report: July 09.01

Signature: Beth Wolchock

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