

WORDS WITHOUT PICTURES

NOVEMBER 2007–FEBRUARY 2009
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

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SOO KIM: The central themes in my recent work concern how the photographic image can alter the sense of time and space, how urban landscapes are viewed through introspective vantage points, and how slowness and singularity can be held in a picture and suggest an alternative way of looking at the world. I'm trying to look at photographic images in opposition to the velocity and ubiquity of images.

Since 2002, my practice has consisted largely of photographic landscapes and portraits where parts of the photographs have been cut away. The subtractive method allows me to introduce visual information that cannot be recorded photographically in one frame. The active removal brings slowness and fantasy to the image. The depiction of time and space is altered and one can see the removal or disruption of the image itself. The cuts are specific to each series of photographs. The photographs are made first and the idea stemming from the initial work dictates what is cut away and what is left behind. The materiality of the photograph has become increasingly important to me.

There are too many photographs and there is too much technological ease. The sense of being visually overwhelmed is perhaps a reaction to the accelerated digital world. My solution is to slow it down by using analog techniques and embracing the imperfect original as opposed to the seamless digital copy. As digital technology has made picture-making easier, less physical and more fleeting, the way we read photographs has also changed. Walter Benjamin proposed that the way that we would understand the world would be primarily through the photograph, replacing the word as the dominant means of learning. What's interesting about this now concerns not only the ubiquity and predominance of the photographic

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image, but our access to this vehicle for information at a scale and speed unimaginable to Benjamin.

Numerous websites covering a wide range of content show innumerable photographs. Seeing more and more images by more and more image-makers, from amateurs to professionals, children and adults, one question that I had was: "What impact does this have on the life of an image?" "How does an image stay memorable amongst such a vast sea of images?" My reaction to these questions was to make non-edition, unique works that attempt to slow down both the making and reading of the photographic image. I attempt to slow down the reading through the removal of the imagery, to make imperfect excisions and to build a slowness into the process of making the work that matched my intent at picturing slowness. I don't wish to be photographically illiterate. Rather, I'm interested in extending and expanding the way we read photographs.

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