

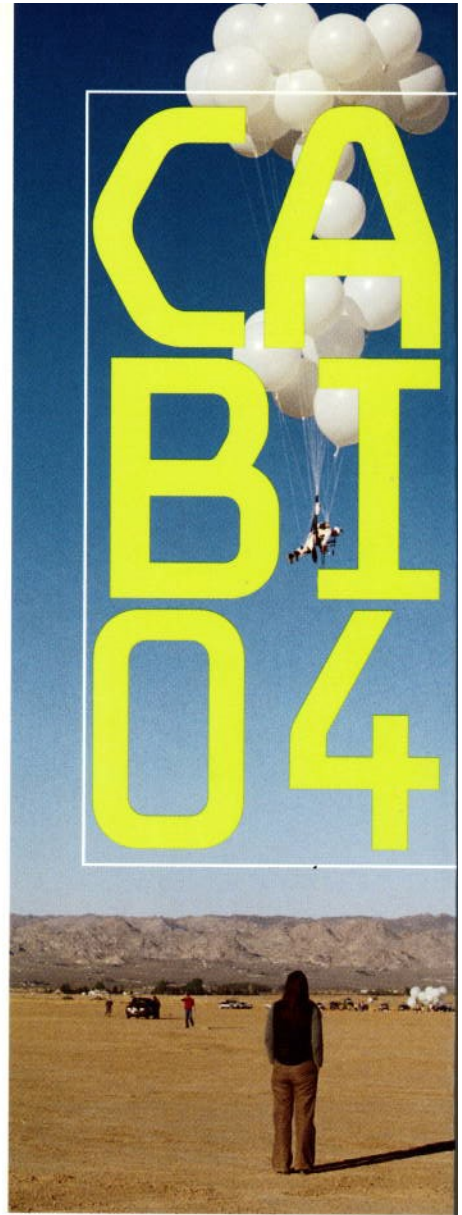


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2004 CALIFORNIA BIENNIAL



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Untitled, 2004  
Cat. 76

## 13 Soo Kim

Travel—the movement from one place to another—affects every human being. Some are invigorated by flying to a new city and finding their way through an unfamiliar network of roads, trains, and buses. Others find the turmoil of travel centers, such as airports and train stations, disconcerting and repellent. Los Angeles-based photographer Soo Kim has taken on the universal experience of discovering the unfamiliar as the subject of her art.

When Kim travels, she takes her camera with her and photographs the people and places around her. One series of photographs from 2001 captured the undersides of planes during takeoff, showing us an image of flight that we seldom witness. We realize that planes are tarnished and rusted in some places but huge and impressive overall. Moreover, the images allow us to study a moment that would otherwise be fleeting, giving us multiple chances to consider a moving object and to remember our emotions when witnessing such movement.

In the body of work that followed this one, she continued her focus on the photograph's ability to freeze a passing moment. By drawing on and cutting into the photographs to create fantastical figures, she made each print unique, prolonging the instant when the shutter clicks and representing the myriad of visions that the mind and the camera can see.

The writings of Gilles Deleuze have influenced Kim's thinking and her photography. In one of his famous texts about film, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983), Deleuze discusses "any-place whatever," sites and situations that are simultaneously one place and also another. His theory posits a mental location that does not possess the characteristics of a single place, but has multiple and conflicting

aspects. During periods of dislocation or relocation, one can easily observe experiences such as this. And for Kim—who was born in Korea, relocated to California when she was six, and moved frequently as a child—these multilayered perceptions reflect her understanding of the world.

Perhaps because of that understanding, Kim's pictures often reveal focused and concentrated images: a few strands of hair next to a plane window, the reflection of a tartan shirt on a train window. She subtly captures the ins and outs, the visceral and the visual, of travel and transition. Further exploring the emotional experiences inherent in travel, in 2001 Kim produced a series in which she photographed individuals at airports. In a loose reference to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, each of her subjects holds a card with a name of a person he or she chose. The names chosen—including Yoko Ono, Raymond Carver, and Paul Thek—suggest anticipation, admiration, complacency, and boredom with the inertia of quotidian life. Whereas the signs function as synecdoches of philosophical beliefs, Kim's photographs picture a host of human emotions—general and personal, universal and intimate.

*Jane Simon*



| *Air (Copenhagen I), 2000*

*North East, 2001*



Atlan11c, 2001

Mich,101 WorthIngtDnIR,1ymond Carver, 2001