

Artist Yoon Cho explores identities in solo show

Yoon Cho, a newcomer to Austin but not to the art world, will display her "Nothing Lasts Forever" exhibit that starts today and ends May 10. Named as one of Austin's "20 To Watch" by the Austin Museum of Art, Cho will display her work at the Women & Their Work Art Space.

Women & Their Work is a nonprofit organization founded in 1978, occupying its current space since May 1995. The gallery aims to exhibit the contemporary art of women living and working in Texas. Until Cho arrived in Austin, she had never seen another gallery exclusively catering to women in the arts.

"They talk about how women being minorities and not getting a chance to show at big shows, so this is really a great chance to put my work out there and show at a place that supports the female artist," she said. "This is the largest solo show that I've ever had. It will be a great introduction to Austin."

Her digital photography and video exhibits focus on the process of making identities. Cho has moved several times throughout her life, and every time she changed locations, she was forced to adapt to her new surroundings.

Cho moved to Austin four years ago after graduating from the Rhode Island School of Design and working as a graphic designer in New York. Her background in graphic design explains how many of her photographs incorporate metaphysical elements, such as X-rays and graphics of her own heartbeat.

The Nuclear Family series shows how Yoon and her husband, Ron, handled the pressures of living in a suburban neighborhood where it seemed that babies were everywhere.

"When we moved to the suburbs people kept asking us, 'When are you gonna have

a baby?'" Cho said. "There were tons of babies in the suburbs and in my neighborhood."

The photographs show two people building their new identity in the suburbs, but with an inserted baby silhouette to add conflict to this process.

The first shot in the series, Car Washing, only inserts the baby by itself. By the last photograph of the series, Baby Room, the imaginary baby and its belongings have taken over an entire room in the couple's home.

In the Texas Self-Portrait series, photos of Yoon surrounded by Texas native plants, her house and the beach are displayed as 70" x 32" images, slightly smaller than Cho's 5-foot-3-inch frame. Additionally, digital images are combined with the photographs, like in Maps, where the layout of Cho's neighborhood is combined with the photo of Yoon in front of her new house in Austin.

"It's a lot more personal. For Nuclear Family, it could be anyone who is going through that similar phase. It could be anyone. That's part of the reason that I never directly show my face," Cho said. "But, [the self-portrait series] has a direct story."

Cho's exhibit will feature three photo exhibits — the aforementioned Texas Self-Portrait series and the Nuclear Family series, as well as the Blurring series. Keeping with the theme of the process of forming identities, the Blurring series features photographs of people with blurred faces to show how one identity is lost when another is created.

Nothing Lasts Forever also includes four video projects: Cell, Persona, Blurring Performers and Backyard Project. The latter two projects are extensions of the Blurring series and the Nuclear Family series, respectively.

— Suzanne Hanshaw



photos courtesy of Yoon Cho

Yoon Cho's Nothing Lasts Forever exhibit opens tonight from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Women & Their Work Art Space, 1710 Lavaca St. Admission is free and open to the public.