

Christine Sun Kim

Finish Forever

December 15, 2018 - January 19, 2019

Ghebaly Gallery is pleased to present *Finish Forever*, an exhibition by the acclaimed multidisciplinary artist **Christine Sun Kim**. Her first solo exhibition in Los Angeles brings together recent videos and drawings that use American Sign Language (ASL), musical notation, and closed captioning in films and television as vehicles to deconstruct perceived ideas of sound and language and interrogate how linguistic authority influences perception.

The exhibition opens with a new diagrammatic mural, *Finish Forever* (2018). The mural depicts an ASL concept of Kim's coinage that cannot be precisely translated into English. The mural shows Kim's ASL notation for the word "finish" stacked five times vertically and elongated across a thirty five foot wall. When signing, to multiply this word—both hands flashing away from the body—is to make it more urgent and increasingly past tense, such that "finish finish finish" may signify "It was done a long, long time ago" or "I know, know, stop already!" Quintupled, the sign becomes abstract and poetic, translated by Kim as the concept *Finish Forever*, "to be done, done, done, done and to not stop being done."

Finish Forever intertwines a number of crucial threads that run throughout Kim's work and throughout the exhibition. Translation is a key notion, and Kim's work frequently represents or makes commentary on translations between the Deaf community and the hearing world, between ASL and English, and between musical notation and psychological or emotional expression. The mural also reflects a larger celebration of the uniquely complex structure of American Sign Language, a language that makes use of simultaneous gesture, posture and facial expression for highly nuanced communication.

These are concepts that surface with humor and wit in *Classified Digits* (2016), a video executed by Kim and her longtime collaborator, Thomas Mader, an ASL learner. Standing closely front-to-back, the pair use each other's arms and faces to demonstrate the nuanced shading that a signer can impute to each sign. The viewer sees Mader's arms and Kim's face and body as they work together to describe complicated social interactions like walking by an ex or trying to join a group conversation. Another video work in the exhibition, a four channel piece called *Close Readings* (2016), also relies on collaboration. Kim invited four Deaf and hard of hearing friends to provide their own expanded captioning to a series of film clips. Augmenting, undermining, and sometimes deranging the existing captions, the hijacked text underscores both the power and the limitations of televisual captioning.

The exhibition also features two series of drawings, each of which deploys musical notation toward expansive ends. With the series *The Sound Of* (2016), Kim uses the symbols *f* and *p*, notation for *forte* (to play relatively louder) and *piano* (to play relatively softer) on musical scores. Depicting an ambiguous time period, perhaps a day or perhaps a moment, each

drawing conveys the fluctuating loudness and quietness of a specific emotion or mental state, like “anticipation” or “being spaced out.” Produced in the wake of Donald Trump’s election, the *Sound Of* drawings give form to political uncertainty. And in the drawings of *Just Music* (2016), short musical cues that have appeared in closed captions of movies or television, such as “epic ominous music” or “very fast rap song,” float over corresponding musical notes of Kim’s imagining united by swooping legato marks. Presented without musical staves or time signatures, the notes reflect an expressive ambiguity inherent in the terse text captions.

Christine Sun Kim (b. 1980, Orange County, California) received a Master of Fine Arts in Music/Sound from Bard College in 2013. She has exhibited and performed internationally, including at the Whitney Museum, New York (2018); Art Institute of Chicago (2018); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2017); De Appel Arts Center, Amsterdam (2017); Rubin Museum of Art, New York (2017); Berlin Biennale (2016); Shanghai Biennale (2016); Sound Live Tokyo (2015, 2013); MoMA PS1, New York (2015) and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013). Kim was awarded a MIT Media Lab Fellowship and a TED Senior Fellowship and has presented at numerous conferences and symposia. Her work has been the subject of numerous articles including in *Vanity Fair UK*, *Art in America*, *DIS Magazine*, *Artforum*, *The Guardian*, *The Wire*, *Rhizome*, *VICE*, the *New York Times*, and *ArtAsiaPacific*. She lives and works in Berlin.