ULRICH

JEAN SHIN HIDE

AUGUST 26 TO OCTOBER 3, 2004

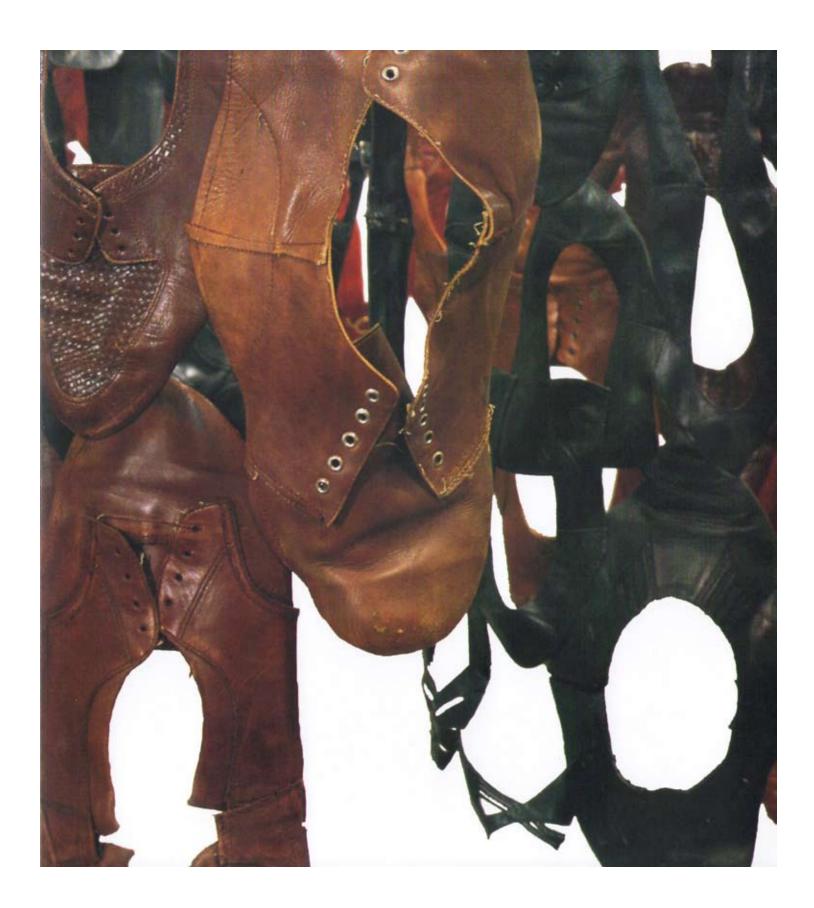
OPENING RECEPTION

5 TO 7 PM THURSDAY AUGUST 26, WITH A GALLERY TALK BY THE ARTIST AT 6 PM

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



Hide (back), 2004, cut leather and suede (shoes), thread and shoelaces, dimensions variable



Jean Shin transforms the detritus of our lives into sculptural objects and monumental installations of breathtaking wonder and beauty. Cast-off items that we no longer want, need, use, or love are her prized materials. Shin is somewhat of a modern-day gleaner, scavenging the streets and sidewalks of New York in search of usable traces of humanity. Empty wine bottles, "loser" lotto tickets, broken umbrellas, worn out shoes, and out-of-fashion clothes are just some of the materials she has given new life to through her art. One might say that Shin has something of a Midas touch—she magically turns heaps of the mundane objects of everyday existence into conceptually profound and visually spectacular piles of gold.

One of Shin's latest reclamation projects is Hide, an installation comprised of hundreds of worn leather shoes that Wandering through *Hide*, we begin to notice scale shifts between the various sizes of coupled shoes, how the pairs relate to our individual bodies, and how our bodies connect with the enveloping environment. This body/ architecture dynamic is a hallmark of Shin's work and can be seen in such previous works as 20/20 (2003), *Umbrellas Stripped Bare* (2001), and *Alterations* (1999). And like all architecture, *Hide* embodies a human history: the accumulation of these shoes is like a chance gathering of strangers or the memories of an anonymous crowd. We cannot help but imagine the individuals who participated in the "building" of the work. What are the life stories that go untold in each pair of shoes?

While many associations reveal themselves in the structure of Hide, there are also many meanings latent in the

work's title. Most obvious is Shin's reference to the material from which the work is made: leather: the tanned hides of animals, Shin further emphasizes the allusion to tanned hide by suspending her hanging leather constructions to the ceiling with shoe laces-



Alterations, 1999/2001, fabric (pant scraps) and wax, dimensions variable, approximately 12x22x12 feet

she has laboriously deconstructed, paired, and then stitched together to form hanging sheets of rich, undulating color. With their soles removed and flattened of their three dimensionality, the shoes no longer do what they were originally designed to do—cover and protect our feet. Divorced from their function and structure, the shoes have been reduced to their material essence. However, these unusual abstract forms serve an important aesthetic function and conceptual potential in Shin's installation: the perforated leather rings provide views through what would be an otherwise opaque curtain. Voids and openings are critical components of Hide, as the installation is as much about negative space as it is about positive space, as much about protection as about exposure.

a technique similar to how animal skins are hung during the process of stretching and drying to make leather. Although Hide is primarily composed of cattle hide (the most common type of leather used to make shoes), it also poignantly speaks of human skin. Each of the hanging elements in the installation is organized predominantly by gender, type, and color (women's white and beige shoes, red pumps, blue, grey and black flats; men's brown loafers and black dress shoes). These fashionable colors of shoes, with their wide range of decoration and design, suggest our extremely diverse human population; there are multiple variations in hue and shade within these groups. Hide serves as a microcosm of humanity. It is significant to note that the "reverse" side of Hide (the "inside"

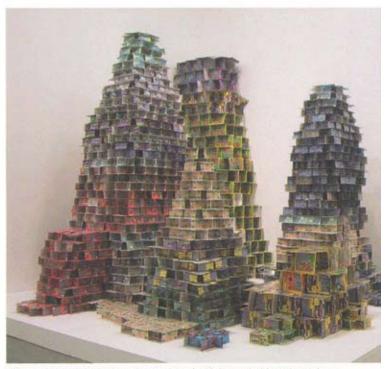
of our shoes—the layer closest to our feet) is, for the most part, the natural, non-dyed shade of leather—suggesting our human flesh, the untreated skin that unites us all.

The allusions Shin makes with Hide take on added dimension when understood in terms of the artist's own personal history. Born in Korea and raised in the United States, Shin has consistently but subtly referenced the immigrant experience throughout her body of work, from the materials she chooses, to her methods and techniques of creation, to the titles she applies. For example, in Alterations (1999), a colorful city-scape constructed from hundreds of cylindrical forms of excess fabric that result from shortening pants and blue jeans, she ingeniously commented on the predicament of failing to measure up to the American fashion industry's standard size (a dilemma for many, but particularly for those of Asian descent). At the same time, the cast-off cuffs may refer to a group of populations—predominantly Asian immigrants—who make up a large portion of the fashion industry's workforce, including sweat-shop seamstresses, tailors, and dry cleaners. They are among the hundreds of thousands of invisible laborers who come to American cities in search of a better life. What many encounter is not utopia but rather a metropolis of lost hope and broken dreams—an urban landscape to which Shin gave concrete form in her astonishing Chance City (2001), a precariously-balanced house of cards seemingly on the verge of collapse built with discarded scratch-and-win lotto tickets.

The all too invisible communities that are the foundation of Alterations and Chance City may also be the subject of Hide. The title, a word meaning "to conceal" or "to put out of sight," questions what is seen and unseen, thereby implicitly suggesting how immigrants labor within our society exist without much notice. But by referring to these less visible groups, Shin asks us to acknowledge their presence and contributions. This conceptual framework finds a physical counterpart in the architectural structure of Hide itself: the leather shoe constructions do not provide cover or protection

and instead reveal and expose their surroundings through their openings and voids. With her signature touch of humor, Shin involves us in a clever word play—we cannot hide within Hide,

In addition to its subtle social content, Shin's work reverberates with a palpable sense of optimism—that value can be found just about anywhere, that we only have to be willing to take time to notice and discover the



Chance City, 2001/2002, \$17,119 worth of discarded lottery tickets, dimensions variable, approximately 8x8x7 feet

unfathomable beauty that lies teeming beneath life's fragile surface. Indeed, Hide celebrates the diversity of our differences, revealing what lies literally on the other side of the fashions that distinguish and separate us from others. And perhaps even more importantly, Shin's Hide reminds us of the beauty that unites all of us.

Elizabeth Dunbar Curator, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art



JEAN SHIN

Born 1971, Seoul, South Korea; lives and works in Brooklyn, New York

Education

1999 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture

1996 M.S. in Theory,

Criticism & History of Art, Design & Architecture, Pratt Institute

1994 B.F.A. in Painting,

Pratt Institute

Solo Exhibitions

2004 Projects 81: Jean Shin,

Museum of Modern Art,

New York

Jean Shin, Frederieke Taylor

Gallery, New York

2003 Penumbra, Socrates

Sculpture Park, Long Island

City, New York

1999 444, Apex Art, New York

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OPEN 11 A.M. TO 5 P.M. TUESDAY-FRIDAY AND 1-5 P.M. SATURDAY AND SUNDAY; CLOSED MONDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.









This program is presented in part by the Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency, and by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.



Selected Group Exhibitions

2004 Counter Culture, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York

Open House: Working in Brooklyn, The Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York

Up and Coming: Jean Shin & Julianne Swartz, ARCO International, Madrid, Spain

2003 Custom Fit, Smack Mellon
Gallery, New York
Bits 'n Pieces, DUMBO Arts
Center, New York
Supranatural, Mixed Greens
Gallery, New York
Reconfiguring Space:
Blueprints for Art in General,
Art in General, New York
Tradeshow: Currents in
New Asian American Art,
CR2 Gallery, Shanghai, China
The Invented World, Seoul

Arts Center, Seoul, Korea

Nature of the Beast, Caren
Golden Fine Art, New York

Multitude, Artists Space,
New York

Mixed Description, Barbara
Davis Gallery, Houston

Barometer, Cynthia Broan
Gallery, New York

Real Interface, space imA,

Seoul, Korea

2001 Material Whirled, Art in
General, New York

Microwave, Three, 123 Watts
Gallery, New York

15 Asian American Artists,
University Art Gallery, State
University of New York,
Stony Brook, New York

Six Sculptors, Long Island
University, Brooklyn

Campus, New York