In the frieze the poignancy of Shin's title for the work—*Crown*—is made clearer. Whereas a crown is both the emblem of, and a metonym for, royal power, the photographs depict many instances of the subjugation of animals and people. Around the necks and legs of dogs, elephants, prisoners, or slaves, the chain is the most obvious indication of a condition of captivity and lack of freedom. But chains in S&M bondage, or in fashion advertisements or runway shows, indicate another, voluntary aspect to their use—a touch of tough that evokes biker gang's chains worn as potential weapons. Large, decorative chains can also be an ostentatious display of wealth: "bling."

To return to Lakoff and Turner's idea of the great chain metaphor, in Shin's *Crown* the chains themselves, and the photographic mural of a continuous span of chain, interconnect seemingly incompatible elements of life: the corroded and the newly minted, leisure and labor, luxury and misfortune. Such are the uses and fates of these links of metal, always mixed in their connotations. In the "Worried Man Blues," the shackles the singer wakes up wearing with are each *individually engraved* with an initial of his name, a kind of extravagance that is as ominous as it is fateful (like the singer's enigmatic claim that "I'm worried now, but I won't be worried long"). As Pete Seeger remarked of this tune, its shifts between disenfranchisement and power, and enchainment and ennoblement, are also part of a great chain of being, one we as humans author collectively about who and what deserves freedom. As in Shin's work, we move from crown to chain, and back again.

> These old songs are never going to die out. This song is the whole human race. I crossed the river, I fell fast asleep, I woke up with shackles on my feet. That's everybody's history. Across the ocean we thought we solved all of our problems. You have that revolution. You get that home. You get that job. You think you solved all of your problems. You crossed that river and found you got shackles on your feet. And who's the judge? Is it some old guy, 74 years old, with black robes? It might be the young judging the old, or the poor judging the rich. But no matter what mistakes we ever made, still got a last verse that holds out some hope:
>
> I looked down the track, just as far as I could see.
> I looked down the track, just as far as I could see.
> A little bitty hand, was waving after me.[3]

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[1] Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 172.
[2] Ibid. 161.
[3] Pete Seeger on *The Johnny Cash Show*, March 4,1970.

# LINKS
## Jean Shin

Jean Shin's exhibition *Links* includes a site-specific installation of chains and a large photomontage, which explore the inherent contradictions of chains' historical and contemporary use. Varying from industrial to artisanal, the chain at one scale is a precious object, a delicate and refined accessory of fashion. Change the material and the scale, and the joined links become heavy and take on the attributes of confinement, burden, and restraint. The project aims to engage these conflicts by incorporating both the decorative and the ominous qualities of the material. A vast, diverse assortment of metal chains have been collected and sourced from the Bethel community and the public, connecting a multitude of personal experiences with collective concerns. The chains will be suspended in space using the four pillars of the Olson Gallery.

BETHEL UNIVERSITY
1871

# CROWN TO CHAIN, AND BACK AGAIN

EVA DÍAZ

It takes a worried man to sing a
worried song,
It takes a worried man to sing a
worried song,
I'm worried now, but I won't be
worried long.

Went across the river, I lay down
to sleep,
Went across the river, I lay down
to sleep,
When I woke up, had shackles on
my feet.

Twenty-nine links of chain all around
my legs,
Twenty-nine links of chain all around
my legs,
And on each link, an initial of my
name.

I asked the judge, what might be
my fine,
I asked the judge, what might be
my fine,
Twenty-one years on the R.C.
Mountain Line.

It takes a worried man to sing a
worried song,
It takes a worried man to sing a
worried song,
I'm worried now, but I won't be
worried long.

—Traditional, first recorded as "Worried Man Blues" by the Carter Family, 1930

It's the substance of a nightmare, to awake in chains. It's also the stuff of a lot American history: The transport of convicts to the colonies. The slave trade and the treatment of bodies as chattel. Impressment and the shanghaiing of sailors. Chain gangs.

For most people today, acts of enchainment remain safely in the realm of metaphor. One might say, "I'm chained to my work," or "he's the old ball and chain," or "stop yanking my chain." Frequent too are figures of speech related to "links" in a chain. We connect things or people by "linking" them up; information on the web is connected by "hyperlinks." We repeat the proverb, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link."

In linguistics and paremiology (the study of proverbs and proverbial expressions), the function of expressions such as these idioms can itself be understood using a concept George Lakoff and Mark Turner have termed the "great chain metaphor." In their 1989 book *More than Cool Reason*, Lakoff and Turner posit that abstract reasoning is pervaded by metaphorical mappings and proverbial language. Much of this kind of figurative speech makes connections between animals and inanimate objects, on the one hand, and the plight of humans, on the other. Derived from the platonic idea of a "great chain of being" in which a hierarchical structure of life is posited as the "natural" order, descending from God to angels to kings to men to animals to plants and finally to mineral particles, Lakoff and Turner's great chain metaphor attempts to understand why animals and inanimate objects are used figuratively with such frequency, and how we come to understand the meanings of these proverbial uses. In humanity's relentless anthropocentrism, the great chain metaphor, according to Lakoff and Turner, "allows us to comprehend general human character traits in terms of well-understood nonhuman attributes; and conversely, it allows us to comprehend less well-understood aspects of the nature of animals and objects in terms of better-understood human characteristics."[1] In Lakoff and Turner's sense a chain not only binds and links unrelated things and concepts when used as a figurative concept, it also functions as a meta-metaphor, providing "instructions for understanding the nature of our being, the nature of people and situations we encounter, and our role in the universe."[2]

* * *

Jean Shin's installation *Crown* (2015) is fashioned from three main components. In the center of the gallery numerous metal chains are strung from the four columns of the gallery. Thick and thin, rusty and untarnished, industrial and decorative, the dozens of chains dangle in a dense weave of interconnected threads that at times appears merely a random tangle. Yet in their mass the strands create the shape of a crown, each suspended section poised like a finial on a tiara. The current iteration of *Crown* grows out of a previous installation created for the BRIC Biennial in 2014 in which Shin used chains sourced by way of the Brooklyn gallery's membership network. Enlarging the project as it travels, Shin has solicited donations of chains from the Bethel University community, adapting the piece to the architecture of the Olson Gallery.

In the case of the expanded Bethel version of *Crown*, Shin has developed a second element of the work's participatory nature. Ringing the gallery walls is a frieze composed of 43 photographs portraying chains. Collaged from hundreds of images Shin sourced with help from Bethel University art history and art practice students, the collaged images have been arranged and cropped so it appears that a single chain winds through the entire group. To maintain the illusion of an unbroken string of links snaking through all the images, each photograph's dimension varies according to size of the chain it depicts and the proximity of the chain as it is represented in the photograph. For example, a photograph of a massive anchoring chain, taken from the perspective of the water near the hull of a giant ship, is printed as a narrow vertical column, following the links as they recede upward. Nearby, an image of a chain connected to a padlock, seen from quite close up, is printed at a diminutive postcard-size scale. The interconnecting chain recedes to a tiny filament in some images, returning as giant hunks of metal in other parts of the work, but in all its twists and turns through space it is represented in reflective mylar material that creates a continuous surface throughout the many photographs. A third element in the gallery is the complete archive of the images submitted to Shin, displayed on a monitor, accompanied by the sound of chains rattling (audio that was recorded at the time that the central gallery's sculpture was being installed).

Images of nautical chains begin the panel of images, the enormous links tethering seafaring vessels. The images transition to chains that demarcate space; in one case, an elevated seaside promenade is shown cordoned off from the sandy beach below. As the frieze continues, the context of the chains in the images changes, depicting those used in carting and trucking, as well as those padlocking gates and securing spaces. Next come chains fettering animals, followed by those binding people. The depictions of shackled people transitions to images of precious chains worn by royals in historical paintings, and models adorned with chains in contemporary fashion advertisements.