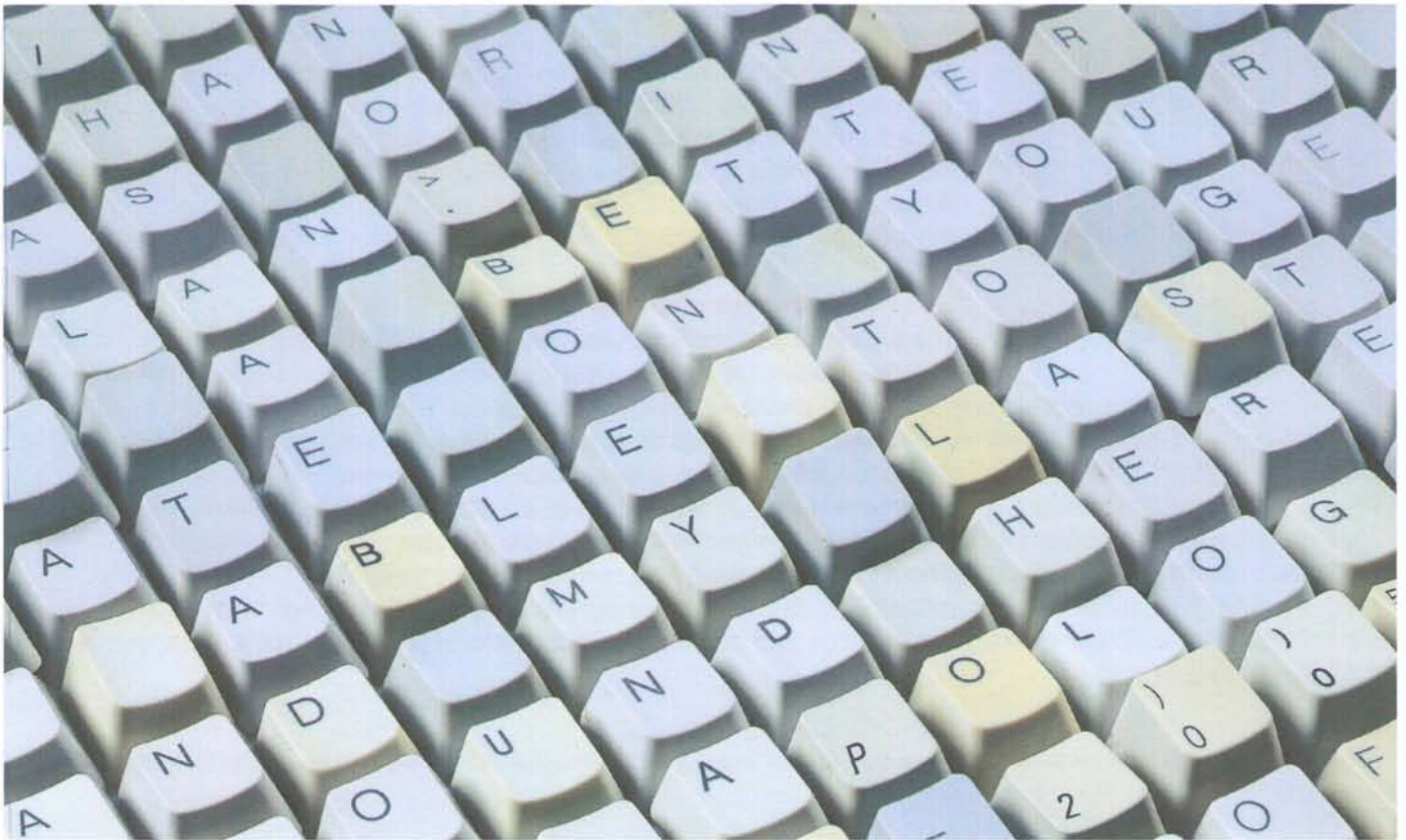


The Fabric Workshop and Museum presents

## Jean Shin: **TEXTile**

7 October–18 November 2006

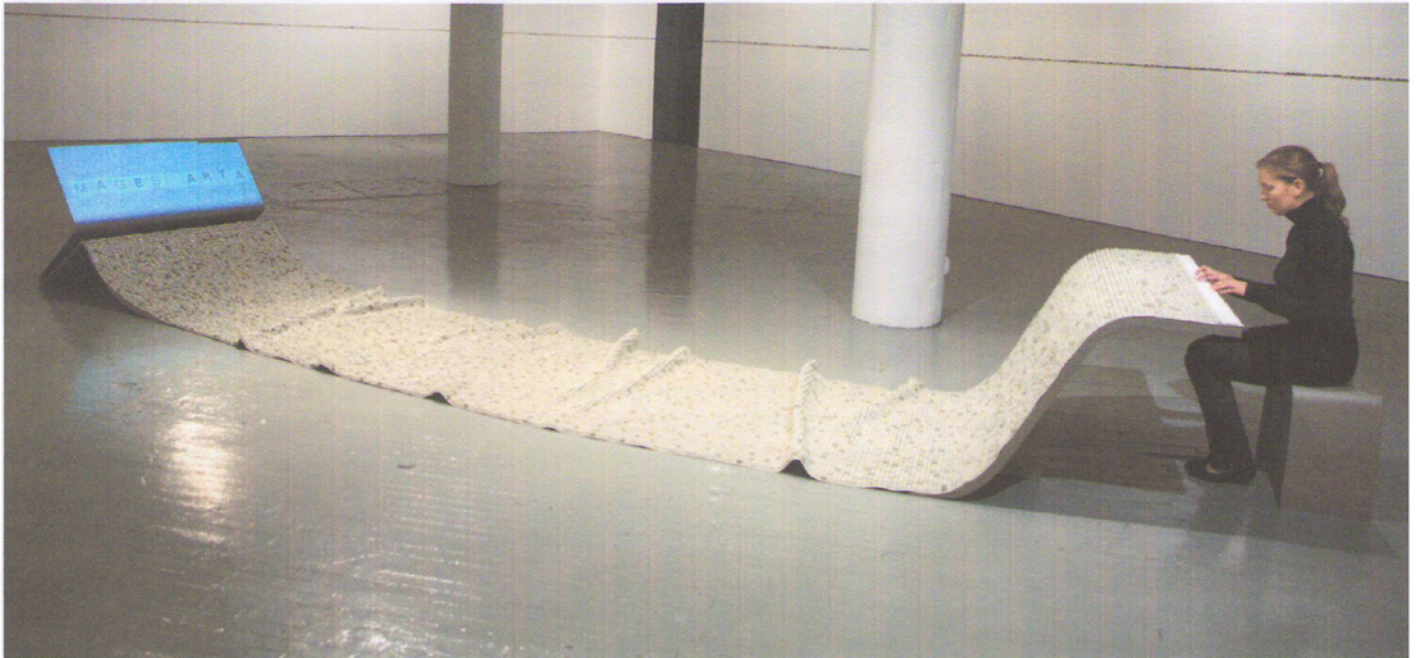


Jean Shin is known for transforming the mundane into poetic meditations on materiality. Discarded objects—from everyday life-used clothes, broken umbrellas, worn-out shoes, old eyeglasses—are amassed, deconstructed, and reassembled by Shin through a labor-intensive process that hints to the objects' former function. What remains is a visually compelling and psychologically powerful transformation of life's leftovers.

Shin approached her residency at The Fabric Workshop and Museum with the idea of continuing her investigations in exploring the new potential of objects, particularly those with an intimate relationship to the body and the senses – such as eyeglasses. Over the course of her three year residency, Shin came to settle upon computer keys as her material. For Shin, the keys have an intimacy and immediacy to the body through touch. Simultaneously, the act of typing is an extension of the mind as each gesture's intent is the construction of language for communication.

Using the key caps as a departure point, Shin worked with FWM project coordinators to develop an interactive "fabric" using thousands of discarded computer keyboard keys embedded in a continuous textile approximately 25 feet in length. The embedded key text—read left to right—is a line-by-line transcript of the e-mail correspondence between Shin and the project staff, Coordinator Abigail Lutz and Construction Technician/ Studio Assistant Andrea Landau. In this way, the custom made keyboard documents the process of its own creation during the artist's residency.

Whether it's eyeglasses, umbrellas or computer keys, by repeating a single, mass-produced object hundreds or even thousands of times, Shin creates homogeneous, monumental structures that paradoxically emphasize the individuality and variation of the materials used. Shin's visually stunning interactive work, *TEXTile*, consists



of 22,528 recycled computer keycaps and 192 custom made keycaps. To make the piece, FWM harvested over 1,000 recycled computer keyboards from local Recycling Centers in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas. From a wide variety of over fifty types of computer key caps that are manufactured, FWM staff identified three specific types of keycaps that would attach to the fabric matrix which is a custom laser cut, high performance laminate fabric with Spectra fibers. This material, chosen from dozens of samples, was selected for its durability to withstand laser cutting without tearing and ability to support the weight of the keys while remaining flexible.

The laborious process of transcribing the e-mail correspondence key-by-key onto the fabric matrix was simplified by using a simple, but extensive, organizational system to arrange all the letters, numbers, punctuation, and command keys. The key-embedded cloth is supported by an aluminum armature that suspends the cloth in a desk-like position where the first three rows of embedded keys are wired to operate like a working computer keyboard. The end of the armature holds the cloth upright at the end, sans keys, so that it serves as a projection screen.

FWM and the artist worked with Moey Inc., a renowned interactive technology research and development company to make the first three rows of the textile "active." Viewers are invited to participate in the installation by typing on these active keys. Their text instantaneously appears on the projection at the end of the cloth, creating a virtual continuation of the conversation within the key-embedded cloth. Viewers will find that the keyboard has been rearranged from the traditional QWERTY layout and that they have to search for individual letters in order to construct their text. QWERTY is the most common modern-day keyboard layout on English language computer and typewriter keyboards. It takes its name from the first six letters seen in the keyboard's top first row of letters and was originally designed for the typewriter in 1868. Even here, Shin makes us recognize how our everyday gestures are informed by what many in the technological field consider an outmoded form of technology.

In addition to the room-sized interactive sculpture, the exhibition includes a site-specific installation of command keys along the walls of the gallery as well as a dual video projection.

Consisting of more than 2,000 command keys, *Key Promises* is installed at eyelevel and wraps 192 linear feet of the gallery walls. The otherwise banal computer command keys are transformed by Shin into a playful concrete poem. The text both metaphorically constructs and follows the viewer's path through the architecture of the gallery from the entrance to the exit: Esc, Pause/Break, Shift, Insert, Enter, Clear, Space, Insert, Control, Alt, Option, Help, End, Return, Home.

To create *Duet*, Shin worked with project coordinators and Matt Suib, FWM Video Coordinator and Exhibitions Assistant, to develop a video in which two keyboards appear to play a duet of virtual correspondence the rhythm of which is set by the distinctive sounds of tapping on a computer keyboard. Like the keys on a player piano, the computer keys endlessly rise and fall in a video loop like pistons.

In each of the works that comprise the exhibition, computer keys—ordinary objects that most of us touch every day as a means of communication between co-workers, friends, family around the corner or across the globe—are transformed and re-contextualized by the act of amassing and isolating them from their original function. These works are particularly resonant at a moment when advances in technology have made e-mail today's most prevalent mode of communication, one that has had vast repercussions on contemporary life. Shin has distilled this object that allows us to communicate globally down and reconfigured it in a way that calls attention to the physicality of the act of typing, emphasizing the relationship of the body to language. In this way, Shin encourages us to contemplate the tactile aspects of an everyday act, the pervasiveness of technology, and the role it plays in shaping contemporary society.

— Lorie Mertes, *Director*

#### EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

##### Jean Shin

In collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia

*TEXTile* 2006

22,528 recycled computer keycaps and 192 custom keycaps, high performance laminate fabric with Spectra fibers, customized active keyboard and interactive software, video projection, and painted aluminum armatures

31 ½ x 48 x 245 inches

##### Jean Shin

In collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia

*Key Promises* 2006

2,105 computer command keycaps: 230 Esc, 224 Pause/Break, 184 Shift, 115 Insert, 84 Enter, 9 Clear, 73 Space, 86 Insert, 247 Control, 161 Alt, 45 Option, 10 Help, 135 End, 60 Return, 442 Home

2328 linear inches

##### Jean Shin

In collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia

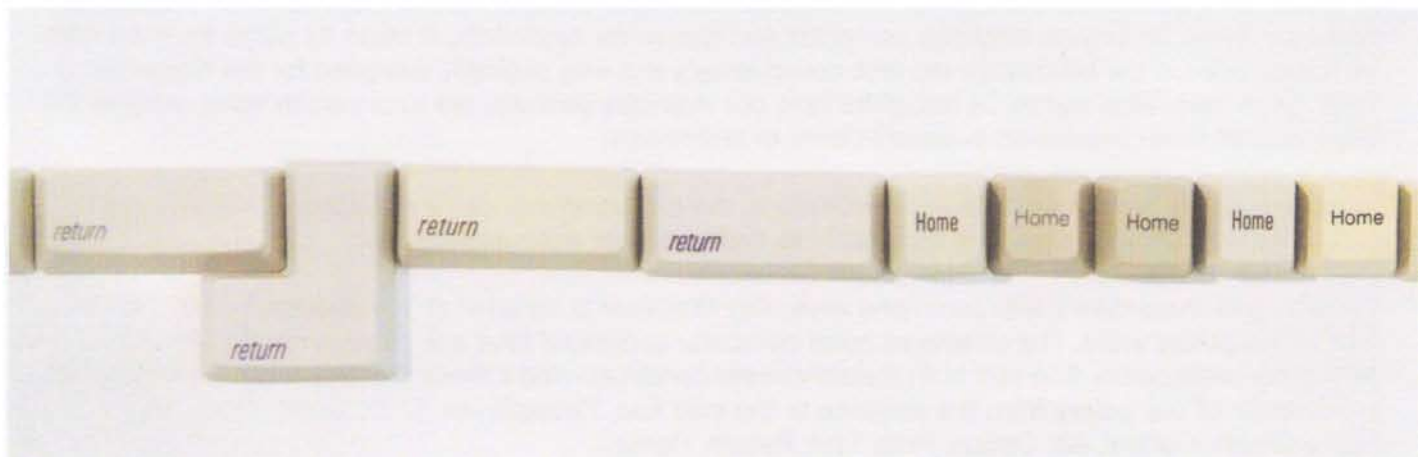
*Duet* 2006

Two channel video installation, two synchronized DVD's with audio

Dimensions Variable

Edition of 5 + 1 AP

*All works courtesy of the artist and Frederieke Taylor Gallery, New York*





#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Seoul, South Korea in 1971, Jean Shin currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She received a BFA in Painting and an MS in Theory, Criticism and History of Art, Design and Architecture from Pratt Institute, New York. She recently participated in the Projects series at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2004); and has had solo exhibitions at Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris (2005); Frederieke Taylor Gallery in New York (2004); and Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City (2003). She received a Fellowship Award in Sculpture from the New York Foundation of the Arts in 2003 and The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Art Award in 2001. Her work is featured this fall at Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington, and PKM Gallery in Beijing as well as in the exhibition *One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now* at the Asia Society and Museum in New York, on view through December 2006.

#### ABOUT THE FABRIC WORKSHOP AND MUSEUM

The Fabric Workshop and Museum is the only museum of its kind, offering internationally renowned artists the resources to create new work in experimental materials. Artists come from all media—including sculpture, installation, video, painting, ceramics, and architecture—and use FWM's facilities and technical expertise to create works of art that they could not create on their own. Research, construction, and fabrication occur on-site in studios that are open to the public, providing visitors with the opportunity to see works of art from conception to completion. FWM's permanent collections include not only completed works of art, but also material research, samples, prototypes, and photography and video of artists making and speaking about their work. Access to the creative process provides visitors with a point of entry into understanding challenging works of contemporary art. All FWM exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public Monday – Friday (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), Saturday (noon to 4 p.m.).

#### IMAGE CAPTIONS

On cover: *TEXTile* 2006 (detail) Inside left: Installation view at FWM Inside right: *Key Promises* 2006 (detail) Back cover: Jean Shin in FWM studios  
Photos: Aaron Igler



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#### Galleries, Studio and Museum Shop Hours

Monday–Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Saturday, noon to 4:00 p.m.  
Group tours by appointment

The programs of The Fabric Workshop and Museum are supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts; The Judith Rothschild Foundation; Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency; National Endowment for the Arts; Miller-Plummer Foundation; LLWW Foundation; U. S. Institute of Museum and Library Services; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Nimoy Foundation; The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro; Independence Foundation; The Philadelphia Cultural Fund; PNC Foundation; E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; Claneil Foundation; Stockton Rush Bartol Foundation; Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation; Pennsylvania Humanities Council, the state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities; The Barra Foundation; Louis N. Cassett Foundation; Quaker Chemical Foundation; and the Board of Directors and members of The Fabric Workshop and Museum.

