Haegue Yang has done a lot of folding and unfolding in the past few years. During the summer of 2006, for “So-Dong 30,” her first solo exhibition in her native Korea, Yang carefully positioned origami objects resembling complex molecular structures, complemented by lights and mirrors, throughout several decaying rooms in an old, abandoned house. The Berlin- and Seoul-based artist almost always works on-site, but this piece marked an important turning point. The house, which had belonged to her maternal grandparents, offered her a “highly practical and extremely human existence in an ideal social alienation” and there, she felt that she could “experiment with immaterial yet existentially intense art.”

Soon, Yang started unfolding what she had folded, not so much literally as conceptually. Variously angled and shaped spatial geometries emerged. The Venetian blind, a simple, effective, and elegant device that both obscures and reveals, became the material of choice. At first (as seen in Series of Vulnerable Arrangements—Blind Room, a piece that was originally created for the 2006 São Paulo Bienale and re-created in 2007 for the exhibition “Brave New Worlds” at the Walker Art Center), the blinds seemed to create a habitat, a carefully controlled microenvironment replete with sensorial engagements activated by electrical appliances such as a fan, a heat lamp, a humidifier, and a scent machine that heightened the distinction between an interior and exterior space. “I normally use blinds to create boundaries, which give me the comfort of breathing inside, while looking half hidden from the outside,” says Yang. “When I look out from the inside, I feel a deep sense of nostalgia and a desire to get to the other side.”
Since then, Yang's use of blinds has become far more expressive and even daring. They have taken on a range of hues (from gunmetal to red and other candy colors) and shapes (reminiscent of mountain ranges and assuming fan or propellerlike structures). Meanwhile, what used to be stationary sources of illumination, in her words, standing "on their own and not for something else," have become more elaborate and fluid thanks to the use of moving theater lights. In her most recent project, Asymmetric Equality, at REDCAT, white and red lights raked and danced across a forest of blinds and mirrors, their movement responding to the pounding of a drum set, which audiences were invited to play. In comparison with earlier pieces, such as those in "Su-Dong 30," Yang's work has gained a sense of openness; her quiet, personal musings on nostalgia have evolved into a willingness to seduce. Or, more fitting to the vocabulary of her thinking, she seems to want to see her community grow and unfold.

Hueyng Yang's work will be featured in Prospect 2, the first New Orleans biennial. Nov. 1 through Jan. 18. For details, visit prospectneworleans.org.