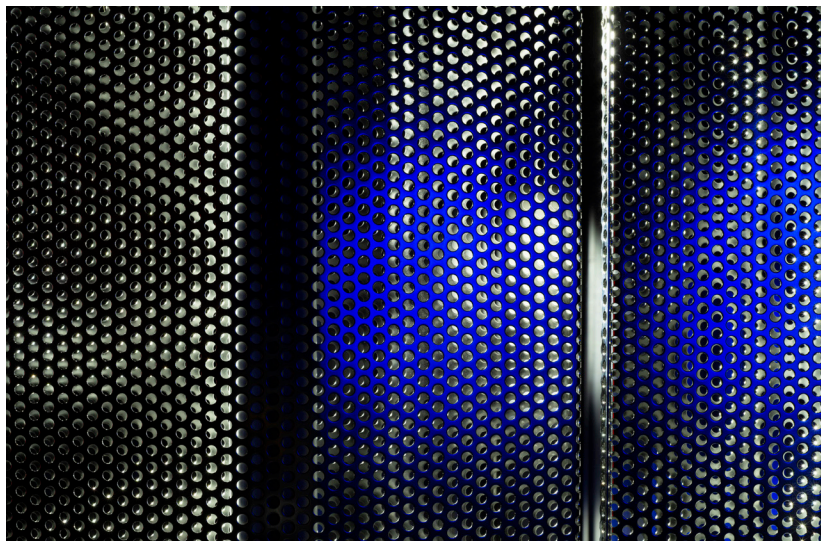


Dia:



Haegue Yang: Through

October 10, 2026–June 12, 2028

Dia Beacon

Riggio Galleries

3 Beekman Street

Beacon, New York

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Fallen Field (detail), 2026

Haegue Yang: Through

Each of my works should contain my whole music world. . . . Each small sound figure must contain the basic concept of the whole piece.

—Isang Yun

Haegue Yang resists any singular way of understanding the world. She interweaves diverse materials and methodologies to bridge art and vernacular forms, creating objects and environments that are imbued with references from disparate geographies and timescales. In this exhibition, titled *Through*, Yang reimagines Korean avant-garde composer Isang Yun's *Images* (1968) as a field of sculptural and time-based relations with bodily, conceptual, and political implications. In doing so, she engages Dia Beacon's architectural conditions and mobilizes their dualities—natural and artificial light, the expansive and the enclosed, the elevated and the subterranean—proposing distinct elements that are contingent upon one another. Similarly, Yang's visual language brings Minimalism's modularity and Postminimalism's fluidity into contact, complicating distinctions between the minimal and the maximal. Across the museum's two levels, Yang's installation explores how meaning and memory, as well as history and identity, shift through movement, succession, and changing proximities.

Yang's long-standing engagement with Yun—reflecting on the possibility that his experience of political violence and exile during the upheavals of 20th-century Korea became both embodied in and obscured by his musical legacy—culminates in *Images*. Composed during his imprisonment by the South Korean government, this piece transfigures ancient imagery of the Four Guardian Deities from Goguryeo-dynasty murals into a contemporary musical language. Each deity symbolizes a color, element, and cardinal direction, in turn represented in *Images* by an instrument: flute for the Black Tortoise (north), oboe for the Blue Dragon (east), violin for the Red Phoenix (south), and cello for the White Tiger (west). Following the ancient East Asian theory of the Five Phases (五行思想), which conceives of cosmological wholeness through interrelation, the four combine to create a continual flux while each retains its respective identity. The quartet progresses as individual timbres emerge, overlap, and dissolve into one another within the heterophonic texture of the work. Intertwining Eastern philosophy with Western techniques, *Images* epitomizes what Yang calls the asymmetrical conditions—between politics and art, homeland and diaspora, primordial and modern—that marked Yun's life and work and continue to shape how they are remembered.

At Dia Beacon, Yang abstracts and variably reconfigures the composition as an interplay of media, color, and movement. On the ground floor, these registers are anchored by *Tidal Field* (2026), a large-scale installation of venetian blinds suspended from the gridded structure attached to the ceiling beams and surrounded by clerestory windows.

Scattered throughout the gallery and running toward the South Garden, the blinds' draped, undulating layers seem at once to yield to gravity, resist its pull, and drift with an unseen current. As the natural light filters through their perforated surfaces, they simultaneously reveal and withhold, separate and connect with their surroundings, neither fully opaque nor transparent. The blinds evoke a state of transformation without ever completing it, inhabiting a threshold between stillness and motion.

Integral to *Tidal Field*, four low-hanging curtains of cascading strands of bells surround the blinds and align with the building's cardinal orientation, also corresponding with the Five Phases theory, which assigns colors to the directions: black to the north, blue to the east, red to the south, and white to the west. A gold rope of bells—yellow is associated with the center in the theory—falls from a square canopy of blinds recalling the open structure of a traditional Korean pavilion, suggesting a celestial axis that joins earth and sky. Historically used in various cultures' rituals to mediate between the secular and the spiritual, the bells here hover between material presence and sensory possibility. A comparable tension emerges in *Sonic Field* (2026), installed nearby, in which a densely woven sheet of bells is placed atop a string of light bulbs on the floor. The bulbs emit a soft glow that radiates through the interstices, rendering a luminous opacity.

The materials in Yang's installation exceed their physical properties, carrying cultural memory and affective resonance. The elongated, serpentine forms of *Fallen Field* (2026) are handwoven from black plastic twine, spilling onto the floor and climbing partway up the columns before stalling in an arrested gesture of ascent (or descent). Evoking the tentacles of an *imoogi*—a creature in Korean folklore that is caught between earthly existence as a serpent and the mythical form of a dragon—the work embodies a state of becoming wherein transition is deferred or never assured. Beneath the woven forms, pom-poms in the four colors appear only in glimpses, recalling the wish-fulfilling jewel that signals the *imoogi*'s transmutation yet withholding its promise of completion. For Yang, the mythic and the ancient remain unfinished; she locates their generative potential as spaces of reparation, rather than repositories of fixed origins or an intact past, in the gaps between remembrance and oblivion. This renewing impulse similarly informs Yang's engagement with weaving traditions and ornamental materials, unsettling conventional hierarchies between crafts, domestic labor, and fine art. Framed by the landscape beyond the windows, *Fallen Field*'s sinuous forms seem to reach toward the outside while tethered to the architecture, creating a spatial continuum across the sloping terrain that connects the ground-floor and lower-level galleries. What initially appears as a binary structure becomes a continuous topological field.

While each work in the upper level implies movement and transformation without fully enacting it, *Axial Flow* (2026), set downstairs, animates this latent potential, reart-

iculating the building's structure through a series of perforated-metal louver configurations and roving lights. Three screens stretch between the columns, while a cell-like structure encloses a square space defined by four columns. Their alignment to the columnar grid introduces a dynamic rhythm that simultaneously reinforces and unsettles the existing spatial and bodily order. The louvers are further actuated through a programmed movement sequence, the individual slats rotating while the installation as a whole oscillates between openness and closure. Yang treats these louvers as a notational medium, structuring their approximately 40-minute choreography with the precision of a musical score: On a continuous loop, the sequence builds toward synchronization, then develops in an increasing complexity of patterns and shifting relations, reaching a climax before loosening and gradually settling back into its initial order. Movement varies in speed, direction, and cadence, distributed across the linear flow of the three screens and the cyclical motion of the cell; continually diverging and converging, the "figures" coalesce into an ever-transforming whole.

In parallel with the louvers' mechanical movement, lights follow a related compositional arc, sweeping through the installation. Their relationship to the louvers varies, alternately accompanying their movement and guiding the orientation of the slats as their spatial and chromatic configurations change. The moving lights continue the directional logic through their associated five colors, with vinyl applied to the south window bathing the space in red. Filtered through successive layers of perforation, the lights generate shifting shadow patterns and moiré effects that extend into the surrounding architecture, acquiring sculptural presence of their own. As such, *Axial Flow* allows multiple temporalities and materialities to coexist, generating an environment in which forms are never static but are constantly recalibrated.

Over decades of living and working between multiple geographies, Yang has developed a practice in which movement is not simply the subject of the work but its operative condition. Through her recurring strategy of mobilizing historical proxies, such as Yun, Yang traverses temporal and physical coordinates, allowing histories, materials, and cultures to disperse and reassemble into imaginative, reparative spaces.

—Min Sun Jeon



Tidal Field (detail), 2026

Oblique Movement: A Conversation

Jordan Carter Your exhibition, *Through*, unfolds across Dia Beacon's two levels, creating a vertical simultaneity that can only be experienced sequentially. How did you approach the relationship between the ground and lower levels—as doubles, counter-points, or parallel registers?

Haegue Yang The use of two levels came from the realization that Dia's building sits on a slope; that thrilled me. As a sculptor, how something stands, sits, or is positioned is fundamental. My starting point was therefore to frame the two floors together and thematize this hidden slope before defining any individual element of the project. The exhibition begins in a space encircled by clerestory windows, on the southernmost side of the ground floor. Then, when going down to the basement, one eventually faces another opening where daylight from the garden also comes through, which to me feels like magic. These two apertures create parallel yet asymmetrical views.

JC Because the installation spans two floors, there is no singular vantage point—no way to grasp the whole at once. Instead, it operates through coexistence and overlap.

HY I appreciate the loss of a singular vantage point, that one has to mentally combine the two experiences. Viewing here is done in succession; we lose one perspective and gain another, suggesting dispersion as a way for things to exist around us and for us to understand their complexity.

JC This connects to our discussions on site and site-specificity, which are central to Dia's history. You've often resisted the term "site-specific," proposing instead a more fluid understanding of site. In this exhibition, we've been thinking through the idea of "field"—a distributed condition reflected in work titles like *Sonic Field*, *Tidal Field*, and *Fallen Field* (all 2026). How does a more diasporic conception of site relate to your interest in transnational identity, especially with figures like Isang Yun, who underlies this project? What does it mean to treat a site as a field of relations rather than a fixed coordinate?

HY In my mind, there is a triangular structure between site, place, and field. While we know "site" as an art-historical term, I've worked with the idea of "place" as an alternative, especially in my earlier video essays. "Field" is newer to me—something I'm still exploring. The plainness of place addresses everyday life and even has an emotional or sentimental quality, rather than one of sharp conceptualization. It was a way for me to step away from the urgency of a conceptual practice. Now I'm moving beyond that and arriving at field, which feels profound since it implies open areas for life and cultivation.

JC For me, field suggests both landscape—again, important within Dia's context—and a space where perception, history, movement, and belief circulate without congealing

into a single viewpoint. It suggests a horizontal condition where elements coexist without necessarily resolving into unity. In this exhibition, the upper level evokes a kind of topological landscape, with elements ascending, descending, or resting on the ground. Relations unfold both spatially and historically—cultural, musical, and spiritual references occupy an equal plane without fully merging.

HY Yes, on the ground floor the doubling is rendered horizontally, while the lower level pivots vertically—though both are layered in parallel horizontally.

JC Going back to Yun, I'd like to discuss his *Images* (1968) for flute, oboe, violin, and cello, which plays an important, if muted, role in the exhibition. Could you speak about your first encounter with Yun's work, and specifically *Images*? What drew you to him, and why did this composition become a gravitational center for the exhibition?

HY I did not have a distinct first with Yun—being Korean-born, his name was simply present. The disturbing realization was that I did not know his music at all; he was remembered by name and as a political figure, but not through his work. This discrepancy between remembrance and oblivion led me to explore his biography and music and discover a strong sympathy for this artist who was politically marginalized by hegemonic structures. Composed during Yun's imprisonment, *Images* carries the memory of the Goguryeo-dynasty murals at the Great Tomb of Gangseo, which he had seen in North Korea in 1963 (a visit later used against him). Holding historical depth and abstraction together, *Images* was the first piece through which I could genuinely engage with Yun and his work's complexity. *Images* was the point where my reflections converged.

JC I'm also interested in the role of silence in your exhibition. The composition is sculpturally present but not sounded. How does this relate to the tension between oblivion and recognition? Yun is both memorialized yet abstracted.

HY When artists refer to something, it can easily become a recognizable layer of the work, what is known as reference. I chose not to leave explicit traces of my references; after my engagement with a subject has gone through intense digestion, I reach a level of confidence to leave it behind. It is not about secrecy but about resisting an overly referential mode—to engage deeply while minimizing overt markers.

JC It's almost that abstraction is a strategy for engaging figures like Yun—inhabiting them indirectly. Could you speak about working through surrogates or proxies? How do you decide what to reveal and what to withhold? What ethical or political stakes are involved in allowing references to remain partial or oblique?

HY I love looking deeply into something; curiosity and the joy of learning are often my motivation. I want to remain a learner, one who obtains a right to unlearn. What I learn matters to me, but transmitting it to the audience requires another language: abstraction. My learning process may be narrative, but the work moves toward another kind of composition—less symbolic, less linear.

JC This points to the accretive aspect of your methodology. You've been engaging Yun's work and legacy for many years, but here you bring it into a specific relationship with Dia. The Beacon building, a former box-printing factory, is aligned to true north, so directionality—also central to *Images*—plays out architecturally and experientially. As you mentioned, Yun developed *Images* based on a mural at the Gangseo tombs, transforming the Four Guardian Deities depicted into musical instruments. Similarly, you transform his compositional forms into color and choreography in the lower-level louver installation, *Axial Flow* (2026). How did you think about Yun's method of translating cosmological entities into artistic media, and how did you overlay that method with the Five Phases theory—an ancient philosophical framework of cyclical relations and transformations—to make it yours?

HY Yun's engagement with ancient philosophy interested me because I saw myself adopting a similar methodology, as another dislocated artist. Modern history often feels heavily entangled—shaped by progress, chronology, achievement, and colonization—with no clear way out. Ancient philosophy, such as the Five Phases theory, seemed to offer a more porous and egalitarian field of imagination: A mystical space for contemporary artists like Yun or me, where symbols are present, but their agency belongs either to nature or remains undetermined, rather than being bound to a single institutional power structure. Perhaps Yun struggled with what to do after mastering European compositional methods like twelve-tone music. I speculated about his artistic struggle and imagined his search for something wilder, less tamed. Ancient philosophy may have allowed him to connect with modern and contemporary history without becoming trapped in it, as he had been as a political dissident of a divided Korea. Within my speculative and imaginative framework, Yun's attempt to evoke the entire Korean Peninsula through ancient culture represents a holistic leap across modern history.

JC I'd like to discuss music, musicality, and notation, and think more formally about the works and the exhibition. For instance, the large-scale installation *Tidal Field* undulates from ceiling to ground, and from certain perspectives suggests musical notation or staves. This may not have been intentional, but it creates a proximity to partiturs. How does musicality or lyricism function as a structuring principle in your work? Do rhythm, repetition, and interval shape your thinking across media?

HY With *Tidal Field*, I did not think of musicality, but hearing you describe it, I can see it. The image I had was more of a wave moving, which is where “tidal” came from. The wave was a form I had not yet been able to articulate with venetian blinds; creating this curve with blinds felt like a technical breakthrough. As for musicality more broadly, I think I became interested in it because I struggled with it. Music was not part of my vocabulary, and I reflexively regarded the classical genre as Western, conservative, and aristocratic—until Yun entered my thinking and compelled me to confront those preconceptions, as though he were someone I met in life. The fact that I resist something can provoke me to draw it nearer, and that struggle can open me to someone.

JC The works also engage with and challenge the unit-based geometries of Minimalism and fluid forms of Postminimalism. This is perhaps the first time you’ve used curved lines at such an expansive scale. We were thinking about draping, suspension, and the *imoogi* as a soft, responsive sculpture, as well as the draping of *Sonic Field* over light bulbs. Could you reflect on your relationship to Minimal or Postminimal art and how that is articulated here?

HY Looking at the three works together, I find it interesting that each engages with weight, though in a different way.

JC And gravity.

HY Yes, gravity and weight. I described *Tidal Field* as curved, but one could also call it sagging: It yields to its own weight while still wanting to remain suspended, creating an elastic relation to gravity. With the *imoogi*, the title suggests something fallen, yet it might also rise. It’s caught between ascending and descending, between a water snake belonging to nature and an entirely mythical dragon it has failed to become. That liminal state interested me both conceptually and sculpturally. Weaving is a fundamental technique for creating a surface, but for many years I used sturdy frames for my woven sculptures, *The Intermediates* (2015–); I was essentially covering static structures. The *imoogi* has no stiff body. It is a soft, tentacular form in which the weaving itself constitutes the body. It feels sculpturally advanced yet structurally basic: It can only be draped and suspended with cables. Its sagging becomes essential. This is the first time I’ve placed the creature completely horizontally, allowing it to be true to its nature.

JC This idea of gravity also connects your constellation of oblique references into a kind of dispersed unity. In Postminimalism, many artists created forms responsive to gravity, with corporeal presences that related to the body, architecture, and atmospheric conditions of the site. Your works respond to their own weight, the floor, the columns, and so on. At the same time, you bring in folklore and cosmology that speak to ascension

and gravity: the imoogi's failed transformation, or the two children climbing a golden rope in *The Tale of the Sun and the Moon*. So, there are references to defying gravity, succumbing to it, and moving between formal, cultural, and spiritual registers.

HY The three works on the ground floor—*Tidal Field*, *Fallen Field*, and *Sonic Field*—all address weight and gravity, so I find myself asking why this is significant in the exhibition. Perhaps the sculptures are still speaking about how heavy they are. They carry a non-cathartic narrative of their sculptural destiny: They are still struggling for emancipation from weight and gravity without ever achieving it. Somehow, this feels like the right narrative for sculpture. It has long been present in my work, but here it is no longer a minor anecdote.

JC It is an unfolding drama, across decades but also across different timescales and cultures. Within the duration of this exhibition, certain decisions and forms developed through coincidence and correspondence. For example, for a period the exhibition will be in proximity to work by Roni Horn. There is an interesting tension between her floor-based sculptures and the genealogy of your *Sonic Guard* (2022), *Sonic Cloth* (2023), and now *Sonic Field*. In this iteration, *Sonic Field* overlays light bulbs, which recall Felix Gonzalez-Torres's light strings. The low, suspended bells of the *Sonic Droplets* within the blind installation might also evoke Gonzalez-Torres's beaded curtains. How do you engage not only historical and cultural figures, but also art history, reimagining formal genealogies in other contexts?

HY Although I recently met Horn in person, both she and Gonzalez-Torres feel historical and almost inaccessible. Yet, I can imagine joining a dialogue already present in their friendship. Perhaps my work extends something they made possible for artists like me. Until the 1990s, I felt compelled to decide whether to engage with reality or not, because political art seemed to offer only historically prescribed terms. Artists like Horn and Gonzalez-Torres showed me that I could create my own way of engaging politically. That was an enormous encouragement, and I feel indebted to them despite never being close to either.

JC That resonates with the idea of porosity at a distance—indirect and proximate relations that inform your practice and unfold through the exhibition's references. You've spoken about the imoogi as a failed dragon, but also about *Sonic Field* as something struggling. You attribute to these sculptures a human-like affect or aspiration. In the lower level, works like *Axial Flow* evoke a scaled-up vertical piano keyboard being played or choreographed; the motorized lights dramatize directionality. Do you think of these works as instruments, performers, or actors within the exhibition? What does it mean to attribute liveliness or intention to objects?

HY I think of it in three parts: shape, movement, and light choreography. In terms of shape, the louver exists between body and architecture. Its soaring verticality suggests the standing human body, but the slender elements are too long and numerous, so they become architectural. Yet, they stop just short of the ceiling, never fully part of the structure. That indeterminate height pleases me by constituting an in-between state, like that of the imoogi. In terms of its rotational movement, I'm still astonished by how smooth it is, so soft, nearly weightless that it leaves one unsettled. The polished-chrome surface mirrors and doubles each slat, while the perforations cast shadows and generate moiré patterns. Through reflection and filtration, a field emerges: doubles of doubles, shadows of shadows, negative spaces, and reflected bodies. Each slat multiplies itself and escapes being pinned down, while light, reflection, and shadow further amplify its movement. There is a looping choreography of approximately 40 minutes. Louvers move in both mechanical and naturalistic modes, accompanied by lights whose four distinct colors correspond to the cardinal directions. At times, light acts like a magnet, drawing the louvers toward it; at other moments, the louvers move sequentially or rotate like a lighthouse beacon. The four distinct chromatic keys occasionally collapse into a monochromatic field.

JC So you have to cooperate with the louvers' smooth, almost silent rotation. It's only at high speed that they produce a sound, something like wind or a storm—an incidental mechanical sound rather than a composed one. What you describe also brings up a tension between industrially fabricated slats as Minimal units and their transformation through perforation, light, and moiré effects. The patterns could practically be decorative, and the fluidity of the movement resists the idea of a monolithic Minimal form. It makes me think about theatricality and ornamentation as ways of challenging the more austere histories of Minimalism.

HY *Axial Field* consists of three walls and one cell, and its choreography has a kind of dramatic arc with a climax as well as an intro and outro. However, it remains abstract, partially Constructivist; the moving lights produce shadows with circular perforation that recall László Moholy-Nagy's *Light Space Modulator* (1930). The choreography of the three walls is distinct from that of the cell. The structure of the installation forces me to think of the choreography in two modalities: On the walls, the movement unfolds linearly, like a wave or sequence, while in the cell, it becomes cyclical, even canonic.

JC The louvers appear autonomous, but they operate in excess of their own structure through light, shadow, and choreography. The cell-like enclosure also echoes multiple sites of confinement: the prison in which Yun composed *Images*; the enclosed space of the Gangseo tombs; and the neighboring work by Tehching Hsieh, *One Year Performance 1978–1979* (Cage Piece), for which he spent a year inside a cage.

At the same time, these references are oblique and replete with associative potential. The cell frames a void, becoming an unfixed space for imaginative projection and speculative inhabitation.

HY Siah Armajani's gazebo works also come to mind here. I've been drawn to them for decades. They resemble cells and are dedicated to political figures, particularly early civil-rights activists, anarchists, and immigrants who fought for American citizenship. Armajani's gazebos become a profoundly contemplative space in which political engagement is framed through the architectural language of confinement.

JC Armajani is relevant here because he worked across media and fused Minimalism, abstraction, and architecture, especially in relation to public architecture and speculative proposals for bodies in space. And he was also a dislocated artist, Iranian-born and self-exiled to the United States. Since you mentioned the louvers in relation to architectural and bodily scale, I'd like to ask about the bodies moving through the exhibition. Movement appears throughout the show in the viewer's navigation, dynamic elements, and responsive or performative objects. How do you think about the viewer's movement or body as an active element within the work?

HY I imagine the viewer moving through a field of simultaneous orientation and disorientation. The chromatic system may provide touch points within an otherwise immersive experience. A numerical logic runs through both the timing of the choreography, which is organized into eight chapters, and the modular structure of the louver walls and cells. Two walls are each formed by two modules, while the third wall is composed of three modules, with each module containing sixteen louvers. The cell follows a different configuration; each of its four sides is composed of three modules, with each module containing eight louvers. The audience may not consciously recognize this mathematical structure, but it creates an internal rhythm that is felt while leaving room for a more intuitive, perhaps even spiritual, mode of being.

JC Indeed, the work, like your practice, mobilizes a structural logic that is undone by the fluidity of movement and lived experience.



The White Tiger, one of the Four Guardian Deities depicted in the mural of the Great Tomb of Gangseo, North Korea.

Isang Yun: A Chronology

1917 Isang Yun was born on September 17 in Sancheong and grew up in Tongyeong, a southern coastal city, during Japan's colonial occupation of Korea (1910–45). His father, Ki-Hyon Yun, was a poet, and his mother, Sun-dal Kim, a teacher, exposing Yun to the arts at an early age.

1925 Yun attended a Japanese-run Western-style school, where he first encountered Western musical instruments, including the organ. Its polyphonic sound contrasted sharply with the predominantly monophonic character of traditional Korean instruments.

1930 At age 13, Yun began playing the violin and composing with the thought, "Why should I only sing and play what others have written? Why not create my own music?"

1931 Yun presented his first composition, a piano piece, at a silent-film theater in Tongyeong.

1935 Yun briefly studied cello, music theory, and composition at the Osaka College of Music.

1937 Yun began working as a schoolteacher in Tongyeong.

1939 Yun registered to study with composer Tomojirō Ikenouchi in Tokyo.

1941 Throughout the decade, Yun participated in anti-Japanese resistance activities, ranging from underground independence movements to Christian groups promoting Korean national consciousness.

1944 At age 27, Yun was imprisoned by Japanese police in Tongyeong for composing songs in Korean, as the public use of Korean was forbidden under the colonial rule.

1945 The Korean Peninsula was liberated on August 15. In the aftermath of Japan's surrender, Soviet and American forces occupied the north and south respectively, leading to the division of the peninsula along the 38th parallel.

Yun began teaching music at secondary schools in Tongyeong and Busan.

1946 Yun took care of children as the director of an orphanage in Busan.

1947 Yun organized the Tongyeong String Quartet and played the cello.

1950 Yun met Sooja Lee, a Korean language teacher at Busan Elementary School, and they married.

On June 25, the Korean War began. North Korea was supported by China and the Soviet Union, while South Korea was supported by the United Nations Command led by the United States.

Due to poor health, Yun was not enlisted and instead joined the Wartime Composers' Association, composing songs promoting peace. Many were published in music textbooks, bringing him national recognition as an educator and composer.

Yun and Lee's daughter, Jeong, was born on November 20.

1953 The bloody three-year war resulted in a stalemate and reinforced the border between North and South Korea, establishing the Demilitarized Zone that separates the two nations until today.

Yun moved to Seoul and taught music at institutions such as Seoul National University.

1954 On September 1, Yun and Lee's son, Wookyung, was born.

1955 Yun received the prestigious Seoul Cultural Prize.

The Vietnam War broke out in November.

1956 At age 39, Yun traveled to Paris to study composition with Tony Aubin and Pierre Revel at the Conservatoire National de Musique.

1957 Yun studied with composer Boris Blacher at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin.

1958 Yun attended the International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt, Germany, where he met John Cage, Yoshio Nomura, and Nam June Paik, establishing connections with the European avant-garde.

1959 Yun moved to Krefeld, Germany. On September 4, he premiered *Music for Seven Instruments* (1959) in Darmstadt. On September 6, pianist Herman Kruyt debuted Yun's *Five Pieces for Piano* (1958) in Bilthoven, the Netherlands.

1960 In Cologne, on June 15, the Novák Quartet led by Dušan Pandula premiered Yun's *String Quartet No. 3* (1959/61).

1961 South Korea underwent the May 16 military coup d'état, led by Park Chung Hee and his allies.

In September, Yun's wife joined him in Germany.

1962 On January 19, in Berlin, Francis Travis directed Yun's orchestral *Bara* (1960), a composition named after a Korean cymbal used primarily in Buddhist ceremonies.

1963 Yun visited the Great Tomb of Gangseo (37 BC–668 AD), a Goguryeo-dynasty site in North Korea. The murals depict the Four Guardian Deities symbolizing the four cardinal directions: the Black Tortoise of the north, the Blue Dragon of the east, the Red Phoenix of the south, and the White Tiger of the west.

1964 Yun and Lee's children joined them in Germany, and they settled in West Berlin.

1965 On September 25, Yun's opera *The Dream of Liu-Tung* (1965) premiered at Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

1966 Yun's *Réak* (1966) for large orchestra premiered under the direction of Ernest Bour in Donaueschingen, Germany, on October 23. In the summer, Yun undertook a two-month study and lecture tour in the United States, visiting Lenox, Massachusetts; Aspen, Colorado; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Chicago; and New York.

1967 On June 17, Yun was kidnapped from West Berlin by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. Accused by South Korea of espionage for North Korea, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. In what became known as the East Berlin Affair, South Korea's military regime accused a total of 194 Korean residents in Europe of espionage for the North Korean mission in East Berlin, and several expatriates in West Germany were kidnapped or coerced into confessions of pro-North activities.

1968 Yun, held under harsh conditions and tortured, was allowed to compose in his unheated cell. He produced three pieces in succession: the one-act opera *Butterfly Widow* and the compositions *Riul* and *Images* (all 1968) for flute, oboe, violin, and piano. Inspired by his 1963 visit to the Great Tomb of Gangseo, later cited in the espionage charges against him, *Images* was written in a guarded hospital room after Yun suffered a physical breakdown during imprisonment.

In Yun's second trial, he was acquitted of the espionage charge, but his conviction under the National Security Act was upheld, resulting in a ten-year sentence. International

campaigns by musicians and intellectuals—such as Herbert von Karajan, György Ligeti, and Karlheinz Stockhausen—continued to pressure South Korea to release him.

1969 Through a presidential pardon following international political pressure, Yun's sentence was suspended and he was released.

Yun began teaching at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater, und Medien Hannover, Germany. On March 24, *Images* premiered in Oakland, California, performed by Mills College New Music Ensemble as a gesture of transnational solidarity.

Yun reunited with his family in West Berlin on March 30.

1970 Yun became a professor of composition at Hochschule der Künste, Berlin, and kept the position until 1985.

1971 At age 54, Yun became a West German citizen, reflecting both official recognition of his artistic stature and concern for his safety amid repeated South Korean attempts to abduct him.

On June 20, his opera *Love of Spirits* (1969–70) premiered in Kiel under Hans Zender. On October 22, two of Yun's works debuted: *Dimensions* (1971) in Nuremberg and *Piri* (1971) in Bamberg, Germany, the latter performed by Georg Meierwein, to whom the piece was dedicated.

1972 Wolfgang Sawallisch conducted the premiere of Yun's *Sim Tjong* (1971–72) on August 1, as part of the Olympics in Munich.

1973 Yun began supporting campaigns for democracy in South Korea and the reunification of Korea.

1975 Yun began adopting European naming conventions such as "symphony" or "sonata" for the titles of his works, reflecting his increasing engagement with Western musical forms.

1976 *Cello Concerto* (1976) was premiered by Siegfried Palm and the Orchestre Philharmonique des Pays de la Loire on March 25, at the Festival International d'Art Contemporain de Royan, France.

1977 Yun and writer Luise Rinser published *The Wounded Dragon: Dialogue on the Life and Work of the Composer*, a seminal book of conversations on Yun's musical philosophy, his experiences as a Korean composer in exile, and reflections on his compositions.

Yun's *Double Concerto* (1977) for oboe, harp, and small orchestra premiered at the Philharmonie Berlin. The piece was dedicated to Heinz and Ursula Holliger.

1980 The Gwangju Uprising took place from May 18 to 27. South Korean citizens rose in protest demanding democracy and were met with brutal suppression by government forces.

Following the uprising, Yun composed the solo cantata *Night, Be Parted* (1980), drawing on three poems by German Swedish poet and playwright Nelly Sachs. During the 1980s, Yun wrote five symphonies expressing hopes for peace.

1981 Commissioned by Westdeutscher Rundfunk, a German public-broadcasting institution, Yun composed *Example in Memory of Kwangju* (1981), reflecting on the Gwangju Uprising.

1982 Yun's music was performed both in North and South Korea, despite their opposing political systems. The annual Isang Yun Festival was inaugurated in Pyongyang.

1984 On May 15, *Symphony No. 1* (1983) premiered at the Berliner Philharmoniker's 100th anniversary event. The Isang Yun Music Institute was established in Pyongyang in December.

1986 On November 13, *Symphony No. 4* (1986) premiered at the Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

1987 On September 17, Yun's 70th birthday, *Symphony No. 5* (1987) was premiered by the Berliner Philharmoniker.

1988 Yun was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

1992 In December, a concert was held with the Hochschule der Künste, Berlin, for Yun's 75th birthday.

1995 On March 22, Yun's daughter, Jeong, received the Goethe Medal on his behalf in Weimar. On May 9, *Angel in Flames* (1994) premiered at the Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

On November 3, at age 78, Yun died in Berlin and was buried with honors by the Berlin Senate at Landschaftsfriedhof Gatow, near his home.

1996 The Isang Yun International Society was established in Berlin, led by Walter-Wolfgang Sparrer. In Korea, Yun's legacy was commemorated by the Isang Yun Competition and the Isang Yun Memorial Park in Tongyeong, as well as the Isang Yun Music Institute in Pyongyang.

2017 Yun's 100th birthday was marked with concerts in Europe and Korea.

2018 Yun's remains were returned to South Korea—23 years after his death and 49 years after he was forced to leave. The return highlighted the enduring complexity of a legacy claimed by both North and South Korea. Today, Yun continues to be claimed by both as part of their cultural and artistic heritage.

2020 Yun's family filed a petition with the court seeking a retrial for his 1968 conviction.

2023 The Criminal Division 5 of the Seoul High Court decided to commence a retrial.

2024 The Supreme Court dismissed the prosecution's appeal, and the first retrial was held in October, 57 years after Yun's imprisonment.

—Subjectively edited by Haegue Yang

About the artist

Haegue Yang was born in Seoul in 1971. She works across media, ranging from room-size sensorial installations, conceptual works, and performative sculptures to paper collages and staging projects, while engaging broad cultural, philosophical, and historical concerns. In her prolific and versatile practice, Yang juxtaposes seemingly oppositional elements, such as industrial fabrication and folk craftsmanship, to explore the affective power of materialities and methodologies and critically examine the notion of modernity. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Hayward Gallery, London (2024–25), and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2026). Yang's work has been included in numerous group exhibitions, in addition to the Venice Biennale (2009); Documenta, Kassel, Germany (2012); Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates (2015); Singapore Biennale (2022–23); and Shanghai Biennale (2025). Yang was awarded the 2018 Wolfgang Hahn Prize by Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and the 2022 Benesse Prize at the Singapore Biennale. Yang teaches at her alma mater, the Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main. She lives in Berlin and Seoul.

Further reading

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Checklist

1. **Sonic Field** (소리장場), 2026

Powder-coated stainless-steel bells, split rings, LED light bulbs, electric cables, terminal strips, and zip ties

2. **Tidal Field** (조석장潮汐場), 2026

Perforated aluminum venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminum hanging structure, steel-wire rope, lacquered stainless-steel compression struts, stainless-steel bells, PVD-coated stainless-steel bells, powder-coated stainless-steel bells, stainless-steel chains, carabiners, and split rings

3. **Fallen Field** (낙하장落下場), 2026

Plastic twine, plastic raffia string, aluminum armature wire, painted-steel stands, zip ties, and split rings

4. **Axial Flow** (축류軸流), 2026

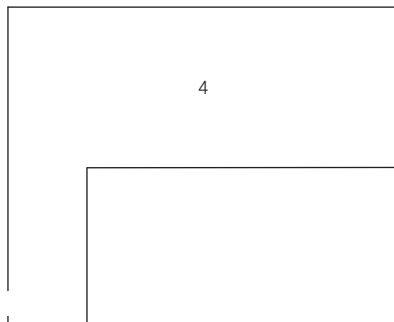
Acrylic lacquer-coated steel frame, perforated polished stainless-steel sheets, moving spotlights, gobos, bearings, motors, custom electronics and software, ratchet straps, and vinyl film

All works courtesy the artist, commissioned by Dia Art Foundation

Ground floor



Downstairs



Haegue Yang: Through is curated by Jordan Carter, curator, and Min Sun Jeon, assistant curator.

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Symposium and public programs are co-presented with the Shen Foundation. Performances by Sejong Soloists, ensemble in residence.

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