

KIMSOOJA

September 30 – December 17, 2006

Curators: David Neuman and Tessa Praun

Kimsooja, born 1957 in Taegu, South Korea.

Lives and works in New York since 1999.

Kimsooja spreads, folds, ties and hangs up bed sheets full of history and cultural significance. The sheets bear traces of life – we are born, sleep, love, dream, suffer and die on them.

Kimsooja studied traditional painting in South Korea but began at an early stage to replace canvasses, paint tubes and brushes with fabrics and needle and thread. Her earliest works are relief textile collages made of her grandmother's old clothes, and this gradually developed into works that fill entire rooms. The textiles in Kimsooja's works are used clothes and traditional Korean bedsheets, which bear traces of life, memories and history. Central themes for Kimsooja are life and communication in contemporary society, but also life as a nomad.

During her time as a resident artist at P.S.1 in New York (1992-93) Kimsooja started working with so-called bottaris. A bottari is a Korean cloth bundle that can be used to store and transport one's belongings. These bundles recur throughout her oeuvre. In Korea they have a deep historic significance, since the people have had to flee from war or go in search of work. The bottaris were used by both refugees and merchants.

In the exhibition at Magasin 3 Kimsooja has parked a German truck (Tempo-Dreirad) from 1938, with the back filled with bottaris. 700 kilos of second-hand clothes are loaded into *Bottari Truck* (2005). The journey, the movement, to leave the familiar in search of something new is an experience that is well-known to Kimsooja – and it is the central idea of this installation and the video work *Cities on the Move - 2727 Kilometers Bottari Truck* (1997), in which a similar truck appears. Sitting on the pile of bundles, she travelled for eleven days to all the places in Korea where she had lived and to which she had memories attached. Kimsooja explains: "My body – which is merely one more travelling bottari – is in the present, it traces the past and is meanwhile moving towards the future, it is perpetually on the move, even though I am sitting still on the truck."

The video work *Sewing into Walking* (1994) shows Kimsooja spreading

and collecting textiles in a valley in South Korea. Before her the textiles billowing in the wind are transformed into three-dimensional canvasses, and folded into bottaris they become sculptures. Originally, the filming was a documentation of her work method. Sewing, a task that is closely linked to Korean tradition and everyday life, serves as a symbolic action for co-habitation and communication in Kimsooja's art. It is in this performative work process that Kimsooja starts to see herself as a needle that stitches the world together with her observations: she regards the world as a vast cloth through which she travels like a needle. In recognition of this she has stitched her first name Sooja together with her last name, Kim.

Kimsooja is always present in her own video works, leading us into them. In her most serene work, *A Needle Woman – Kitakyushu* (1999), she is lying stretched out on her side on top of a limestone mountain; she lies completely still but her presence is vital and embodies time.

In *A Laundry Woman – Yamuna River, India* (2000), Kimsooja gazes out at the Yamuna River near the place where the dead are cremated. The currents carry the remains of burned cult objects and flowers. What she witnesses becomes a room, like a bottari, containing traces of the life and death of anonymous individuals. In the work *A Beggar Woman – Cairo* (2001) Kimsooja appropriates public spaces for collective experiences and makes us aware of the everyday dramas that often go unseen in our stressful, routine lives. She uses a similar approach in the series *A Needle Woman*, which she produced in 1999-2001 and recently resumed work on. Rigid and immobile, she stands in the midst of a flow of passing people in various metropolitan cities all over the world.

In the lower gallery of Magasin 3, Kimsooja has hung colorful, symbolic bedsheets that become billowing paintings in the light breeze. We move in between the rows of bed linen to the accompaniment of Tibetan monk chanting. In this installation, titled *A Laundry Woman* (2006) these once private textiles convey a remarkable corporeality and become a form of memorial.

Kimsooja's work has been shown in museums and galleries worldwide, and she has been represented at biennials in Istanbul, Sao Paolo and Venice. For more information and images, we recommend the documentation video in the entrance foyer. You can also visit Kimsooja's website:

<http://www.kimsooja.com>