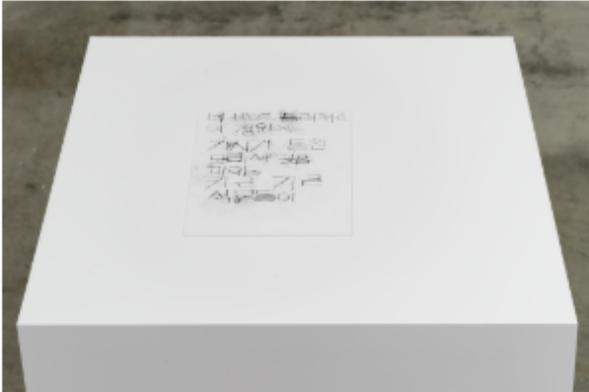


ARTFORUM



Chung Seoyoung, *Thorns, Tall Plants*, 2020,
ceramic, painted plywood pedestal, 12 x 8", 25 x
27 x 42".

SEOUL

Chung Seoyoung

BARAKAT CONTEMPORARY

36, Samcheong-ro 7-gil, Jongno-gu
May 12–July 5, 2020

In “Knocking Air,” her first solo exhibition in South Korea in four years, Chung Seoyoung presents twenty-seven large-scale sculptures and installations, a video, and drawings on ceramic. The work that perhaps best reflects the artist’s interest in poetic language and sculptural

intervention into everyday space is the first series one encounters upon entering the gallery: ten pristine white pedestals, neatly arranged and inviting viewers to walk through them. On each, Chung has placed a letter-size, paper-thin, white ceramic plate. The spatial arrangement is deceptively minimal. The short texts written on each work yield a kind of augmented reality, in which visual and linguistic references are layered to offer seemingly nonsensical intuitions: “This garden sealed with four walls. With thorns. Purple flowers. Very high plants,” reads one (*Thorns, Tall Plants*, 2020). “A hole. Free. Free and happy. A big hole. A bigger hole,” reads another (*A Hole*, 2020). The origins of these text-drawings lie in Chung’s 2014 sound installation *Nap*, for which the artist explored historical sites within the Korean demilitarized zone of Cheorwon County with three musicians, whose observations and improvised language she recorded. Thus, despite their initial inscrutability, these words certainly refer to the uncanny reality that exists within the borderland. Chung materialized the sound recordings for the pieces on view by writing the excerpts in ceramic glaze pencil on kaolin-clay tablets, and her awkward calligraphy on the resulting porcelain plates is at odds with their exquisite surfaces. The blotted stains and traces of her hand transpose fragmentary narration into a visual experience. Part of a generation of artists who maintained a critical distance from two opposing factions of Korean art: the explicit political activism of the Minjung art movement and the socially insouciant Dansaekhwa movement, here Chung continues to create an environment of subtle tension between the real and the imaginary.

— Jung-Ah Woo