

K. Min  
*from here to there*

*I draw anything that comes to my attention visually, emotionally, and psychologically.*

K. Min's small paintings and pastels of insects assert an unblinking affection for her subjects by memorializing them as specimens of the real world. Contained, fragile and nearly weightless, the insects as described by Min are presented as markers of their own existence. Similar in their delicate thinness to the insects, the elevated grain hoppers of *Texas #1* and *Texas #2* are determined by their mechanical purpose. Their landscape settings are flat and nearly neutral fields of spatial ideas. These objects, insects and grain hoppers among others in this exhibition, are only as much as they need to be, minimal without being minimalist. They occupy our attention by igniting our sense of their function and their curiousness.

Time is slowed down as images glide into the space of our vision the way clouds do. Our seeing works selectively to collect bits of now, of then and of later on. In her series of stained upholstered chairs and couches, Min was motivated by an accidental occurrence. She had completed a couch painting, photographed it and then printed the image. The print was damaged by a drop of water, diluting and altering the color of a small part of the image making the couch appear stained. Drawn to this alteration, Min went on to continue the couch and chair project by incorporating more 'stains', suggesting forensic narratives and crime scenes. However interpreted, these images challenge our aesthetic norms. The stains that may repel us also intrigue and compel us to remain tuned to their dissonance. *Leaking #2* demonstrates Min's steadiness of purpose, its pale violet chair appears assaulted by age, its domestic comfort slipping away from a history of too much experience. Related to the stained couches and chairs are the bread and sweets with and without mold. Decay becomes an insistent presence. Things change and become other things. Things die. Even in the presence of such morbidity, experiencing these images also yields an unexpected and quiet humor. The large couch of the ironically titled *Therapy* is like a decorative infection.

Min's subjects are not all bruised or wounded, but many are marked by elements that isolate the subjects in space and time. The small pastel landscape *Spring Fire* is a haunting scene that layers a dark foreground against a dimmed background. Between the division of land and sky, smoke rises from a sliver of fire indicating wind direction as it specifies an event left unexplained. This

incident is seen from the road—a landscape story. Another road painting, *Hope for Mt. Agamenticus*, directs our attention through a dense alley of dark trees under a paler sky to a small bright green patch of light. Road imagery implies a sense of change, in this case a change unnamed. This condition of mutability is developed in Min's painting and drawing process. The edges of things are frequently blurred, a softening effect called *sfumato* in Italian painting. In Min's work this method gently shakes forms, creating a peculiar, soft vibration.

In *Morning Tub*, Min places the tub in a boxed-in space, quietly asserting architectural pragmatism. Min's immobile subjects lend themselves to being contained and, like the insect images, preserved as collected inventories of experience.

Min's paintings and drawings are deliberations on memory. When I first saw *After the Rain*, it felt vividly familiar. Was it the trisected space of sky, trees and pavement? The dull, grayness of the overall picture? Or was it the solitariness of the white propane tank—the central form—bright against its darker surroundings? Such ordinary objects, secured in a metal fence, like a framed icon—the space seemed to become my own memory as if my seeing it reinforced its existence. Min's images pulsate like reenactments of thought. The utility pole in the drawing *On the Way to the Post Office* establishes an anchoring effect against the thick tangle of the trees. The moment is one of conditions rather than events. The smear of coral pink light on the wall over the bed in *New York Story (Sunset)* seals the image within the rhythmic alterations of time.

Light is frequently more than illumination; in some paintings light is a figure itself. The electric lights in *Working Time* are set against the dark, enabling their own visibility as devices. *Off Hours* and *Foggy Night* make light as much of a subject as that which is lit. Night imagery is also explored in Min's pastel *Billboard*, whose darkness frames the surface of the greenish blue billboard surface.

*Untitled Round Table* presents the glowing fantasy of a covered table floating in a utopian space designed only to contain one thing. This image evokes the quiet dreaming of the Belgian surrealist, Rene Magritte, whose subjects frequently deny gravity. The table cloth reveals only the table's contour, recalling Magritte's shrouding of figures, the unseen subjects falling prey to an anxious victory of unknowing. Where light exposes objects and spaces to our seeing experience, darkness alerts us to what we do not experience. *Despair* draws a black shade down a window, blocking an unseen view. The covered window enables a locked-in, protected intimacy at the cost of a thwarted connection with what is out of sight. *Despair* is antithetical to much of Min's work, but serves as a sensory balance, recognizing the partnership of light and dark.

The small *First Tree* and the large, multi-paper *Winter Tree* describe the unrushed vitality of living nature, the branches of the trees leading the eye upward, while dividing the space they occupy. Nearly abstract compositions, the trees have the feel of cropped anatomical studies, their organic reach carrying the eye beyond the fictive space they inhabit. The trees suggest an arcing and muscular choreography encouraging a sense of our relatedness to them. Min's paintings, pastels and drawings manifest a plainspoken idealism at the heart of representation—a persuasive urging to see beyond naming what we see.

*David Raymond*