

English 230 Worksheet for Tuesday, September 13th

*THE MOOD OF THE MOMENT*i, by Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries

Available at yhchang.com/THE_MOOD_OF_THE_MOMENT_V.html

This [work](#) was released in 2007 and was intended for projection in a gallery setting; however, it, like practically all of Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries' art, was also published online. YHCHI is a duo—Young-Hae Chang (from South Korea) and Marc Voge (from the U.S.)—based in Seoul. Chang is an artist and doctor of aesthetics with a Ph.D. from Université de Paris, and Voge is a poet with interests in British and American modernism. Since 1999, they have composed their pieces in ActionScript and Adobe Flash, with text and audio, across at least twenty languages. The text is always written with the Monaco typeface (monospaced, sans-serif) and functions like an optical image: a projection of letters, numbers, and words intended for a visceral impression. Their slideshow approach to media echoes Bob Dylan's 1965 promotional video for "[Subterranean Homesick Blues](#)" (part of the 1967 documentary, *Dont Look Back*). Dylan, of course, did not use Monaco. (His "slides" were handwritten.)

While it may at first seem like an abstract media experiment—with its caps, countdown, slideshow delivery, and use of `O` for `O`—*THE MOOD OF THE MOMENT* does have a story. You can watch and listen to it. Two characters speak through concatenated voices resembling those used for digital assistants (like Alexa) and screen readers (that read aloud the content on your computer screen). One character, who appears to be coded male (I will use "he" for now), attempts to communicate with another character, who appears to be coded female (I will use "she" for now). The audience never learns either of their names. A cover of Cal Tjader's 1965 song, "Soul Sauce" (the English translation of "Guachi Guaro" or "Guarachi Guaro"), itself a cover of Dizzy Gillespie's "Guarachi Guaro" (1949; arranged by Gerald Wilson), plays in the background. This song is synchronized with the text. As the female-coded character listens along and says "Guachi Guaro" when the music stops, the male-coded character asks her what she's saying. She translates it for him.

IT MEANS
"SØUL
SAUCE . "

The male-coded character clearly does not recognize the song and continues to ask the female-coded character some questions, interrupting her as she tries to listen to the music. Maybe they are at a club, bar, or house party somewhere in Seoul, and the music is instrumental to the scene and mood: it's dance music ("Seoul Sauce?"), not muzak. Whatever the particulars of the setting may be, he does not get the picture. He persists in his attempts to extract meaning from a moment she simply wants to enjoy. Or maybe I'm misinterpreting it. What do you think?

I wonder if YHCHI is having some fun with critics of art and literature. The male-coded character aims to accumulate cultural capital and overinterprets the situation without managing to consider the situation, listen, be present, revel in the moment, or respect her space. When the song is over, he fills the silence with deflation. "*WATCH ME, WOW. COOL. YUP.*" She's there and says nothing, or she leaves. We do not know for sure. Mediation, including translation ("Guachi Guaro" to "Soul Sauce") and adaptation (of Gillespie's song), as well as a lack of context and verbal communication, are themes here. There is no narration, and the audience is positioned as if they are witnessing the situation or eavesdropping on it.

Although *MOOD OF THE MOMENT* is now available in video, which you can pause, silence, and move forward and backward, the first version (watch it [here](#), if your browser still supports Flash; thanks, Wayback Machine) is a Flash animation that affords no such interaction. You cannot control the pace of reading and listening, and the animation begins automatically once you arrive at its URL. (The same goes for the gallery installation. It could not be paused. It played on a loop.)

Yet the message is still rather clear in video. This work is no click-happy hypertext. It's not a go-where-you-wish, "cyberspace" tale. It's more like live television in a browser. Would you say it addresses you? Immerses you? Entertains you? Frustrates you? As media, it seems to sit somewhere between propaganda and art. As fiction, it functions like a snippet of dialogue in a short story, novel, or even radio drama. We lack narrative exposition and are thus nudged to assume a lot. Perhaps too much . . .

As you watch *THE MOOD OF THE MOMENT*, I encourage you to consider the following questions:

- What are your initial impressions of this work? What did it make you feel?
- What does this work remind you of? To what would you compare it?
- What would you say is the conflict? Is it resolved?
- How does this work address or speak to you? Who would you say is the intended audience?
- After watching it, what do you remember most? What stuck with you?
- What adjective would you use to describe this work as an experience?
- What does this work appear to value (or care about)? What's the message?