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### Sweet Spot

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*CUNY Hunter College*

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Sweet Spot

by

Kajin Kim

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts Studio Art, Hunter College  
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Date

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Date

Carrie Moyer

Second Reader

A certain sense of absence and isolation from others has permeated my life. There is also the irony that if I want to communicate closely with someone, I have to go into a closed room alone, take off my mask, and meet via Zoom. Since I haven't been able to visit my home on the other side of the globe for a while, I get together with my family on the screen. As an international student, the only community to which I belong closely is the school, but even if I come here every day, I rarely encounter someone. We hesitate to visit each other's studios or get together with close friends. I miss them all, but I have the anxiety that body-to-body contact may be perceived as threatening rather than a sharing of warmth.

I think about their absence in my everyday space. Their bodies are not here and are somewhere else, but I think of them by recognizing their absence. As when you go into a house and see somebody's shoes are there, the shoes are a marker of the absence of that person but at the same time a marker of the presence of a human body. Likewise, chairs leave traces of bodies that have either sat on or will sit on them. The chair is a placeholder for the body and an invitation to sit, at the same time. Wherever there are objects for human use, there is also the presumption that a human is around somewhere. These placeholders displace and delay the presence of others into an unknown somewhere. I want to create placeholders in my installation that serve as invitations to someone who is not here but is around somewhere. I hope there is a moment of invitation for a propositional body, so that even if no one is there, it is as if a body is expected and implied.

I feel like we exist as fragments. Although the fragments do not physically exist on the same layer, I want to make contact without contact, by overlapping the planes where each fragment

exists. The overlap of layers imagines the coexistence of here and there or of different fields that are far apart, each one on its own terms. By bringing in another field, I hope to blend it into the field where my body is staying: overlapping two different layers.

Manifestations of alignment between separate layers is a continuous thread throughout the installation. This is hinted at by the name “Sweet Spot”. In both virtual and physical space, we yearn for this sweet spot of connection and clarity, without always being able to find it. The installation as a whole is one work that can be viewed from multiple perspectives and is made up of multiple components that each in themselves are also made up of multiple layers. Each component creates the possibility for finding a kind of sweet spot where the layers seem to connect and coexist.



*Sweet Spot* (2021), mixed media installation [Component 1]



Component 1 (detail)

Component 1 was made through the transformation of a clothing rack into an image hanger, which allows one to observe hung images from multiple perspectives and angles. Without being an actual rack, the image-stand invites the viewer to look through what it hangs: images of hands that have been printed on separate transparent layers of PET film. Without the images moving, the viewer's eyes construct the touching of hands based on perspective in the room, forming a kind of contact without contact. The hand image itself that creates this contact without contact feels like a placeholder for an absent body. The hanger itself suggests the act of touching, as it is an object that we ordinarily hold and move with our hands, when we rummage through the closet to choose clothes. Depending on where viewers stand, they will perceive a different view out of the stacked layers. The view they get becomes a reminder of the relation between presence and absence, as this compositional body kind of semi-exists. It is there but the viewers are aware that

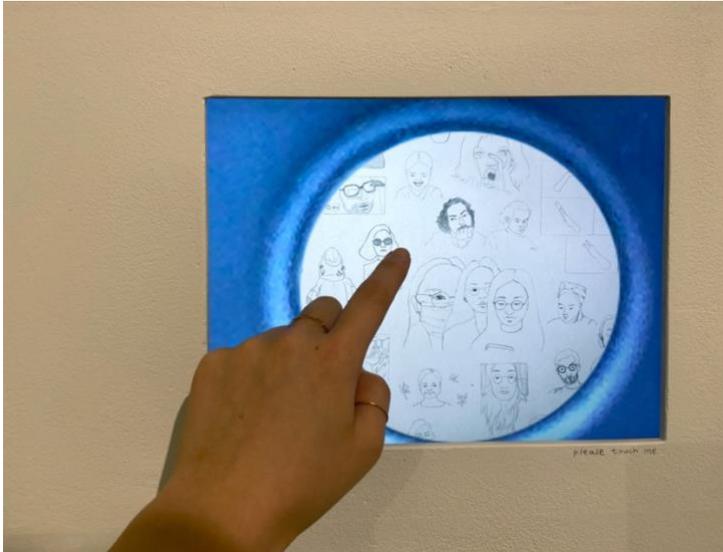
there is no one single given plane, they themselves are making it. This experience constructed in the space between the multiple layers shows that the void is both empty and not empty.

Wall projections and embedded wall works (installation components) invite viewers to actively engage with them. Only after the audience's body arrives can the works be completed. In one wall projection work, Component 2, two images are projected onto the same wall. One projector shows the Dynamic Desktop MacBook wallpaper that shifts with the time of day, changing the lighting and look of the wallpaper with the progress of the sun across the sky. The image projected by the other projector cannot be seen as it is less bright than the Dynamic Desktop wallpaper. Only when a body stands in front of the Dynamic Desktop wallpaper and becomes another screen for the image, can it be seen through the viewer's body.



*Sweet Spot* (2021), mixed media installation [Component 3]

An embedded wall work Component 3 is made up of foot shaped stands, for viewers to step on, so as to look into an eye shaped hole in the wall, which display a video installed inside. The video only can be watched when the viewers make eye contact with the hole that is located higher than the average height for humans.



*Sweet Spot* (2021), mixed media installation [Component 4]

In another embedded wall work Component 4, stacked layers of images can be explored by zooming in and out and panning by the touch of the viewers' finger. These pieces installed inside and on the wall are like apertures or windows. I don't mean apertures like in the camera only but more like places that allow me to know that I'm here and what I'm seeing is over there and I am making contact with it by seeing it through either device or screen. We're usually accustomed to see walls as barriers blocking us to experience this one space bordered by the walls. By making apertures in the walls, I want to dismantle the wholeness of the physical barriers by bringing in

another field and blending into the walls. I want to make the walls a meeting point where many layers are folded and coexist.

I made another version of skin for the screens (wall, monitor, laser engraved mirror, printed PVC vinyl). Here, the skin is the skin as a surface on which contact is premised, and some exchange occurs in the space between the skins. In Component 4, the tablet embedded into the false wall becomes a new skin of the wall that changes every time a viewer's fingertips touch. It is physically flat and thin but experientially depthless. Touch enables panning and zooming in and out and dismantling the fixation of the boundary of the wall. Now with a digital space that doesn't necessarily have a boundary, the boundary is actually expanded to dissolve or somehow virtually exists.



*Sweet Spot* (2021), mixed media installation [Component 5]

In Component 5, I considered the surface of a digital device to be like a new skin. When you put your phone in front of a computer monitor, iridescent waves appear at the physical surfaces of the screens because of some kind of interaction happening at the space in between them. It reminds me of touch without contact and the connection between two spaces.



*Sweet Spot* (2021), mixed media installation [Component 6]

The surface of a mirror absorbs layers that exist separately and aligns them on a single plane. Component 6 is a combination of a monitor playing a video and a frame hinged next to the monitor. Half of the frame holds double silver mirrors. A drawing and the flipped version of the drawing is laser engraved on each backside of the mirrors so the engraved parts match exactly. You can see the view on the other side of the mirror coming through the engraved part as the silver on the backside is peeled off and becomes translucent. So, the drawing is not just a drawing but like a tunnel that connects both spaces behind the double mirrors facing against each other. When I stand in front of the monitor, I would see myself, a reflected image of the video and the drawing from the mirror next to the monitor.



*Sweet Spot* (2021), mixed media installation [Component 7]

In Component 7, the idea of alignment is embodied in a different way from the more physical components. A video shows a crosswalk, with people walking both directions, which over time is covered in shadow. It's a moment where people, who are busy with their own business, are aligned with another dimension (shadow). This alignment creates a connection and mediation between separate dimensions or bodies.

Most of the pieces in the show include the experience of contact between human bodies and separation of the bodies. There's always some kind of a screen, or aperture, or wall that divides them. So, the body has to do something (alignment, connection, mediation) or touch the other body or thing, in order not to remain as a separate fragment.