

Ohio University/Lancaster

Yong Soon Min: Hitting Home

1 - 19 April/
Opening Reception, 1 April, 3-6 p.m.

By Fred Kalister

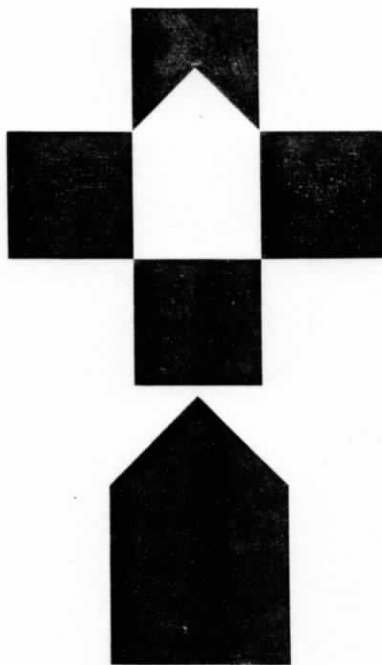
Yong Soon Min, Visiting Instructor at Ohio University since 1981, has gained curatorial and critical attention in Ohio predominantly for her thoughtful, provocative installations. She is by training, however, a printmaker, and in 1982 was chosen for a Baker Award grant for research to produce a new suite of etchings.

She has cut plates into shapes of simple houses and Greek crosses, but rather than begin etching them, she has been using the plates as templates in a series of drawings. One could view the drawings as preliminary studies, but they, and the spontaneous medium, have taken a much deeper hold on the artist, compelling her to work on a great variety of formal and associative possibilities. She is on a complex journey of discovery; the series of drawings is titled *Hitting Home*.

She wrote us that "The images of the house and the cross are used for all their excessive baggage of references and connotations. Their strong identity in an art historical context as formal language is also part of this baggage. These images are both pure and engaged; they pertain to a socio-aesthetic dynamic. . . I'm intrigued with the variety of relationships that the house and the cross forms can enter into and with their resultant generation of new forms and meanings."

Though the forms are simple break-ups of the square, and although Min began her career strongly influenced by Minimalism, her complex thinking and the process of discovery in this series becomes apparent. What intrigued us about *Voice Over Flicker*, her installation at O.U.'s Seigfred Gallery in the late fall of 1982 (reviewed by Leslie S. Curtis,

Dialogue, Jan./Feb. 1983, p. 11), was the complexity and interplay of personal narrative with quotes (uncredited) mined from Western and Oriental literature and oral poetry. Her imagination and intelligence reminded us of the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, whose eclectic and arcane reading is a prospecting for nuggets of imaginative, philosophic, affective brilliance. In *Voice Over Flicker*, Min's nuggets were mounted very carefully on the piers across from the mirror tiles in which the viewer had to confront his own image and use the quotations and Min's personal narrative in a subjective/objective, introspective dialogue. Many



Yong Soon Min, from *Hitting Home* series, 1984, graphite on paper. Photo: Joel Hakken.

portions of that work dealt with the sense of place and home, and, conversely, the feelings of alienation and void we find in ourselves.

The theme of the house and home has been a long-term preoccupation with Yong Soon Min. Born in South Korea, she moved to the United States at age seven and was deliberate in her rejection of Asian culture. As she wrote about the "excessive baggage" of the

house and cross signs, symbols, and formal language, her discussion seemed particularly Western (she became a U.S. citizen in 1971), and in many respects she is thoroughly Western, but where is she, indeed where is any of us truly "at home"? She quoted Novalis (from *Fragments*): "Philosophy is really homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere. Where, then, are we going? Always to our home." Min's drawings seem to emanate from the un-ease, the dis-ease of contemporary life yearning for that security, for a spiritual home while we are threatened with total annihilation and a plethora of other fears and humiliations. Life is obviously no more safe, and probably more censored, in South Korea. On her visit to Seoul in 1978, shortly after the assassination attempt on President Park, she found that her relatives' expensive apartment, a high-rise within easy view of the President's blue mansion, was completely blocked from that view and had been even before the assassination attempt, for "security reasons." That experience with 'home' generated the installation piece titled *House of Cards* (1981), which treated the tenuous nature of political structures.

The Greek cross, while seeming to offer spiritual security and comforting orthodoxy, is also the shape used by the International Red Cross, and is, therefore, fraught with alarm. The intersection of the shape, equal on all sides, holds powerful forces in balance, for the moment, but it, and they, cast a deepening shadow on all our houses. These fairly literal associations are, of course, only a way in; Min's work speaks on many levels: metaphoric, symbolic, formal, personal, and poetic. This exhibit will present us with mirrors that have both Western and Eastern connotations, and in which we can glimpse realities of the world and of ourselves.