

## Jean Shin

Frederieke Taylor

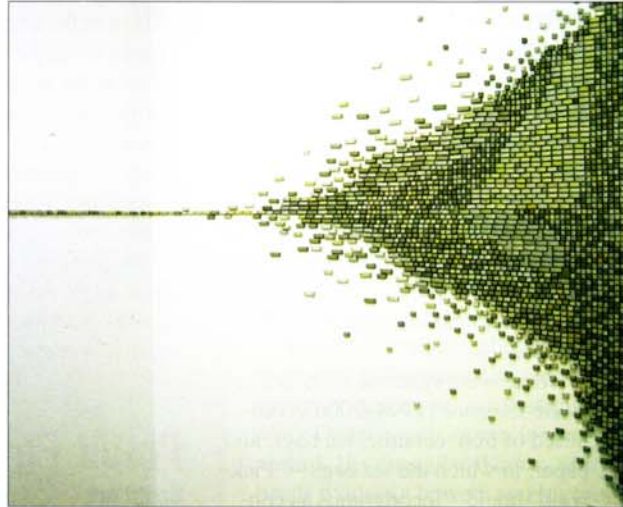
The staccato rhythm of typing that continuously pervaded the gallery was a sound both familiar and mysterious in its disembodied amplification. Jean Shin plumbed this dichotomy in “Key Promises,” her intriguing installation that used the trope of communication by computers to create a kind of concrete poem.

Shin has long made assemblages from weathered items that have functional and intimate relationships to the body—old clothes, umbrellas, prescription eyeglasses. Here she used keyboards—objects touched by rote with fingertips. At the entrance there was a two-channel video titled *Duet* (2007). On facing walls, monitors showed keyboards being typed on without hands in a noisy rat-a-tat. This ghostly conversation evoked the kind of exchanges people carry on by way of technology yet did so using decidedly low-tech means: Shin maneuvered the keys, which were attached strings underneath, as in a player piano.

On the walls between the two monitors, Shin mounted hundreds of command keys. A loose sprinkling of “enter” keys invited viewers to follow their path around the room, as they seemed to break into a syncopated rhythm of “pause/break,” eventually coalescing into one long, uninterrupted line of “control” set at eye level. On the last wall, “return,” “end,” “home,” and “help” constituted a dense, cloudlike mosaic, with a scattering of “alt” below and “esc” veering off above.

The accumulation of the keys drew attention to the subtle variations in tone, wear, size, and position of text within their supposed uniformity. At the same time, the reconfiguration of the command keys brought out the meanings inherent in these words that we tap without thinking.

—Hilarie M. Sheets



Jean Shin, *Key Promises*, 2007, computer command keycaps, installation view, dimensions variable. Frederieke Taylor.