

Paige K. Bradley, Hara Museum, Tokyo, *Artforum*, February 2019

## TOKYO

### Lee Kit

#### HARA MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Lee Kit's exhibition "We used to be more sensitive." turned most of the rooms of this 1930s-era building into a temporary home for feather-light interventions. While *painting* in Lee's practice can certainly refer to the process of applying paint to a substrate, it is just as likely to refer to that of articulating light through the utterly utilitarian but thoroughly contemporary means of a video projector. What is most thrilling is when he throws footage of flapping fabric, or that of a painter in a studio adjusting a work in progress, onto plain or painted planes in a kind of trompe l'oeil of process and product that rings true to his own assessment of these installations as "situations." The artist is more interested in politics than in aesthetics, as he noted in an interview with this publication in 2016. The practice of art can be political, he believes, and so can its reception.

This sparsely installed show, whose components were not individually titled, homed in on such nondescript imagery as a pair of human feet hovering over a blue-light-bathed wood floor in a video—technically of completely average quality, neither high definition nor remarkably

low grade, and screened on a bare wall via a projector placed on the floor—with subtitles that for the most part make exceedingly minor riffs on the same essential statement, including DEEP INSIDE, YOU NEVER LET THIS GO. The skin color and corresponding ethnicity of these living feet are indistinct. Hung in a short hallway adjacent to the museum's café was a painting on a thick sheet of cardboard with a sky-blue splotch hovering above a field of metallic gray, embellished with the plain yet loaded line MOST OF THE TIME, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM LOOKING AT. (The last two words of that line



View of "Lee Kit," 2018.

could barely be discerned beneath the silver expanse.) Words put in an appearance just so their meaning can evaporate. Rather than producing an effect, Lee effaces, making things visible but not necessarily available.

Looking at Lee's humble work feels like a tremendous relief, because it's so obvious how to make it stop, unlike almost everything else in this world—and it barely exists in the first place. The projectors were, after all, mostly situated right on the floor or otherwise in uncovered plastic tubs—ready to be moved. The artist's expression exists mostly by way of a plugged-in cord, easily pulled out and movable to a new context as needed, or desired. Maybe it's like twilight, the most beautiful part of a day, because it's usually already gone. The same can be true of institutions, including the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, which will permanently close its doors in December 2020, due to the unsuitability of what was built as a private residence for the purpose of presenting exhibitions, and in particular an inability to provide barrier-free access. But don't fret. Opening and closing might be all that a museum—or a show inside it—actually does. We are supposed to provide the rest.

—Paige K. Bradley