

Intersections with Myung Feyen  
by Malcolm Sutton

The last time I intersected with Myung was via Skype. In the background I could see the white wall of her new apartment, and in the foreground was Myung. She showed me the wooden box that stores her cinema tickets. We talked about her life and her work and this website.

Before Skype there were intersections in Chicago, Toronto and The Hague.

Myung is more interested in the idea of becoming than many people are. Having us all write down our desires every five years. That those desires will change every five years or maybe remain consistent.

Myung extracts sand and water from places around the world by way of people who come to visit her.

Before coming to The Hague, we (my wife, Amber, and I) were asked to bring along some sand from Ottawa, where I was living at the time. We were concerned about getting busted by the airport security for bringing the sample, and in fact we didn't bring one.

There is something about having to pass through airports, which seem like the narrowest of spaces.

Sand carries so much with it, it is hard to know where to begin. But I hope that I can find a contradiction in sand.

Myung has many projects and they seem to be moving into the past and into the future. They suggest a long view. The sand, the water, the cinema tickets, the passport

photos of friends, the portraits of her parents taken every time they meet, the *Momentum* project that tracks friends' lives at five-year intervals.

We can't really speak of Myung's work without bringing up containers. I don't want to extend this to the idea of containment though. There are containers for the sand and water, a wooden box for the cinema ticket receipts, the room on which the names of her guests are written.

But containment is something else. The containers are functional, though they may be precisely designed for their purpose. They hold their objects. I haven't seen the sand and the water containers, but I know that the sand and water must be in containers of some kind. Containers are as much for transport as they are for containment.

Water is already a kind of contradiction to sand, in its singularity. Water seems like one, and sand like many, though both need containers.

Sand is often called on to represent the eternal and the infinite. I hesitate with these words.

When our son, Anselm, was born, Myung sent him a mobile in the mail.

Sand is so often used for us to understand large, abstract ideas that are otherwise ungraspable. And because it is a natural substance, it links those big abstract human ideas like infinity and eternity to nature, making those human ideas seem as though they are natural too.

But here sand operates through other human channels. Myung's art is to pull sand out of the natural and out of the abstract.

The sand comes from particular countries, just as the passport photos. In a way the sand escapes its home country only in order to recognize that it in fact has a nationality.

In that way it enters history.

Myung removes those things from the natural so that they become historical.

Now sand is closer in likeness to passport photos than to infinity. This is a contradiction that is worth realizing.

Passport photos are now closer to sand, but not in order for them to become eternal and infinite.

Myung quietly creates vectors. When I think of her work I see careful lines drawn across maps. Those very often cross in The Hague.

And they represent people who I would want to meet and have dinner with. Who might even feel like family though I have not met them.

The friends who bring Myung sand pull the sand into a narrative of communication and travel. That narrative, too, makes the sand enter history.

I think that this way of looking at Myung's work is so different from what a first impression might give. It is an antinomy of that first impression.

Somehow the sand and the water collected by friends are guarantors of our intersecting with Myung at her apartment in The Hague.

I have a poor memory, which is why my intersections are not better filled out.

The sand and the water now have a before and after. Previously there was no before and after for them, and now there is, with the narrative and the immigration. And now the sand is side-by-side with the water and the passport photos, and has, therefore, a diachronic and synchronic existence. Before it just existed outside of this.

Having us all write down our desires every five years.

And that our images in passport photos will change in order to show two divergent trajectories.

The most noticeable change is likely our biological aging.

But the second, which is so important, is the moment of the photo, signified via our haircuts and our collars and our glasses.

Fashion somehow enters in this way as much as whatever creases our faces show. Surely there is another contradiction here. We are not outside of the fashion of the moment. There is a year and the year is written down on our hair and clothes.

In Chicago, when I arrived to meet Myung, we went for a long walk from Logan Square along California to Chicago Ave, where we ate pulled pork sandwiches and fries. She took photos of me and the funny restaurant.

In the first round of *Momentum*, six years ago, I must have said I wanted to have a child in the next five years, and that happened.

*Momentum* asks us to do something that causes a small fissure in our lives. We are asked to speak for ourselves of our own lives in a way that we are never asked to. It is like a census that cares about our desires. Surely, when we write about ourselves, we frame our lives in relation to her project.

The work feels in opposition to the internet, whatever the internet means, and perhaps this is why meeting by Skype felt the way it did. Myung's work casts the long view, the span of a human life. Her work has a strange faith in something that the internet says no to. There is delay. There is the faith that something will arrive even after weeks or months, or after a long silence.

The internet says no to delay. And no to sand, even when sand enters history alongside the internet. *Momentum* feels very different from Facebook. But at the same time we can talk

about them in the same sentence, and look for contradictions.

When Amber and I met her in The Hague, we had dinner prepared in a tiny shared kitchen outside of her apartment. Her friends are of different nationalities but we probably spoke in English. We ate outdoors in a small courtyard, which one can imagine as a point where narrative lines were crossing.

This moving image seems like another iteration of her work which must so often run seamlessly from her life in order to include ours.