

# This artist signed the national anthem for Super Bowl audiences. With her MIT show, she nudges visitors toward 'respecting our deafness.'

By [Diti Kohli](#) Globe Staff, Updated February 13, 2020, 3:09 p.m.





Christina Sun Kim's exhibition "Off The Charts" opens at the MIT List Visual Arts Center. ROBERT RIEGER/ROBERT REIGER

If you watched the Super Bowl, you likely missed Christine Sun Kim. As Demi Lovato stood at the 50-yard line to sing the national anthem, Kim was positioned at the 40 — to interpret the song into American Sign Language. A day later, her byline turned up in The New York Times with an essay that outlined the ups and downs of her experience.

Last week, MIT List Visual Arts Center opened an exhibition of works by the California-born, Berlin-based artist. The show features a dozen hand-drawn infographics, each breaking down a personal decision from Kim's life. We caught up with the artist via email to ask about the MIT show and the Super Bowl. The interview has been condensed and lightly edited.

**Q.** You recently wrote [an op-ed in The New York Times](#) about your experience signing the national anthem and “America the Beautiful” at the Super Bowl. How could that experience be improved for you and the viewers?

**A.** I'm grateful that the National Association of the Deaf and the NFL gave me this opportunity to sign the anthem. The whole experience was incredible and the Jumbotron in the stadium showed me in picture-in-picture (PIP) the entire time. It's worth mentioning that I lost my [expletive] when Jennifer Lopez and Shakira came out for the halftime performance!

As for the viewers outside the stadium, I think the best solution would be to do PIP on the television broadcast so that everyone can watch together. Or the other option is to truly commit to the separate feed for ASL users only, without cutting away from the performer.

**Q.** Do you think that experience will make it into your art?

**A.** I'm sure it'll seep into my practice somehow. I've been thinking about patriotism and choreography in general.

**Q.** If you had to describe your upcoming MIT exhibition in three words, what would they be?

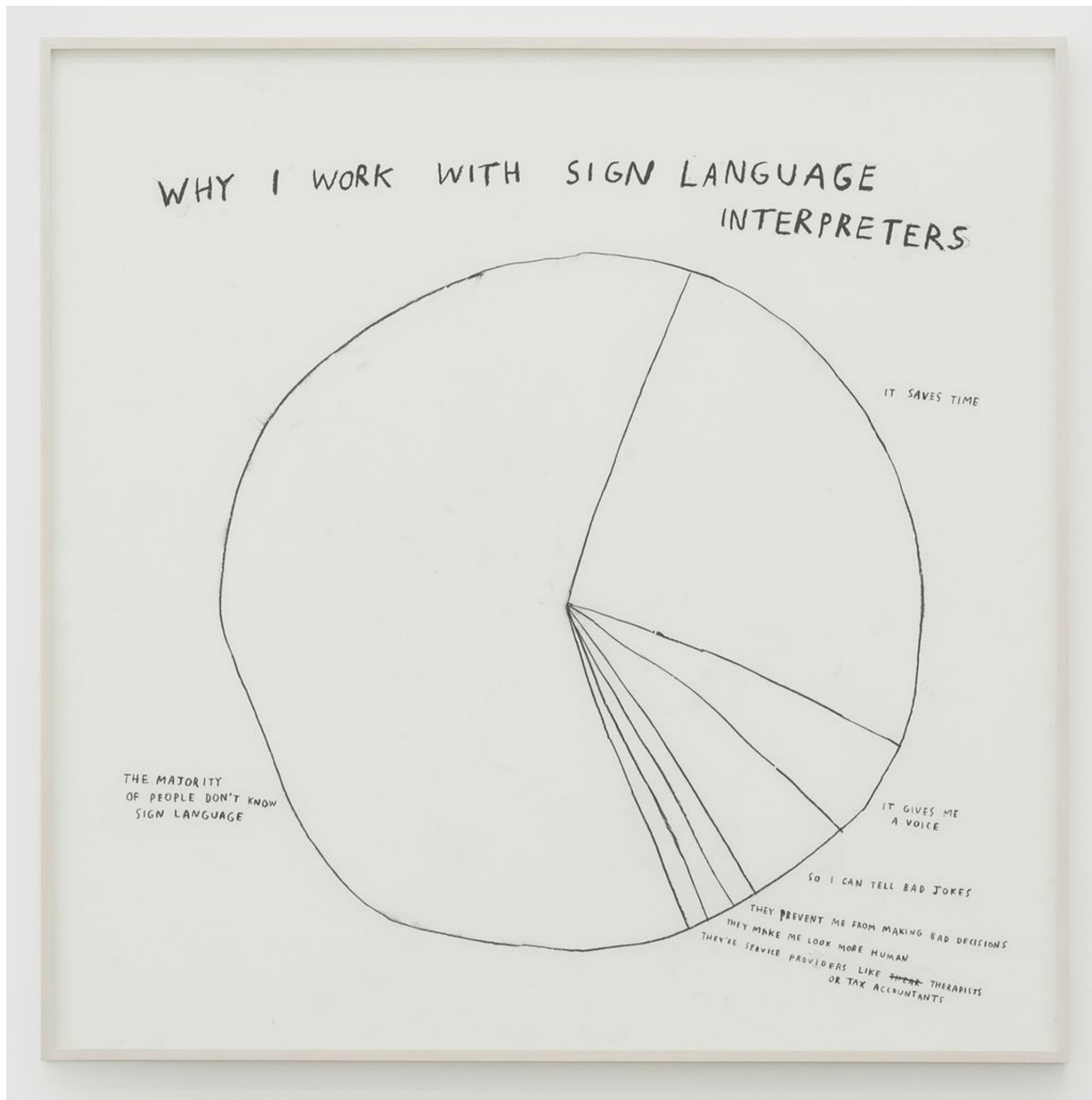
**A.** More pie charts.

**Q.** Tell me why you drew them with charcoal.

**A.** I love how messy charcoal is and how I can show these drawings in such a clean space like this.

**Q.** What's your favorite piece in the exhibition? Why?

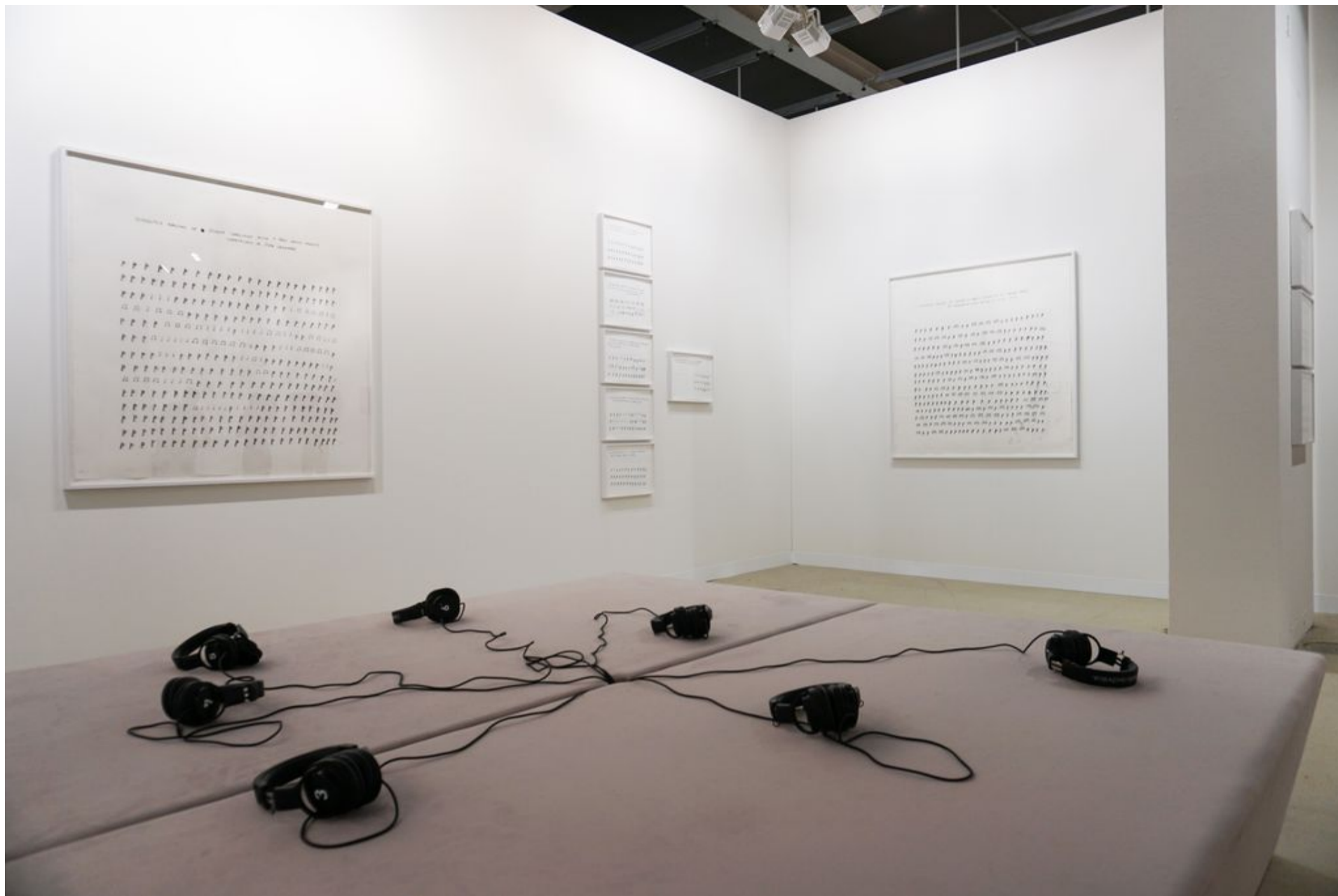
**A.** I recently made three new drawings that offer three different POVs of the alphabet in American Sign Language: speller, bird, and lurker. So they're my current favorites. The rest are mostly about my personal decisions as a deaf person.



An example of Kim's pie chart drawings. CHRISTINE SUN KIM (CUSTOM CREDIT)/CHRISTINE SUN KIM

**Q.** You also chose to incorporate an audio installation. Tell me about it.

**A.** I did not want to play songs for my child that I am not familiar with because I'd like to know exactly what she's listening to. So I wrote a score and invited seven parent-artists to make songs plus write a description to make it conceptually accessible for deaf people including myself. It's called "One Week of Lullabies for Roux."



Kim's exhibition includes an audio installation, titled "One Week of Lullabies for Roux." WHITE SPACE BEIJING (CUSTOM CREDIT)/CHRISTINE SUN KIM

**Q.** What lessons do you hope audiences walk away with after seeing your collection?

**A.** No lessons, just want it to be something that sits in the back of their mind, and stays with them in terms of respecting our deafness and sign language.


**OFF THE CHARTS**

Through April 12. At the MIT Visual Arts Center, 20 Ames St., Cambridge. 617-253-4680, [listart.mit.edu](http://listart.mit.edu)

Diti Kohli can be reached at [diti.kohli@globe.com](mailto:diti.kohli@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter @ditikohli\_.

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