

whitewall

CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

SPRING 2024



THE ARTIST ISSUE

LEE UFAN - HAEGUE YANG - KIM YUN SHIN -
MINJUNG KIM - MINSUK CHO

CHANEL

HIGH JEWELRY

N°5 NECKLACE IN 18K WHITE GOLD* AND DIAMONDS,
FEATURING A 55.55-CARAT EMERALD-CUT DFL TYPE IIA DIAMOND.





Ana, Fadia, Jiahui, Nyajuok & Violet, Rome

Gucci Ancora, Spring Summer 2024
By David Sims



MaxMara

FROM THE EDITOR

Our annual spring Art Issue is one that we've come to look forward to each year. The heart of *WhiteWall*, which has always existed at the intersection of art, design, lifestyle, and fashion, is and always will be art. And over the past several years, this issue has been a chance to focus on a specific country or region. It is a joy for us to zoom in on one geographical area and its diaspora. It is a chance for research, individual discovery, in-depth conversations, and a greater understanding of culture, history, and humanity.

We look at South Korea, and specifically Seoul, at a time when the art world globally has their eyes set on the market and creative output as well. The success of Frieze Seoul has caught all our attention, and we've seen international galleries like Pace, Perrotin, Gladstone, König, Peres Projects, White Cube, and more open up Seoul locations. Galleries like PKM, Gallery Hyundai, and Kukje Gallery have been well established for decades, bridging Western and Korean artists and collectors. And Seoul is also home to many alternative art spaces, like WHITE NOISE, Factory2, Primary Practice, Alternative Space LOOP, alongside independent curators and major institutions like the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art and Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art. The community is filled with vibrancy and a strong culture of engagement, patronage, and support.

Artists like Hejum Ba, Gwangsoo Park, Sungsil Ryu, and Yeonsu Ju join fashion designers like Hyun Park, Seokwoon Yun, and Sohee Park, as well as designers like Kwangho Lee and Yong Ju Lee in a cross-section of the impact of Korea's next generation of creative leaders.

In the issue you'll find the meditative work of artist Lee Ufan, captured for one of our covers at his studio in Japan. Minjung Kim, also on our cover, spoke candidly with us about her lifelong practice and career. Architect Minsuk Cho discusses the inspiration and design behind this summer's forthcoming Serpentine Pavilion. Haegue Yang, speaking to us from Seoul, shared the process behind three diverse approaches to her projects—performance, sculpture, and site-specific installations. And Kim Yun Shin expressed how she connects with nature first before engaging with materials of wood and stone for her sculptural process.

The coming together of these pages also always falls at the start of the year, creating a great source of inspiration for our editorial team, and we hope, for our readers. What a joy it has been to put together this issue's focus on the outstanding art, design, and culture of South Korea. And it has been a pleasure to work with Susan Shin, our esteemed guest editor for the issue.

Katy Donoghue
EDITOR IN CHIEF



DIOR

HIGH JEWELRY

LES JARDINS DE LA COUTURE COLLECTION
Necklace in white and yellow gold, diamonds, pink sapphires, emeralds,
pink spinels, tsavorite and purple garnets and rubies.

LE CLUB ARMCHAIR, PHOTOGRAPHED BY PAOLO ROVERSI



Poliform



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HOMME PLISSÉ

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FROM THE PUBLISHERS

Welcome to South Korea! As we are continuing our regional approach to the annual spring Art Issue, this year we are dedicating our focus to South Korea.

The Land of Morning Calm has become a major regional and international cultural center. With its global music industry leadership, prolific film and television production, and several generations of fine art regional dominance, we are exploring old and new talents of South Korea, including their approach to their craft and how it is influencing the world at large.

As spring is blooming everywhere, we are contemplating the beauty, the impact, and the legacy of work by artists, designers, filmmakers, architects, and collectors alike.

The new generation of Korean collectors is also changing the game with its cultural codes. This spring the blossoming is particularly important to our vision of renewal and new hope for beauty and peace everywhere.

We hope you will enjoy our curation and awakenings as much as we have while researching and conducting the interviews.

This issue would have not been made possible without the help on the ground of our guest editor, Susan Shin, who made the local exploration a pleasure and helped us secure some of the most interesting interviews.

Thank you all, and we hope that this year's spring blooms will bring joy to all.

Michael Klug & Laurent Moïsi

FOUNDER, PUBLISHER, EDITOR AT LARGE
COO, ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER



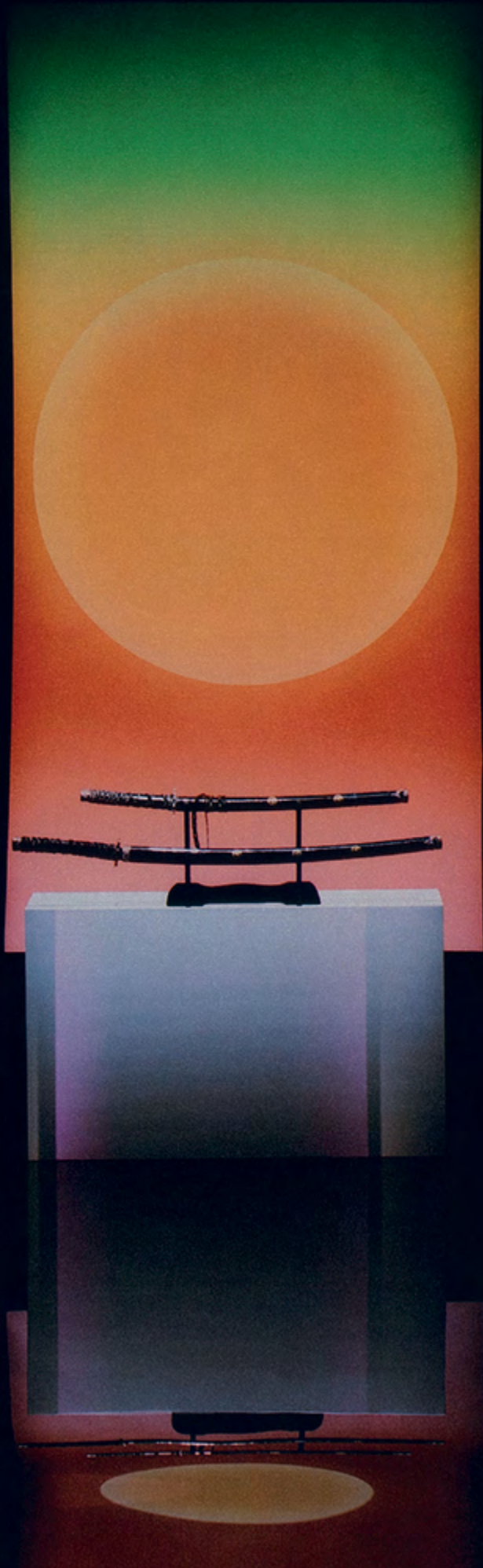
Spring is blooming



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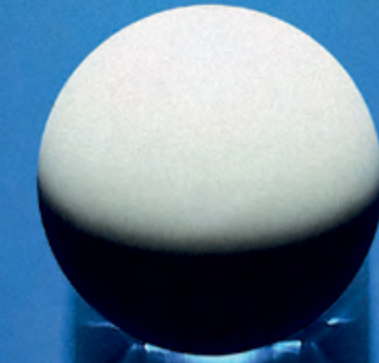
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"MON PARFUM, RIEN D'AUTRE"*
NICOLAS VU, CO-FOUNDER

*"NOTHING BUT MY PERFUME"



INTRODUCING A NEW ERA OF PERFUMERY:
CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION TO SERVE LONGEVITY AND CREATIVITY

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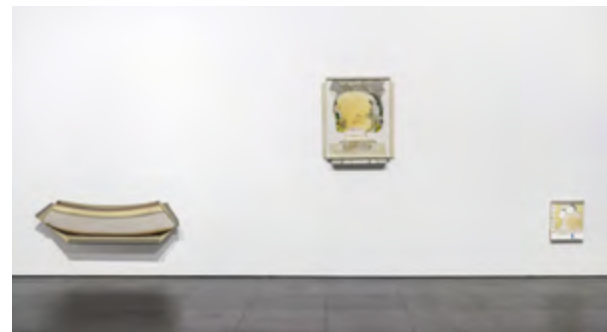
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PORTRAIT OF LEE UFAN IN HIS STUDIO, PHOTO BY TETSUO KASHIWADA.

MINJUNG KIM

MINJUNG KIM, MOUNTAIN, 2021, INK ON MULBERRY HANJI PAPER, 136 X 173.5 CM, GALLERY HYUNDAI, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. © MINJUNG KIM.



"BEAUTY LIES IN THE DETAILS OF THE GRANDEST STRUCTURES, AND THE FINEST." ORAÏTO, CREATOR OF SHAPES, WEARS THE VACHERON CONSTANTIN TRADITIONNELLE.

VACHERON CONSTANTIN | ONE OF NOT MANY.
GENÈVE

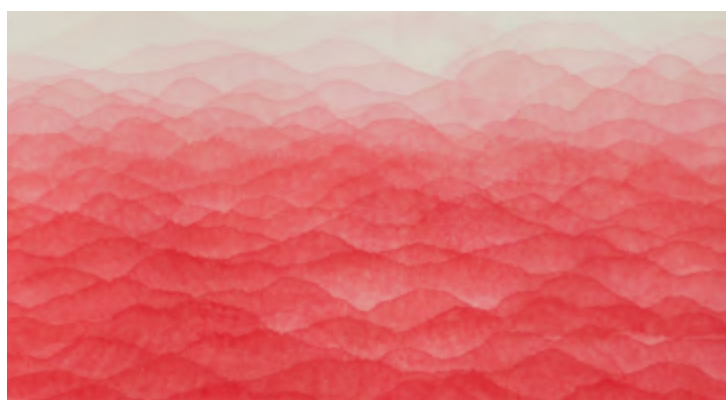
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D.154.2 ARMCHAIR GIO PONTI



Molteni & C

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Sarah Bochicchio is a writer, researcher, and editor. Her work focuses on art, fashion, history, and gender, with a particular interest in the way images and objects shape conceptions of the self. She has contributed to journalistic, academic, and museum publications, including *Art Papers*, *Apollo*, *Garage*, *The Outline*, *Art & Object*, *Vestoj*, *British Art Studies*, and the recent exhibition catalogue for *The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She is currently pursuing her PhD in History of Art at Yale University.

ANDREW HUFF

Andrew Huff is a writer and artist based in New York. He has written about and reviewed exhibitions throughout North America and Europe, and has interviewed a mix of emerging and established artists from around the world. He is the co-founder of Chapter, a communications and business development agency that represents architects, landscape architects, and design brands. He studied Art History and Visual & Media Studies at Duke University.



TETSUO KASHIWADA

Tetsuo Kashiwada (b. 1988) engages with the people and natural landscapes he encounters on his travels, using photography to explore questions or feelings of unease that arise. In his work, he addresses environmental issues and the separation and coexistence of humankind and nature.



SUSAN SHIN

Susan Shin is the founder of Shin Advisors, a global brand strategy, marketing and communications consultancy specializing in art&culture, fashion, entertainment, technology, and philanthropy advisory. A former intellectual property lawyer, Susan is a luxury brand strategist working with some of the most prominent luxury brands as well as iconic artists, museums, galleries and organizations. She has curated and produced several significant, global art exhibitions.

Susan is an avid art collector, and is the Arts and Culture Advisor to WWD Korea as well as the Founding Advisor of Artivist. She also serves on the Boards of several art-related, beauty and hospitality companies.



Pinault Collection

Exhibition
Bourse de Commerce
Paris 20.03—02.09



Peter Doig, *Pelican (Stag)*, 2003-2004, Pinault Collection © Peter Doig. All Rights Reserved. DACS/ADAGP, Paris 2024

Le monde comme il va





1.

PART PAST, PART FUTURE

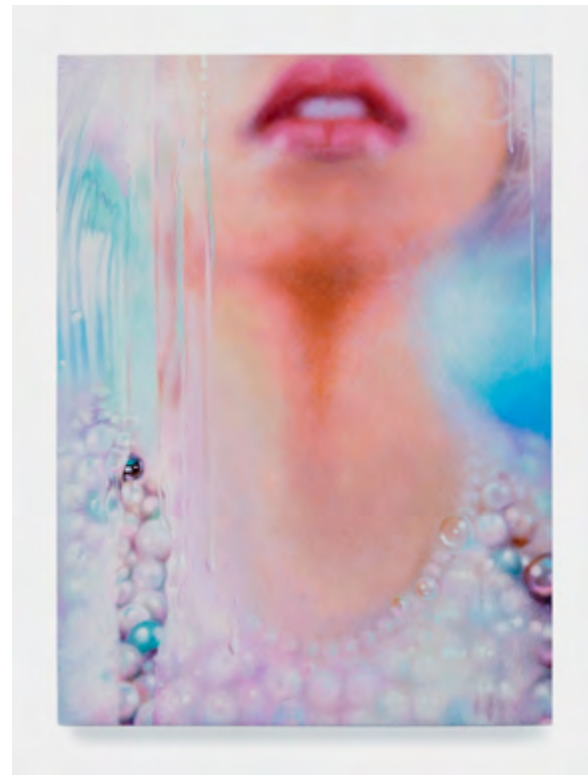
- 1. Art Sonje Center (ASJC) presents "I want to eat mangos in the bathtub" (March 8-May 12)—an exhibition by the Antwerp-based artist Rinus Van de Velde that explores narratives blurring fact and fiction. (Rinus Van de Velde, *Mountain*, 2019, cardboard, paint, wood, and mixed media, 450 x 400 x 280 cm. Antoine_van_Kraam, courtesy of the artist.)
- 2. ASJC also presents "36 Months of Loss" (February 16-May 12) by the Berlin-based artist Dan Lie that investigates the meaning of existence within the cycle of birth and death. (Installation view of "Dan Lie: 36 Months of Loss," Art Sonje Center.)
- 3. Curated by Ahn Jae Woo at Amado Art Space, a group show named "The Mussolini Podcast" features riveting work by Jungin Kim, MinOhrichar, Ahn Jun, Nayoung Jeong, Asaran Jeong, Yun-Woo Choi, and H.J.H. (Yun-woo Choi, *Just Another Day... Somewhere I Belong*, 20240306, newspaper, resin, and stainless steel wire, dimensions variable, 2024, courtesy of the artist.)
- 4. Lehmann Maupin Seoul reveals its latest presentation of paintings by the New York-based artist Marilyn Minter, on view through April 27. (Photo by OnArt Studio, courtesy of the artist, Salon 94, New York; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London; and Baldwin Gallery, Aspen.)
- 5. Open through May 5 at Peres Projects is "Imagine" by the Swiss artist Yves Scherer—the artist's first solo show with the gallery and his first in Seoul. (Courtesy of Peres Projects.)
- 6. At Gladstone Gallery through April 13, Ian Cheng's exhibition "Thousand Lives" explores art that adapts to humans, including simulations, a 50-minute anime video in the Unity video game engine, and more. (Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery.)



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Gideon Appah The Play of Thought

With You Ever, be Here Again?, 2023 (detail), acrylic and oil on canvas 240 x 230 cm © Gideon Appah

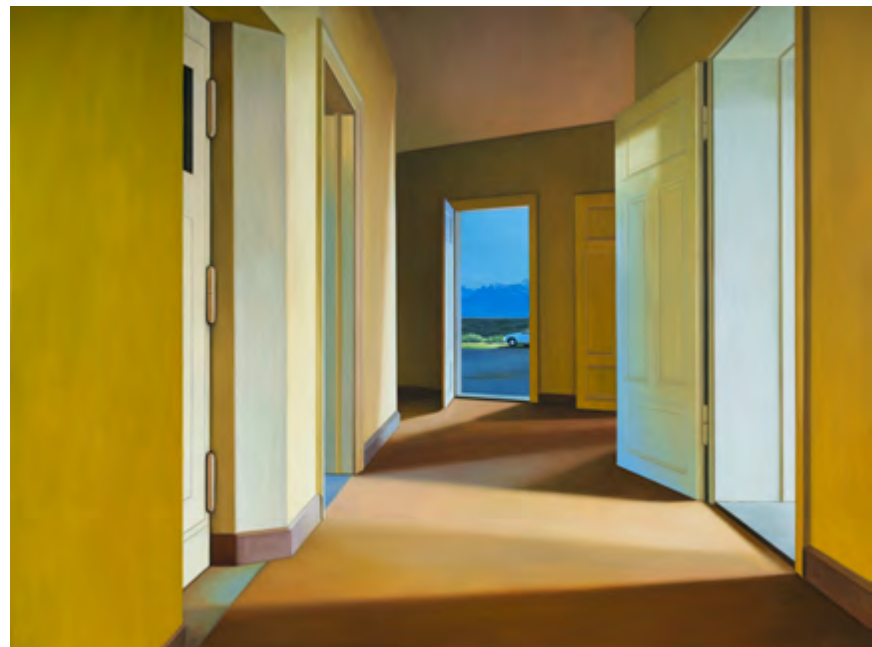


1.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

- 1. For the 2024 Venice Biennale, Koo Jeong A will represent South Korea with "Odorama Cities," co-curated by Jacob Fabricius and Lee Seolhui. (Koo Jeong A, *Constellation Congress*, 2010-11, courtesy of the artist.)
- 2. Zhang Yingnan's "Melting" exhibition, open through April 12 at König Seoul, shows the Beijing-based artist's works in his first solo show. (Zhang Yingnan, *A long journey*, 2024, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm, courtesy of the artist and König Seoul.)
- 3. At Perrotin Seoul, GaHee Park's show "Fun and Games" is on view through April 6, presenting nine new paintings that showcase the artist's signature hand. (GaHee Park, *Shadow Woman*, 2024, oil on linen, 18 x 15 in., photo by Paul Litherland, courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.)
- 4. On view through March 13 at Pace Seoul is "Time Lapse," an exhibition of figurative paintings by eight Korean artists. (Jinhee Kim, *In the Theater*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 160 x 130 cm., © Jinhee Kim, courtesy of the artist and ThisWeekendRoom.)
- 5. Artwork from the late pioneering Brazilian artist Lygia Pape is seen in her first solo exhibition in Asia at White Cube Seoul, open until May 25. (Lygia Pape, *Ttéia*, courtesy of the artist and White Cube Seoul.)

2.



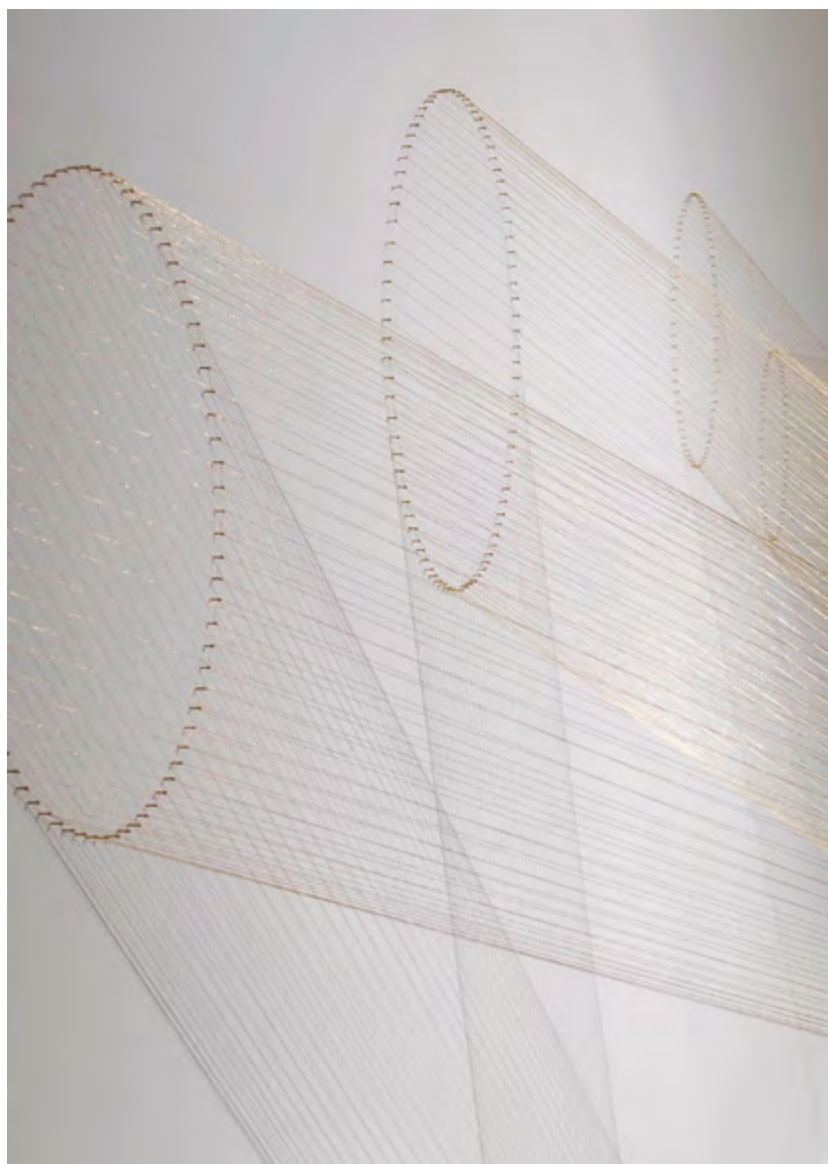
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5.



Christoph Büchel, *The Diamond Maker* (2020-ongoing)
Photo: Michael Huviler

Fondazione Prada

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1.



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3.

SEOUL STYLE



5.

- 1. The Leeum Museum of Art has launched a public program with the Chanel Culture Fund named "IDEA Museum: Ecological Transformation," inaugurated by a collaboration with the artist Tomás Saraceno. (Courtesy of Chanel.)
- 2. We1ldone's Spring/Summer 2024 collection by creative director Jessica Jung builds upon her artistic references, focused on works by the artist Do Ho Suh. (Courtesy of We1ldone.)
- 3. The creative director of CHARM'S, Yohan Kang, has created empowering new pieces for its latest collection, emphasized by the many cultures it's inspired by. (Courtesy of CHARM'S.)
- 4. Wooyoungmi's Spring/Summer 2024 line embraces the island of Jeju as its muse, inspired by its gorgeous contrasts. (Courtesy of Wooyoungmi.)
- 5. Designers Jenny Kim and Haeun Lee of KIMMY.J produced a new line of socially meaningful streetwear pieces, made of varying textures and fabrics that pay homage to their influences. (Courtesy of KIMMY.J.)
- 6. Gentle Monster's 2024 collection features wrap-around silhouettes and unveils its take on goggle frames. (Photo by Elizaveta Porodina, courtesy of Gentle Monster.)



4.



6.

JEFF WALL
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SUMMER SHOW
MAY 19 – AUG 11, 2024

MATISSE – INVITATION TO THE VOYAGE
SEP 22, 2024 – JAN 26, 2025



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Park Chan-kyong, *Citizen's Forest*, 2016, three-channel video, directional sound, 26 minutes 32 seconds, © Park Chan-kyong, courtesy of Art Sonje Center, Kukje Gallery.

“PARK CHAN-KYONG: GATHERING”

Resurrecting tradition at Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art in a sweeping exhibition honoring the filmmaker.

By Erica Silveman

On view now through October 13, 2024, at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art in Washington, D.C., is the exhibition “Gathering,” from Seoul-based visionary Park Chan-kyong. In an enthralling meeting of film and photography, the perceptive artist grants visitors access to his poignant investigations of contemporary Korea through a highly nuanced, creative lens.

Park studied fine arts at Seoul National University and California Institute of the Arts. His artistic prowess is a soulful patchwork of interest and intention—a dream-like trail of folk traditions, historical catastrophes, and stirring literary references leading to a haunted landscape of beauty and suffering within post–Cold War South Korean society and state. Works on display in the show, including *Citizen’s Forest*, *Belated Bosal*, *Fukushima: Autoradiography*, and *Child Soldier*, ingeniously layer scientific scrutiny, artistic meditation, and technical production, for a transformative personal and collective experience.

Brimming with tender reflection, query, and interrogation, Park’s

sweeping exhibition honors both heritage and modernity, allowing ample space for an open-minded dialogue on the salvation of Mother Nature and the safekeeping of humanity. Recently, *Whitewall* had the opportunity to speak with the groundbreaking artist about the anthropological imagination, radical disconnection, and the newest form of superstition.

WHITEWALL: *Can you share elements of your artistic process, which thoughtfully balances the crafts of photography and film to both document and impart emotional insight on Korean heritage?*

PARK CHAN-KYONG: Research, production, materials, media, et cetera, seem to be of almost equal importance. What is always most important and difficult is conveying the profundity of an event. It seems that the only way to create a good dynamic between meaning and effect, indexes and metaphors, is to constantly reciprocate.

Rather than renewing Korean traditions, I try to find newness that



Portrait of Park Chan-kyong, courtesy of Park Chan-kyong.

already exists in the traditions. Honestly, to me, traditions are often newer than contemporary culture. It stimulates some anthropological imagination and also provides insight into interpreting various contemporary issues. As long as the imagination and insight can be conveyed well, it doesn’t really matter what the medium is. However, photos combined with text and videos combined with sound are essential for me as a storyteller.

WW: *The three-channel video Citizen’s Forest provides the framework for this presentation, in which sweeping video invokes a landscape scroll painting. Within this piece, you spark a stirring encounter between folk culture, Minjung painting, and poetry of the late Kim Soo-young. What inspired you to shape this particular dialogue, making way for a meditation on contemporary tragedies endured by South Korea?*

PCK: The reason I think tradition is important is because Korean society has become so radically disconnected from tradition. The causes are the Korean War, which brought about complete destruction, and rapid westernization and modernization. There are many artists who have paid attention to this issue, but in literature, Kim Soo-young, and in art, Oh Yun, have created some of the most notable works.

The ghosts of history that Kim and Oh deal with seem to have a slightly different status nowadays. Although the ghosts in my work are somewhat scary, they express a certain indifference. To be more precise, those ghosts are aware of the indifference of modern audiences. There have been various historical tragedies, but it is difficult for us today to go beyond consuming a constant flow of tragedies. That’s why the ghosts that appear in my work do not perform actions that can be clearly identified.

WW: *The Film Belated Bosal is quite sculptural, offering a mosaic of black-and-white imagery that both compels and unnerves. How did you develop this visceral work of impending environmental catastrophe?*

PCK: I didn’t think it was sculptural, but thank you for putting it that way. Hearing reviews like that makes me think about my work again. Maybe it’s because the negative-inverted image emphasizes the object’s texture in a strange way? For example, there is a scene with heavy snowfall at the end of the movie, and because the white is inverted to black, it looks like radioactive fallout is falling in the movie.

This work is paired with Fukushima, Autoradiography. While Fukushima is more of a dry report, *Belated Bosal* deals with a somewhat religious and abstract topic of what “hope” is. I came to think that the paintings and myths depicting the Buddha’s nirvana episode address this issue at a very complex level.

In a state of nirvana, the Buddha shows the soles of his feet to his disciple who arrived late at the funeral, metaphorizing the end of a long period of time, a humble relationship between all things, and the overlap of mourning and hope. If you felt that this work was sculptural in another aspect, it was probably because it was “memorial.” In general, commemorative sculptures are often vertical, but this work emphasizes horizontality in several ways.

WW: *How does the juxtaposition here of Mother Nature, science, humanity, and modern industry immerse viewers in the political realities of South Korea and our collective society?*

PCK: In Japan and Korea, the Fukushima nuclear accident is called March 11th. March 11th made me ask a lot of difficult questions. For example, why did a country that experienced the atomic bomb build so many nuclear power plants? Is radioactivity invisible? Et cetera. But when I actually went to the site of the damage, I was first overwhelmed by the magnificent nature of northeastern Japan.

I was especially impressed by the overgrown plants, since there were no people around. However, my group and I had to cover not only our entire bodies but also our cameras with vinyl. The air was very clear, but I was confused about what clear meant. The biggest fear for me was the feeling that we really don’t know what we are doing to nature and ourselves, with what we call “science and technology.”

WW: *A collaging of fixed and moving images unfolds in Child Soldier, following the uncertain journey of a companionless North Korean soldier, brimming with moments of lost youth and intimate connection to the natural world. How do you expect visitors might react to this project?*

PCK: When this work was exhibited in Korea, I thought many people, I mean mostly anticommunists, might protest against the museum. But it was a bit surprising for me that no one did. I guess I was probably the biggest coward. I tried to show that the most nonpolitical image can be the most political image, but I think it ended up being an apolitical image. Maybe the only one of few apolitical images about North Korea in the world. That can be political in a good way after all. This work is also about censorship in a sense.

WW: *Utilizing imagery that might simultaneously be familiar and unusual to audiences, does memory and awakening perhaps play a role in the evolution and intention of your works?*

PCK: Ultimately, my work is a way to understand history. To me, understanding history does not mean uncovering the truth, but, rather, constantly reconstructing “valuable” memories. Perhaps this is because the experience of my generation, at least, changes and forgets so quickly.

When I describe my work, I often use the term postcolonial unheimlich [unhomeliness]. When I encounter Korean traditions, it feels like home and feels unfamiliar at the same time. It’s like the experience of returning home at night after a trip and bumping into the same corner of furniture again.

WW: *Alongside “Gathering,” you screened your short film Night Fishing at the museum on October 22. The acclaimed work, which won the Golden Bear for Best Short Film at the 61st Berlin International Film Festival, was created in collaboration with your brother, filmmaker Park Chan-wook, and stars singer and actress Lee Jung-hyun. Uniquely shot on an iPhone, how does the film explore your ardent interest in traditional Korean shamanism through the lens of modernity and swift socioeconomic development?*

PCK: We lose close friends and family, and we ourselves die at some point. In the past, the mourning process was complicated and long, so the culture of sufficiently honoring the departed and getting used to death seems to have been much more mature than it is now. The Korean shaman’s Jinogwigut (a ritual to appease the dead and guide them to the underworld), which is featured in the film, uses funerals as a refreshing opportunity to renew the community.

I believe that many of the ills of modern society arise from moving away from this culture. If smartphones are media, we just used the “medium” in its original meaning. Shamans are the oldest form of mediumship, and smartphone technology is the newest form of superstition?

WW: *Do you have any other upcoming projects you would like to shed light on?*

PCK: I have been doing art and film as “projects.” But these days, I want to create something through repetitive daily labor. So I’m trying to paint before I get older and my eyesight gets worse and my hands start shaking.



Park Chan-kyong, *Child Soldier*, 2017-2018, photograph in light box, 83 x 56 x 7 cm, © Park Chan-kyong, courtesy of the artist and Tina Kim Gallery, New York.



Park Chan-kyong, *Child Soldier*, 2017-2018, photograph in light box, 83 x 56 x 7 cm, © Park Chan-kyong, courtesy of the artist and Tina Kim Gallery, New York.



Portrait of Dr. Yiyun Kang, courtesy of Jaeger-LeCoultre.

DR. YIYUN KANG

Reflecting the innovation of watchmaker Jaeger-LeCoultre's Reverso timepiece through art.

By Eliza Jordan

Late last year, Jaeger-LeCoultre presented its most recent “Reverso Stories” exhibition in New York. For its North American premiere, the presentation celebrating the watchmaker’s storied Reverso timepiece from 1931 featured commissioned artworks from its Made of Makers program. Immersing guests into the creative and cultural universe of its design was a multimedia sculptural installation entitled *Origin*, designed by the Korean artist Dr. Yiyun Kang, who works in digital media. Inspired by the golden ratio, a touchpoint it shares with the Reverso model, the artwork was projected onto a large 3D screen and seamlessly blended nature and manmade design.

Kang spoke with *Whitewall* about her visit to Jaeger-LeCoultre’s headquarters in Vallée de Joux, Switzerland, how she brought *Origin* to life, and the project she’s working on next with Google.

WHITEWALL: You were trained as a painter and are now working in digital media. What prompted that transition?

DR. YIYUN KANG: I started to move to video so that I could play with time. I learned installations so that I can play with space. I started to move to digital because I was so interested in the materiality. Based on what kind of software or hardware you use, it could be really versatile. When I use

projection mapping, I can map the entire building. In this case, for *Origin*, it’s a more sculptural piece. I love the diversity of the digital medium.

WW: How did visiting Jaeger-LeCoultre’s headquarters inspire *Origin*?

YK: Before that, I had an idea of the theme of Reverso and Golden Ratio, but I couldn’t develop it further. After visiting the manufacturer, it became quite clear. I was talking to the artisans about how they make watches, observing the whole process of watchmaking. It was in the middle of that beautiful nature, I could finally contextualize my work. I titled it *Origin* because I wanted to understand how the philosophy and the heritage of the brand are reflected in the Reverso with the help of Golden Ratio.

WW: What made you connect with the golden ratio, specifically?

YK: When most people first hear about the golden ratio, they believe it to exist in the face of the Mona Lisa or the Parthenon temple. But after my research, I found that it is not real. There is no scientific evidence that we can say that there is a golden ratio reflected in the smile of the *Mona Lisa*. I wanted to find if there was any object that exists that actually represents the golden ratio in it. In the research, I found that it is in nature, not in mankind’s beautiful artifacts.



Courtesy of Jaeger-LeCoultre.

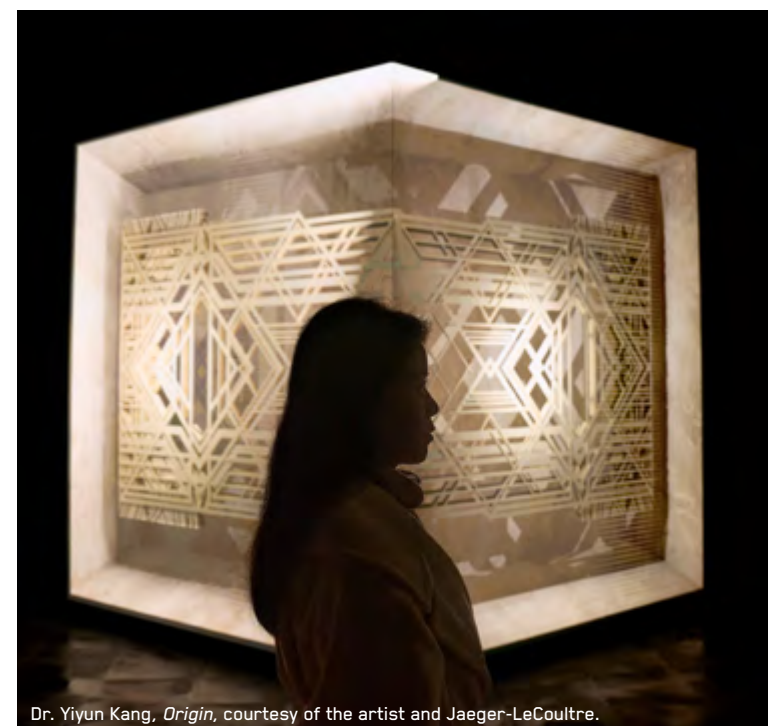
If you look at a pinecone or a sunflower, they are specifically formulated in a way that makes them able to absorb more light and more water, allowing them to grow as a result. As evolution happens, they have evolved in this particular way, which happens to represent the Fibonacci number. It’s so captivating for me because it’s not a pattern for decoration or beauty; it’s a pattern for life. The golden ratio is somehow historically embedded in the origin of life and that’s probably why humanity has been drawn to the number for such a long time.

I found something really interesting in another paper about cognitive science. It looked at how humanity has been drawn to that Golden Ratio for such a long time because it’s the proportion that we see every day. We receive information from that particular ratio. For example, books, newspapers, TV screens, smartphones, and computer monitors are quite similar to the golden ratio. We instinctively find it comfortable as well as aesthetically pleasing.

I wanted to link the cognitive part of the golden ratio and how we perceive it, alongside the actual, evolutionary pattern for life that we find in nature—these interesting findings—to the Reverso.

WW: You’ve previously said that your work investigates “the in-between—between the finite and infinite, reality and unreality, surface and depth, absence and presence.” How does *Origin* do this?

YK: I was inspired by the actual pine tree forest in the Vallée de Joux, where the manufacturer is. It represents the origin of the golden ratio that is represented in the pinecone. When connecting this theme to the Reverso, a more human artifact or, as I call it, a perfect watch, I realized it’s not just about the beautiful technician or the aesthetic design, but there are also ergonomic functions as well. I didn’t want to just create an artwork that was purely decorative or pretty. I wanted to tackle “Why does this watch incorporate the Golden Ratio in it?” In order to do that, it transcends the human element and it starts from nature. *Origin* was there.



Dr. Yiyun Kang, *Origin*, courtesy of the artist and Jaeger-LeCoultre.



Courtesy of Jaeger-LeCoultre.



Courtesy of Jaeger-LeCoultre.

That’s the reason why designers in the 1930s were so much inspired by the Golden Ratio and why it has remained one of the most iconic watches, still, nowadays. The logic is that it’s not just about humans’ interpretation of beauty; it’s connected to the beauty of nature.

WW: The piece was created with projection mapping, a relatively new art form. How has this allowed you to create immersive environments?

YK: Projection mapping is relatively new and a different way to immerse yourself than cinematic work, for example. When you go to the cinema and sit still in a dark room, you see this screen in front of you and watch it from the beginning toward the end.

In contrast, projection mapping is three-dimensional. It can be a small indoor experience or it can be massive, like an entire building. The scale varies, so your experience can also vary. It can be a completely overwhelming experience, or it can be an intimate experience depending on how artists use the medium.

In my work, I use audio as well, because I want to dramatize a space even more. When the visual meets the audio, you have more options to experience and make your own version of immersion.

WW: What are you working on next?

YK: I’m working on an online project with Google. It will also be about human and nonhuman nature. We are examining earth and water data at the moment. It will look a little different from *Origin*, but fundamentally there’s a lot of continuing elements for me as an artist.



Courtesy of Jaeger-LeCoultre.

PROFILES



Portrait of HyungTeh Do, courtesy of Gallery Hyundai.

HYUNGTEH DO

Constructing an ecosystem of Korean contemporary art at Gallery Hyundai.

By Eliza Jordan

Founded by Park Myung-ja in 1970, Gallery Hyundai is the longest-running contemporary art gallery in Korea. Since opening its doors, it has played a vital role within the Korean art scene, surpassing the typical functions of a commercial gallery. In its first few years, Park launched one of the first art publications in Korea, *Hwarang Magazine*. It also presented digital media art and participated in international art fairs, which were both unique facets to the region at the time. And after over five decades of supporting Korean artists both at home and abroad, Park established KoRICA (Korean Research Institute of Contemporary Art) to advance research and archives for Korean artists.

Today, Gallery Hyundai's owner and CEO, HyungTeh Do, is unwavering in pursuing its longstanding mission of supporting artists in and out of the gallery. The gallery remains a space for both modern and contemporary dialogues to flourish, and explores ways to forge, suggest, and develop a mutually constructive path for those in the Korean art scene.

Recently, Do shared with *Whitewall* how the gallery has expanded its support of artists, including Minjung Kim, Yun-Hee Toh, and Chung Zuyoung, who all are presenting work at the gallery early this year.

WHITEWALL: *One of Gallery Hyundai's missions is to make lasting contributions to the Korean art scene. Where do you feel the artist fits into that equation?*

HYUNGTEH DO: I can state with utmost conviction that Gallery Hyundai has always been for the artist and *with* the artist, meaning that our question isn't just about what the artist can do for the gallery, but what the gallery can bring forth for the artist. For example, we were one of the first Korean galleries to participate in international art fairs since 1987 and have always made a point to highlight our robust local foothold by championing the work of Korean modern and contemporary artists. The majority of our overseas art fair presentations heretofore have been to stage solo booths that foster a concise yet comprehensive environment, showing the totality of the artist's practice and effectively generating their niche in the larger global art scene.

WW: *Other than your commitment to artist representation, another definitive role that you've upheld throughout the years is discovering and cultivating the careers of fellow gallerists. How would you describe that?*

HD: As with our artists, Gallery Hyundai has been able to evolve and establish its status today as one of Korea's leading galleries with the unwavering support and engagement of our gallerists. We have gallerists who have been working with us for 20, even 30 years, and know the gallery and our roster of artists through and through, while there have been others who spent a bulk of their formative years with us and ventured onwards to other Korean and international galleries. With many Korean gallerists making a name for themselves on the global art scene, I'm proud to say that Gallery Hyundai has played the role of an academy for aspiring gallerists who have genuine passion for promoting modern and contemporary Korean artists beyond the region.

WW: *How does the gallery focus on presenting mixed media work—like videos, digital compositions, or immersive installations—in Seoul's tech-forward landscape?*

HD: Nam June Paik was an essential driving force of Gallery Hyundai's media art program since the mid-1980s. We worked closely with the artist and still harbor great admiration and respect for his lifetime work and legacy beyond that. My personal experiences with Paik expanded new horizons for Gallery Hyundai to dedicate a significant portion of its program to both media and mixed media art, which was mostly viewed as erratic for a commercial gallery back in the day.

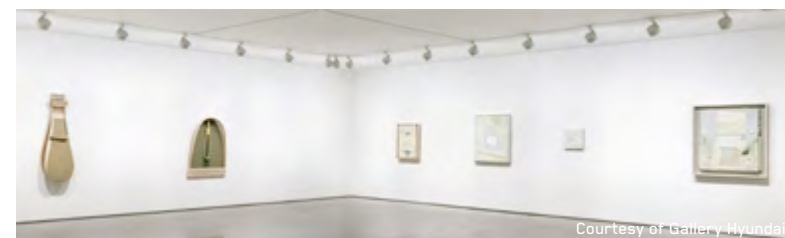
Today, we continue to work with Korea's foremost interdisciplinary, multimedia artists including the estate of Park Hyunki, Ayoung Kim, and the artist duo Moon Kyungwon and Jeon Joonho. I daresay these artists have achieved both commercial and institutional success to some extent, but mixed media occupies a territory that is disparate from that of more traditional mediums, which inspires us to constantly navigate ways to make these works more accessible.

WW: *How would you describe how the contemporary art scene in Seoul has changed since the foundation of Gallery Hyundai?*

HD: I believe that Korea's private collectors have played an integral role in forming the bedrock of the Korean art scene. When Gallery Hyundai first opened its doors in 1970, there already existed a discreet yet strong culture of collecting among the nation's private and corporate collections (notably the Lee Kun-hee collection). The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a surge in the number of private museums in and around Seoul as corporate collections sought ways to give back to the local community, which then encouraged Korea's public museums to further bolster their programs, cultivating a constructive ecosystem in the art scene that continues to develop today. And from this, we are beginning to witness the second and third generations of collectors, many of them educated abroad, who have access to further resources as they are fluent in English or any other foreign language.

WW: *Which emerging or young artists are on your radar right now?*

HD: A relatively young artist we are focusing on for international promotion is Kim Sung Yoon. While Kim has been a part of the gallery's roster of artists for a while, thus far we've been building a strong foundation for him within the domestic art scene and clientele. Our first international showcase with the artist is Frieze LA in February, for which we are presenting a solo booth of Kim's most recent floral still lifes. Other than the fact that Kim is very obviously a skilled painter, his works harken to the 17th-century Dutch masters but at the same time bring the traditional subject of still life into the contemporary day and age by digitally "collecting" images of flowers from different seasons, and "placing" them in ceramic vases (what he fondly refers to as "Google arrangements") created by his artist colleagues. At times juxtaposed with (also digitally generated) splashes of paint or cartoonish characters, these hyperrealistic renderings of flora are imbued with an erratic twist that explores the liminal space between reality and artifice, which warrants a closer look from the beholder.



Courtesy of Gallery Hyundai.



Courtesy of Gallery Hyundai.



Courtesy of Gallery Hyundai.



Choong Sup Lim, *Untitled*, 2008, thread, wood, and acrylic, 109 × 75 × 15 cm, courtesy of the artist and Gallery Hyundai.



Choong Sup Lim, *Between - Baby Birds First Flight in the Concrete Jungle*, 2014, acrylic, oil, pencil, crayon, U.V.L.S. gel on canvas, 223.5 × 173.5 × 6 cm, courtesy of the artist and Gallery Hyundai.

PROFILES



Kim Sung woo, portrait by artifact.

KIM SUNG WOO

Providing a platform for overlooked and under-researched artists and artwork at Primary Practice.

By Eliza Jordan

Kim Sung woo established the nonprofit arts organization Primary Practice (PP) in 2022 to both continue telling and retell Korean art history's lineage. With an interest in exploring the underrepresented curatorial and exhibition practices in Korea in order to share artistic meaning and produce critical value, PP showcases exhibitions that blur the boundaries between commercial and noncommercial sectors. Often, Kim spearheads collaborations with external institutions and galleries to further its barrier-breaking agenda, too.

Whitewall spoke with Kim about how PP furthers dialogues between artists, curators, and critics, and how, by questioning the reality of the art ecosystem, we can connect over, create, and perpetuate great art.

WHITEWALL: You were previously the chief curator at Amado Art Space from 2015 to 2019, and an independent curator who organized the Gwangju Biennale in 2018 and was a curatorial advisor for the Busan Biennale in 2020. How did these experiences lead to launching PP?

KIM SUNG WOO: Balancing the role of a curator in a specific art space and engaging in independent curatorial activities allowed me to explore and examine various artistic experiments and discourses that may have been overlooked or omitted in the geography of the contemporary Korean art scene.

Moreover, with the launch of Frieze Seoul in September 2022, the Korean art market has garnered unprecedented attention and prosperity. The market-driven aesthetic tendencies have become significant forces in the art, operating more strongly than ever. The evaluation of artistic value seems aligned with market demands and supplies, and the media appears busy generating issues within that dimension.

In the system I encountered as a curator, there were practices overlooked, and in the current state of the Korean art scene, Primary Practice aims to embrace significant discourses and experiments overlooked in the contemporary art scene. Through the curatorial methodology in contemporary art, Primary Practice intends to explore and address the intrinsic meaning and value of art, as well as art history and visual language, without being dependent on capital and market.

WW: How does the organization's mission reflect these overlooked practices?

KSW: Primary Practice is established to capture today's art in an expanded context with contemporary curatorial practice. "Practice" means exploring the attitude of the artist in depth, which is the genesis and origin of the work, rather than the representational level of work. And to examine the relationship between attitude, meaning, and form within contemporary conditions is the

"primary" value of this space. On the other hand, "PP," an abbreviation for the name of the space, sounds like children's excretion—"pee-pee." This means that Primary Practice advocates the artistic practice and thoughts as excretion, valorously revealing the points that today's system overlooks or cannot contain.

PP values the dialogues between artists, curators, critics, designers, and more. It raises questions about the reality of the system that operates the art ecosystem and recognizes the peripheries and marginals that deviate from the trend and center as important values. These constitute the backdrop for all projects happening in the space.

We ultimately want to be a temporary, but long-lasting, time and space to diagnose our present condition and status via contemporary art.

WW: PP is a nonprofit organization. How does this impact its positioning within the art world of Seoul?

KSW: In the late 1990s, alongside the economic crisis in South Korea, alternative spaces began to emerge. Since then, they have evolved in various forms and missions. The current nonprofit spaces in Korea differ from their predecessors in terms of their mission of discovering and incubating young artists. And in today's nonprofit/alternative space, there seems to be a more effective focus on constructing a genealogy from the past to contemporary art, attempting to understand it in different viewpoint, or generating coordinates for contemporary art scene.

In this context, Primary Practice seeks to examine the genealogy of Korean art history that has been ongoing and establish a lineage that will continue from this point forward. Additionally, we have a deep interest in the relatively under-researched field of curatorial history and exhibition practices in Korea. These practices provide artistic meaning and produce critical value within the contemporary discourse that commercial galleries often overlook. Furthermore, we have recently collaborated with external institutions and galleries, crossing the boundaries between commercial and noncommercial sectors, and contributing to the production of discourse within the art community.

WW: How do your roles as a curator and a writer impact your thoughts on the contemporary art market?

KSW: In Korea, there is a somewhat distinct separation between the noncommercial and commercial art scenes. Artists are often categorized into biennale-type artists and commercial-type artists. Biennale-type artists are those whose works are based on the context of contemporary discourse and hold art-historical significance. While not all artists fall into this category, in Korea, there are artists who, separate from the contemporary art scene, only focus on market-driven practices. Although their works may be intriguing, they are often perceived as artists following market trends and are read merely as aesthetic objects.

Curators, closely associated with the art institution and policy, sometimes navigate between the realms of commercial and noncommercial, working to blur these distinctions. We may showcase so-called biennial artists in gallery exhibitions, aiming to break down the existing perception of separation.

WW: What topics are you or the artists you present interested in communicating right now?

KSW: I am interested in rewriting history, focusing on individual narratives that diverge from official records. Through the construction of counter-histories derived from these personal narratives, I aim to explore the dynamic relationships within the image of the present we inhabit. This inquiry ultimately extends to issues such as the dynamics of knowledge and power, as well as hierarchies between the Western and non-Western perspectives, and so on.



Installation view of "FORMULA" at Primary Practice, photo by CHO Junyong of CJY ART STUDIO.



Installation view of "FORMULA" at Primary Practice, photo by CHO Junyong of CJY ART STUDIO.



Installation view of "FORMULA" at Primary Practice, photo by CHO Junyong of CJY ART STUDIO.

PROFILES



Photo by HeoJangbeom.

AMY KIM

Cultivating a community of exchange, patronage, and opportunity with ARTIVIST.

By Susan Shin

For founder Amy Kim, ARTIVIST is a community of like-minded people who have a shared passion and interest for art and culture with an international perspective. Based in Korea, it is made up of a nonprofit artist residency program, an art collectors/patrons club, and an exhibition space. Its developing art collection is slated for a future ARTIVIST co-op museum, ultimately offering the chance to learn, interact, and engage in dialogue with the arts. The residency has hosted artists like Dustin Yellin and Agostino Iacurci with curator Afrodet Zuri.

Whitewall recently spoke with ARTIVIST's Kim, a development expert and avid art collector, to learn more.

WHITEWALL: How did you come up with the idea of ARTIVIST?

AMY KIM: I've always been interested in the power of art to inspire, connect, and move people. Formerly a strategy consultant at Deloitte, I advised cultural institutions, municipalities, and the ministries of tourism and culture on large-scale public art and cultural projects, and in the course of so doing, I learned so much about art, and how it is the progenitor to and catalyst of change. As I discovered more and more, my passion for art grew, and I wanted to share this with others.

Although the spotlight is on Korea as an art and cultural hub these days, I realized there was a serious gap in art education and the ways art is inculcated on all levels. Many want to start collecting art, but don't know how to go about it—many young, potential collectors are interested but don't have a basis of knowledge or are intimidated. The art market in Korea, although thriving, is still relatively new. I saw a big opportunity to bring discovery, knowledge, and access to my peers and add to a truly international and vibrant art culture in Korea.

WW: Tell us more about the artist residency program.

AK: The program currently supports three to four artists a year. Working with our resident curator, we select artists from all over the world to experience Korean culture in an immersive way to inspire creation of works influenced by their new environment. We want this to be a time of freedom and exploration for the artist, to step outside of the comfort zone. The residency period culminates in an exhibition and a dinner in honor of the artist. During the artist's residency, we introduce him/her to collectors, curators, museums, public art opportunities, and brands who may be interested in collaborating. We hold public and private talks with the artist who also participates in our philanthropic endeavor in an educational program for children.

Korea is a great exporter of its culture, but our culture can only continue to grow if we also interact globally and import culture too. By bringing an artist here, we learn the cultural influences and perspectives of that artist, just as that artist is influenced by Korean culture, then it becomes a world culture of sharing, mutual understanding, and appreciation.

WW: Who have been some of the artists who have participated in the program, and who is ARTIVIST's next artist in residence and what do you have planned for them?

AK: Since our launch this past September, we have hosted American artist Dustin Yellin and Italian artist Agostino Iacurci, and we are really excited to bring Brooklyn-based artist Talia Levitt to our program in Korea this spring. I love her trompe l'oeil paintings of tapestries that superimpose transparent figurative imagery on archival paintings; instead of being flat, the illusion is rendered with texture through paint-cast objects such as buttons, stitching, and embroidery. I am fascinated by her technique of applying acrylic on the canvas to mimic real cloth and the exquisite detail. It is something I believe our Korean community will appreciate as Koreans tend to value detail and technical perfection.

WW: What is Club ARTIVIST and how is it different from the other membership clubs in Korea?

AK: The vision for the club is to bring together a community of people with a common interest in discovering, learning about, and supporting art, design, and culture. All of the membership clubs are very similar in Korea in that they all relate to hotel clubs, industry-specific clubs, food and beverage clubs, bars, and lounges. There is no club that is centered around an overarching mutual passion and interest in art, design, and culture. Many membership clubs have failed in Korea because of certain cultural proclivities such as people not wanting to mix with others and certain cultural biases. I want Club ARTIVIST to break down those barriers, and open communications, leading to a sharing of information and culture.

These days Koreans travel all around the world, and many younger people are schooled abroad and there is a heightened interest in art—likewise, others have a strong interest in Korean artists and the Korean art scene. Although based in Korea, ARTIVIST also has global members to enrich our community experience. We will offer meaningful programming, such as curated panel discussions, artist and collector talks, artist studio visits, customized museum and gallery tours, curated trips to art fairs around the world, and collaborations with arts and culture organizations around the world.

WW: How would you characterize Korean collectors?

AK: The Korean art market is very young and new collectors tend to be focused on art as an investment which drives their acquisition choices. They are afraid of making a mistake, and they are always looking towards art that will rise in value. The "art" of collecting is very new here, with the exception of some older OG super collectors. There are very few art advisors in Korea—the art industry is centered around galleries, museums, and academia. I wanted to bring awareness of good artists in various genres around the world and give access to global art experts so that our community can learn, and to promote a thoughtful evolution of the way they think of and experience art.

WW: You are a collector yourself? How did you start collecting?

AK: I come from a family of finance professionals who have always appreciated art and design. Over the years, they've supported regional artists and collected some meaningful works by significant Korean artists, such as Lee Ufan, Park Seo-Bo, and Lee Bae. I'm a young collector like so many of my peers, and I'm thrilled to discover new and emerging artists, as well as learn about the work of very established artists and masters. I'm at the beginning of my collecting and rather than having a specific theme or focus for my collection, I simply buy what I love. These days I am looking at artists such as Flora Yukhnovich, Cristina BanBan, Adrian Ghenie, Tahnee Lonsdale, Egami Etsu, and more.

Zadie Xa

Rough hands weave a knife

Paris Marais
April—May 2024



Thaddaeus Ropac

London Paris Salzburg Seoul

Zadie Xa, *Trickster: Mongrel, Beasts* (detail), 2023.
Oil on canvas, 111x111x300 cm (94.49 x 94.49 x 236.22 in).
Etiel panel: 240 x 300 cm (94.49 x 78.74 in).
©: Zadie Xa. Photo: JuhHo Lee



Portrait of Sungah Serena Choo by Jinwoon Park.

SUNGAH SERENA CHOO

Finding inspiration in the personal when curating independently and at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art.

By Eliza Jordan

In 2022, Sungah Serena Choo joined the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art as a curator in the exhibition department. Her experience before joining Leeum, as a curatorial assistant at the Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA) and then as an independent curator for seven years, led her to establish long-lasting relationships with artists. Today, her observations of the art landscape's rapid changes lead to the support of emerging contemporary voices alongside modern, traditional Korean artists Leeum is known to showcase. Additionally, Choo has continued her work as an independent curator, coordinating outside projects at spaces like Platform-L, Amado Art Space, Boan Artspace, and more.

This spring at Leeum, "Philippe Parreno: VOICES" (February 28–July 7), an exhibition she has organized and is curated by Sungwon Kim, the museum's deputy director and chief curator, opens as Korea's first large-scale solo exhibition of the French artist's work. More of a journey through the artist's personal stories, it is imagined to be an experience rather than a typical art event, exploring the connections between time and memory, perception, and experience. This contextual framing, reliant on both the throughline in storytelling and medium choices, is something Choo has been interested in throughout her art career, and one that she aims to further explore and express in her role at the museum.

In celebration of the museum's 20th anniversary, Choo shared with *Whitewall* how she's currently embracing and showcasing the evolving art world in Seoul and where to explore when you're in town.

WHITEWALL: *Through your independent and on-staff work as a curator, how has your approach to curating art evolved? Are you gravitating to different mediums, or exercising different curatorial muscles now at Leeum?*

SUNGAH SERENA CHOO: It's not easy to present so many exhibitions in one's own language and senses for a long time. So far, I have been interested in the folded and unfolded forms of the medium based on sculptural practices of emerging artists based in Seoul. It always interests me, giving narrative to exhibitions, such as presenting to interpret the structure of language in

literature in conjunction with how artists deal with specific mediums expanded to their attitudes.

Moreover, personal situations and stories inspire me, which I think an exhibition should have that the audience can relate to. Rather than universal sympathy, questions that may not be universal or that could easily be overlooked, but that have not yet been unveiled to the surface, may be visualized in the form of empathy. In this way, just as the most personal matters are derived from the most fundamental questions, when curating exhibitions that focus on linking the micro-history in our lives with the context of mediums and attitude aspects of visual art.

WW: *You mentioned in a previous interview that younger voices are shaping the art scene in ways they haven't been able to before. How so?*

SSC: There has been a huge switch in how younger generation groups of artists and curators build up their voices. In Seoul, a decade ago was a time that enabled artists born in the 1980s, who were still considered emerging and young artists, to create a topographic map of the current art scene and the nature of art spaces. In the early to mid-2010s, there was an explosive growth of independent spaces and collectives that strove to operate their own spaces that were both studio and exhibition spaces as well as curating exhibitions since they could not show their works at art institutions and they wanted to create more. If the voice of the curator was not recognized a decade ago, the last decade has seen the rise of independent curators since we have built a sense of camaraderie and collaboration with our contemporaries and we have begun to speak up for the rights and roles of the curator in our own creative language. Through time and persistence, young artists have established themselves over the past decade or so, and they are still shaping the art scene of today.

WW: *What has visibly changed in the past ten years?*

SSC: Seoul's art ecosystem, which has been working more flexibly than other cities and states since the pandemic, has become more visible to international stakeholders. In the immediate aftermath of COVID-19, major international galleries opened branches in Seoul and started to take an interest in young Korean artists, presenting group exhibitions on a smaller scale. It has been a bit difficult for the young Korean artists to integrate into the boundaries of the commercial scene. But as opportunities have arisen, the scene has been divided into those who are wary of or actively embrace the conflation of commercial and noncommercial.

The same is true of established art institutions. I think now is a transitional period in which things coexist without being biased to one side or the other in the process. I find that many artists who have many opportunities showing works in different cities expanding outside. In addition to this, the online platforms of social media have led to an explosion of young artists who have developed artistic languages that are equally at home in a more international language, rather than remaining in a domestic language.

WW: *For those new to Seoul, where would you recommend they visit?*

SSC: For art, I recommend N/A, located in Euljiro, which has a program that showcases a wide range of genres such as fashion and photography, as well as contemporary art, with exhibitions that introduce an expanded group of emerging and young artists. It's a move that differs from the conservatism prevailing in the art world. In addition, Primary Practice, which was recently inaugurated last year in Buam-dong, Jongno-gu, is a project space that runs with a curatorial direction. It presents the artistic practice of young artists from a more delicate perspective.



Woo Hannah, Kai Oh, Dew Kim, *Autophagy*, 2023, courtesy of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art.



Installation view of Dawhan Kim's exhibition at Amado Art Space, courtesy of Sungah Serena Choo.



Frieze Film 2023 at Boan Artspace, courtesy of Sungah Serena Choo.

PROFILES



Portrait of Hyun-Sook Lee, 2020, photo by Jisup An, courtesy of Kukje Gallery.

HYUN-SOOK LEE

Bridging the gap between Western and Korean art for over 40 years.

By Katy Donoghue

Hyun-Sook Lee founded Kukje Gallery in 1982 in Seoul as a budding collector—whose collection began with work by the Korean artist Jang Ri-seok. The early shows at the gallery included the work of Ok Yon, Byun Jong Ha, Oh Chi Ho, Hwang YeomSoo, and Yoo Youngkuk. As a gallerist, Hyun-Sook stood out against the mainstream trend at the time—but sales were good, proving she was on to something. And for over four decades, she has continued to forge and grow her collection, often from travels abroad.

As Lee became familiar with the international scene, she decided Kukje could be the place to bridge that gap between Korean and Western art. She started staging shows with names like Helen Frankenthaler, Alexander Calder, Bill Viola, Donald Judd, Ed Ruscha, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Louise Bourgeois, in Korea—many for the first time.

In August of 2018, she opened, Kukje Gallery Busan, as the gallery’s first-ever outpost. It was a way to bring their program to a more regional audience in Yeongnam to “enhance the public’s general understanding of contemporary art,” as she described it.

This spring, Kukje Gallery will show the work of Kim Yun Shin and Suki Seokyeong Kang in Seoul, as well as Kim Yong-Ik in Busan.

WHITEWALL: *What was the early reception of their work to the Korean collectors you worked with?*

HYUN-SOOK LEE: Back in the 1980s, Korea enjoyed a relatively stable art market supported by healthy and reasonable competition amongst local galleries. The landscape seemed reassuring and promising in terms of business potential. You could say that sales was less challenging than now in a sense, and that it was no surprise to see people voluntarily visiting the gallery after coming across the exhibition advertisement on the local newspaper.

Many of the artists that I presented to my collectors, such as Alexander Calder, Anselm Kiefer, Donald Judd, Frank Stella, and Helen Frankenthaler, were positively received by both collectors and art enthusiasts alike. For example, Frankenthaler’s show (which I was quite concerned and nervous about in the beginning) proved to be a success, with important collectors and museums acquiring several of the artist’s works.

WW: *You also championed postwar Korean artists like Ha Chong-Hyun, Lee Ufan, Chung Chang-Sup, Kwon Young-Woo, Park Seo-Bo, and Chung Sang-Hwa. Why was this group of artists important for you to showcase within the gallery?*

HSL: Before Dansaekhwa, Korea was not known for a particular art movement that received international recognition. The absence of such a movement made it a challenge to position the nation’s artists in the global art market, as their works lacked art-historical context that the international audience could resonate with.

In order to more effectively promote Korean modern and contemporary art beyond the local boundaries, I recognized the fact that it would be essential to establish active discourse around a selection of Korean artists from the same generation, depicting artistic vocabulary that shared a common ground or ethos. In the process, I discovered postwar Korean artists, such as Park Seo-Bo, Ha Chong-Hyun, Lee Ufan, and Kwon Young-Woo, who all endured a crucial era in Korean history when there was a violent sense of oppression that led to restrictions in their creative vocabulary. After thorough discussions with fellow professionals in the art world, including curators, writers, artists, and collectors, across the commercial and noncommercial sectors, I fully embraced the art-historical significance of these artists and was motivated to spearhead the positioning and promotion of the Dansaekhwa movement in the global art market.

Throughout the past decade, I have bolstered the promotion of these artists across the international art community by organizing special exhibitions including “Dansaekhwa” (2015), Collateral Event of the 56th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia; “When Process becomes Form: Dansaekhwa and Korean abstraction” (2016) at Villa Empain, the Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium; “Korean Abstract Art: Kim Whanki and Dansaekhwa” (2018), at the Powerlong Museum, Shanghai, China; and most recently “Ha Chong-Hyun” (2022), Collateral Event of the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

WW: *You’ve supported the career of contemporary names like Haegue Yang, Kimsooja, Gimhongsok, Kyungah Ham, Yeondoo Jung, Kibong Rhee, and Jae-Eun Choi. Given the profile of the gallery, when does it make sense for you to bring in and represent a new artist?*

HSL: Our gallery currently represents a total of approximately 50 Korean and international artists. As the relationship between the artist and the gallery is often and most importantly rooted in mutual trust and respect, the process of representing a new artist is always very personal and therefore memorable.

Normally, we would follow the artist’s exhibitions and activities for a relative period, possibly find collaboration opportunities, discuss future potentials and directions, and arrive at a decision. As a gallery that has extensive experience with artists of all age, genders, and nationalities, the most important factor that we would consider in representing a new artist would be the “fit” between the artist and the gallery. After all, representing a new artist is just like welcoming a new family member!

Throughout this intimate and intricate process, the gallery has welcomed a list of artists to its roster in the recent years. The Korean artist Heejoon Lee and the Bangkok- and New York–based artist Korakrit Arunanondchai, to name a few, and most recently Korea’s first-generation woman sculptor Kim Yun Shin. I cherish Kim’s lifelong dedication to art, which I was honored to witness at her retrospective at the Nam-Seoul Museum of Art last year. I’m also excited to share that Kim will be featured at the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in April.

WW: *When you founded the gallery, there was a clear divide between foreign and national artists. Now less so, with artists showcasing on a global platform. How do you see your artists on that broader, international stage?*

HSL: As you mentioned, the dynamics of the art world are strikingly different from when I opened the gallery. From institutions and project spaces to galleries and art fairs, there are numerous global platforms for artists to showcase their work.

One recent, noticeable change regarding our Korean artists (such as Park Seo-Bo, Haegue Yang, Kibong Rhee, Kyungah Ham, and Suki Seokyeong Kang) at art fairs is that an increasing number of international collectors proactively inquire about their works.

Compared to the past, when I had to describe each artist’s oeuvre and vision in detail, I now often encounter clients who are already familiar with the artist, or even own a piece. It is a joy to see Asian or European



Kukje Gallery K3, photo by Yang-Kwan Kim, courtesy of Kukje Gallery.

collectors resonate with the uniquely Korean aesthetics of the artists’ works—their reactions are the proof that Korean modern and contemporary art possesses international quality and value.

Of course, many of our artists are very active outside the boundaries of art fairs as well. I am a proud witness to the rich exchange of contemporary art and culture that occurs with Korean artists showing abroad and international artists showing domestically. Examples of such exchange include Jean-Michel Othoniel’s immensely successful solo exhibition “Jean-Michel Othoniel: Treasure Gardens” (2022) at the Seoul Museum of Art, Korea; Jae-Eun Choi’s solo exhibition “La Vita Nuova” (2023–2024) at Ginza Maison Hermès Le Forum, Tokyo, Japan; Haegue Yang’s upcoming participation in Encounters at Art Basel Hong Kong and much anticipated solo exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, U.K., this year; and Kim Yun Shin at the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (2024).

Research and academics are equally important in introducing artist to an international stage as well. Korean artists have been eagerly sought out as subjects of comprehensive monographs by prestigious international arts publishers. Major publications include Park Seo-Bo: *Écriture – Art* (Rizzoli), *Ha Chong Hyun* (Gregory R. Miller & Co.), and *Hong Seung-Hye: Organic Geometry* (Scheidegger & Spiess).

WW: *Do you see your audience and collector base as much more international as well?*

HSL: Whether based locally or abroad, collectors and clients are like family, and it is one of my most heartfelt missions to stay connected and build relationships with them bound by trust. I’m proud to be able to say that we have a collector base that is both local and international, mainly thanks to our long-standing participation in prominent art fairs around the world.



SUPERFLEX, Still image from Flooded McDonald's, 2009, RED, 21 min, courtesy of the artists and Kukje Gallery.



Gimhongsok, A Pair of High Heels, 2012, bronze, cement, 30 x 31 x 17 cm, courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery.

The first art fair Kukje participated in was ART/LA ’88, while we made our debut at Art Basel in 1998 as the first Korean gallery to participate in the event. At the moment, the gallery annually participates in 15 to 20 fairs across the world. These include Frieze LA (February), Art Basel Hong Kong (March), Frieze New York (May), Art Basel (June), Frieze Seoul (September), Frieze London and Masters (October), Paris+ par Art Basel (October), and Art Basel Miami Beach (December).

WW: *How have you see the culture of collecting in Seoul and the broader Korea evolve since founding the gallery?*

HSL: Korea’s collecting culture and collectors’ understanding of being a patron of the arts has developed significantly throughout the past four decades. In the very beginning when I opened the gallery, collectors were mostly accustomed to oriental painting, and were rather novice to the idea of collecting Western art or paintings in general. Since then, I believe collectors have grown to accept much more diverse forms of art and styles of artists. In other words, Korean collectors nowadays appreciate and collect a much wider spectrum of art and are proactive in learning about different artists. As there are many ways to get access to artists these days (online and offline), I often feel that collectors are much more informed than before as well.

WW: *Kukje is now a family-run business, with your children taking part as well. Was that always your vision?*

HSL: I am thankful for what we have achieved as a family-run business throughout the past four decades. Since my children have been the closest observers to my life as a gallerist, their involvement came naturally—this was not a deliberate decision, but, rather, a gradual process that occurred over time.

PROFILES



Portrait of Dalseung Hwang courtesy of Kiaf SEOUL.

DALSEUNG HWANG

Creating, fostering, and promoting sustainable art ecosystems with the Korea International Art Fair.

By Eliza Jordan

Dalseung Hwang's involvement in the art world has spanned several decades and roles. His initial interest in art, however, was simple, sparked from the feeling he had while gazing at paintings. "In a continuous search for that same vibrant inspiration, I then sought connections with the creators behind the artworks," he recently shared with *Whitewall*. Through those conversations, he was urged to open his own gallery, which led him to establish Keumsan Gallery in 1992.

Today, Hwang is the president of the Galleries Association of Korea (GAoK), an organization founded in 1976 by five local galleries—including his own. In 2002, GAoK launched the Korea International Art Fair (Kiaf), and over 1,000 international galleries have participated since. Presently, he is the chairman of the fair's Operating Committee. *Whitewall* spoke with Hwang about how he hopes to perpetuate a sustainable art ecosystem in Korea.

WHITEWALL: *GAoK was founded almost five decades ago. How has its ethos expanded throughout the years?*

DALSEUNG HWANG: Throughout its decades-long history, GAoK has initiated and engaged in a wide range of activities to support the growth and revitalization of the Korean art market and the gallery ecosystem. Its two annual art fairs—Kiaf SEOUL and Galleries Art Fair—have long served as the platforms to showcase the latest trends in Korean art and to bring the world's attention to Seoul as an art hub. We also run an art appraisal organization; host open seminars, trainings, and campaigns seeking to boost awareness about major issues in the art world; and provide grants to arts writers and critics.

In recent years, with the advent of the digital era and many market transitions, we've introduced new elements such as Kiaf PLUS, a sector at Kiaf dedicated to new media and digitally native works.

WW: *What is your role like today as the organization's president?*

DH: As the president of GAoK, I have also been serving as a mediator between GAoK members and the Korean government, and I have actively participated in national political discussions, advocating for measures to protect and enhance the overall quality of Korean art and the art market.



Kiaf SEOUL 2023, photo by Kiaf SEOUL Operating Committee, courtesy of Kiaf SEOUL.

Furthermore, following the introduction of the Art Payment System implemented this year, GAoK has taken the lead in advocating for policy improvements for the growth of the Korean art market, such as relaxation of the Cultural Property Protection Act and improvement of the tax system.

With the hope of bolstering the Asian art market and nurturing the connections between art markets across Asian countries, I have also engaged in meaningful dialogues with other gallery associations, such as those in Indonesia and Taiwan. This year I also intend to broaden and strengthen collaborations with more national institutions, to help further improving both the association and the art market.

WW: *The organization has been instrumental in creating and supporting an arts ecosystem in South Korea. Under your direction, what decisions do you feel you've made that led to Seoul becoming a global art capital?*

DH: One critical factor that I think has been essential in driving Seoul to a more highly international scale has been engaging and collaborating with more and more government officials and national institutions. In the last few editions of Kiaf, we have seen the growth of the support by institutions such as the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the Arts Council Korea, and the Korea Arts Management Service, which has been a turning point towards the internationalization of the Korean art market.

WW: *One of GAoK's leading initiatives was creating Kiaf, which is now 22 years old, and you're the chairman of its operating committee. How would you describe the fair's evolution to what we see today?*

DH: Throughout its 20 years of history, the number of participating galleries at Kiaf has grown from less than a hundred to more than 200, promoting contemporary Korean art globally and becoming the go-to place for Korean collectors and art lovers to experience and discover international galleries and artists. Since 2022, our first year collaborating with Frieze, Kiaf has established itself as an internationally notable art fair and enhanced its operations and production to meet the international standards. In 2024, GAoK is committed to doubling its efforts to elevate them beyond the expectations of global art enthusiasts, through collaboration with exceptional galleries and artists, as well as through strengthened partnerships with government entities, local institutions, and public offices.



Kiaf SEOUL 2023, photos by Kiaf SEOUL Operating Committee, courtesy of Kiaf SEOUL.



Sooyon Lee, portrait courtesy of The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.

SOOYON LEE

Through exhibitions at MMCA, the curator explores the theories, concepts, and cultures that reflect our world.

By Eliza Jordan

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) was founded in 1969. As Korea's only national contemporary art museum, it introduces Korean and international art and artists to the world through dynamic exhibitions and presentations.

Today, the museum's curator, Sooyon Lee, has an affinity for institutional programming that reflects art in history and culture. Her bachelor's degree in linguistics and master's degree in art history from Seoul National University, as well as her current PhD studies at Cornell University, center research in visual language implemented through digital media. Her interest in artists' conditions, and their abilities to facilitate new visual languages in a global context, is apparent in recent MMCA shows she has curated, including "Project Hashtag" in 2021, "Paik Nam June Effect" in 2022, and the Korea Artist Prize 2023.

Lee spoke with *Whitewall* about her approach to curating exhibitions at MMCA, how Seoul's art landscape is changing, and why it's crucial to share local ideas with international patrons interested in the "Korean wave."

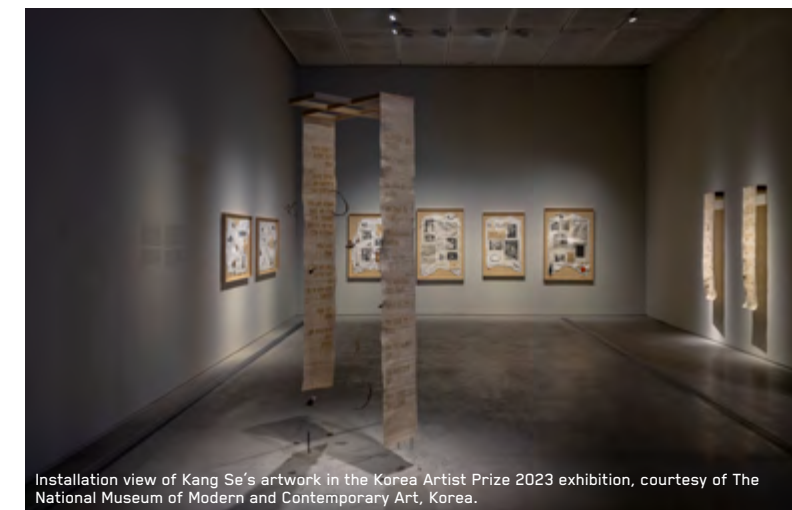
WHITEWALL: *How does MMCA's focus on showing both modern and contemporary artworks impact your curatorial approach?*

SOOYON LEE: Most major museums, including the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, typically take two to three years to organize a major exhibition. In the contemporary art scene, where the keywords of "contemporary art" change rapidly every year and new artists emerge, it is not an easy task to spend a long time and take a long breath to organize an exhibition. Therefore, as a museum curator, when planning an exhibition, I try to rethink newly emerging concepts and themes in light of art history, so that the exhibition can show various layers in a historical and social context.

For example, the topic of metaverse in contemporary art has been hot lately, and as I work on a proposal for an exhibition at the museum, I'm incorporating not only the metaverse but also historical pseudo-metaverse concepts such as ideology, virtual reality, and cyberspace, and researching how virtual spaces have historically played a role in society.

WW: *You're also in a PhD program at Cornell. What are you learning in the classroom that you're applying to your role as a curator? Does being in a space of continued learning impact how you think of exhibiting artwork?*

SL: After joining the museum in 2008, I curated the first exhibition of the museum's media collection. At that time, the idea of specializing in media was still very new. After that, I curated several exhibitions and learned a lot in the field through various opportunities, but I realized that I really wanted to study for the sake of study before it was too late, so I



Installation view of Kang Se's artwork in the Korea Artist Prize 2023 exhibition, courtesy of The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.

went to Cornell University for a PhD program. It was a great opportunity to broaden my horizons by studying not only my previous fields of study, such as linguistics and art history, but also the history of technology, sociopolitical history of technology, and technology-related theory and philosophy.

The biggest thing I learned from being in a place with so many international students was how the same concepts in theory are understood in different ways in different places and times. I found it interesting to see how a theory is recognized and accepted differently as it spreads to different regions.

For example, in Korean art history in the 1990s, the terms "postcolonial" and "postmodernism" were all the rage, but the understanding of these terms was completely different from the emphasis in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East; and the word "cyberspace" was used interchangeably with the word "plaza" in Korea due to the influence of Minjung Misul (People's Art). These points apply not only to geography but also to time. It is impossible to fully read the art of the 1990s only from the perspective of the present, but at the same time, exhibiting it now can present new possibilities that could not be seen at that time.

Therefore, when I approach the works in the exhibition, I always think about diverse ways the context of these works can be read. There is a quote that I always remember: "The past and the future are alien planets."

WW: *How would you describe the art landscape in Seoul right now?*

SL: The current art scene in Seoul is more boiling than ever. Especially after the pandemic, the art market has been reopened with the arrival of the international event Frieze Seoul, following the reopen of Gwangju Biennale and Busan Biennale. This direction is in line with the trend of popular culture, the so-called "Korean wave," and everyone seems to be looking forward to the creation of a new bubble.

What is important in this situation is where the local art scene meets these international trends. Young artists and masters who have already left a big footprint in Korean art through Monochrome painting and Experiment art from the 1970s and the 1980s are thinking about it together, and I think it is more important that we share the ideas for a meeting point with international curators and directors we meet in Seoul.



Installation view of Sojung Jun's artwork in the Korea Artist Prize 2023 exhibition, courtesy of The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.

TO WATCH

Kwangho Lee, installation view of "Composition in Blue," 2020, at Leeahn gallery in Seoul, courtesy of the artist.



Kwangho Lee

The artist and designer presents new work, dismantled and born anew.

By Sophie Aliece Hollis

Since graduating with a degree in metal art and design from Hongik University in 2007, the Seoul-based creative Kwangho Lee has forged an impressively varied repertoire of material-rich furnishings, lighting, decorative objects, installations, and interiors. He has built a career upon elegant and unexpected expressions of mediums that run the gamut from household items like PVC cables and expanded polystyrene to fine marbles and metals. This work has had an impact around the globe through collaborations with brands like Fendi and Hem, representation from illustrious galleries, and various international design and institutional exhibitions.

For his next exhibition, which opens March 7, 2024, at Seoul's Leeahn Gallery, Lee will be debuting a new artistic approach: Rather than leaning into the material expression for which he is known, the multifaceted artist will rely upon the materials he has honed to dictate a fundamental expression of his own evolution. To uncover the motivation behind this introspective shift, *Whitewall* spoke with Lee about the forces driving his practice into the future.

WHITEWALL: *When and where did the inspiration for this exhibition come?*

KWANGHO LEE: I don't think it would be accurate to say that the inspiration for this work appeared suddenly. I've been working steadily, pondering how to visualize my thoughts and the relationship I have to the materials I deal with. The more time I spend with these materials, it feels as if I'm talking to myself, or, on the contrary, like the material is talking to me. How I define myself affects not only the direction of my work, but also my life as a whole. In this exhibition, I wanted to track the changes and attitudes of these natural thoughts with myself and try to visualize them.

WW: *Can you describe the theme of the exhibition?*

KL: Currently, the title of the exhibition is "yesterday is tomorrow."

If my previous work was very honest and sought accurate forms, the work I will present in this exhibition will make use of irregularities through crushing, cutting, et cetera, to dismantle my original work. I plan to reorganize it into new shapes and sizes. In other



Portrait of Kwangho Lee by Dong-ho Hahn.

words, with the idea that I am being born again, this exhibition will set a virtual time zone from yesterday to today to try to visualize that it is altogether a specific and vague time, and that I am moving through changes in my mind, environment, temperature, et cetera.

The final title is still undecided, but it will be based on the idea of being born anew and sculpting tomorrow from yesterday. Today is always who I am now.

In recent years, I have started to look more deeply inwards and project myself more into the things I create for the future. In that process, as I said before, I think the distinction between things that have a purpose and those that don't should also disappear, and what I create should be seen as a pure expression of me. Rather than focus on creating something "new," I want the environment I grew up in and the environment I am in now to naturally guide the work.

My current environment seems to be changing too quickly, but the part of me in that environment that remains unchanged creates a strong contrast. Rather than relying upon external factors, I want my work to be centered around this strong desire to examine and learn more about myself.

WW: *Can you speak to the logic behind the materiality of this exhibition?*

KL: Firing enamel on copper in a kiln causes the surface of the copper to turn almost ceramic. For over 16 years, I have incorporated this traditional Korean technique in my work as reproduction rather than exploring the unique characteristics and changes of the materials throughout the process. Unlike other metals, copper easily shows handprints and scratches on its surface. When oxidized by heat, it demonstrates the visual beauty of peeling away hard skin and sprouting new skin. As enamel is added to the metal, the surface becomes relatively shiny and attracts my eyes with its intense colors.



Kwangho Lee, installation view of "Composition in Blue," 2020, at Leeahn gallery in Seoul, courtesy of the artist.

For this exploration, I have endeavored to use these characteristics as a guide rather than merely replicate the traditional practice of the craft. By repeatedly throwing, tearing, burning, and melting, I am able to visually represent the process of changing an unintended action into an action with another intention. I myself am introduced into the material, destroying myself, melting myself, tearing myself apart, becoming hard again, and, at the same time, I am reborn as another me. I'm simultaneously entering a new environment while adapting to that environment.

I've tried to take a deeper look at the meaning of the word "adaptation." The endless adjustment of my relationship with the environment around me asks fundamental questions about existence and the perspective from which my gaze and attitude in life can be set. The purpose is to imagine the future by facing my life in the past and the environment surrounding me, and use myself as a tool to embody that imagination.

WW: *How have you been preparing for this individual presentation of work?*

KL: I've been thinking about the work for years, but it's been about six months since I started producing these certain results.

WW: *How does this exhibition fit within your portfolio? Does it trace familiar themes or depart entirely?*

KL: Perhaps this exhibition represents a natural change of thought, getting to know and question myself more before sending out an external message. I feel this is the most important and long-term subject to explore. When I look back on my work later in life, I think this exhibition will likely represent a key turning point.



Kwangho Lee, installation view of "Composition in Blue," 2020, at Leeahn gallery in Seoul, courtesy of the artist.

TO WATCH

Portrait of Gwangsoo Park, courtesy of the artist and Hakgojae Gallery.



Gwangsoo Park

The Seoul-based artist paints kaleidoscopic landscapes of color.

By Maria Owen

When asked about the places that most influence his work, Gwangsoo Park says his hometown, Cheorwon, is in every fiber of his being. He describes it as a place of extremes—welcoming and harsh, beautiful and terrible. This duality has reappeared throughout Park’s practice, a constant exploration of shadow and color, maker and made, birth and death. He is an observer of cycles in process; he recalls ancient stories and retells them in new form.

Over the years, Park has come to be admired for his intuitive use of rich color and exploration of eternal themes. The Seoul-based painter employs memories of the natural world to create his landscapes, rearranging figures as they appear from strokes of fluid oil paint. Following his recent exhibition, “Copper and Hand,” at Hakgojae Gallery, Park offered *Whitewall* some insight into his current exploration of color, creative influences, and the personal connections to land and body that drive his work.

WHITEWALL: *The work in your most recent exhibition, “Copper and Hand,” employed iridescent copper alongside representations of nature to prompt larger contemplation of enduring, universal threads. As we continue into 2024, how are you pursuing these themes, and are there any new ideas coming up in the studio?*

GWANGSOO PARK: I would like to continue to expand on my current theme. More specifically, I would like to mix human and natural figures more actively in my paintings. The concept of nature within me is a vague experience of the terrain I sensed in my childhood. Big mountains and clear air, dark and dangerous valleys, trees that grew randomly, like tangled hair.

When I recall these memories, I feel like I’m uncovering a part of someone that I’d forgotten, so I’m interested in pushing the boundaries of the human form. And then, as always, I go to the art store and buy some paints. Color is still a stimulus for me.

I intuitively pick the colors I want out of a sea of colors. It’s like when you’re walking and suddenly come across a stone that catches your eye, often with colors reminiscent of a glowing mineral or a peculiar plant, and they grow imperfectly on the canvas, permeating and mixing with each other to create a dramatic atmosphere. It’s fun to use unexpected colors.

It’s not specific yet, but I’m envisioning a narrative animation where the creator, the creation, and the relationship between the two of them are playing out in a variety of ways.



Gwangsoo Park, *Language of Water*, 2023, oil on canvas, 162.2 x 130cm, courtesy of the artist and Hakgojae Gallery.

WW: *Your works often show characters marveling at nature, as well as in moments of struggle or intense effort. How do you select these narratives, and what interests you most about them?*

GP: As an extension of the larger theme of disappearance and annihilation, I began my current work by establishing the concept of the creator-created and drawing parallels between maker and work, God and human, and parent and child.

In the exhibition “Copper and Hand” in 2023, the figure of the human being acting within the inescapable nature was prominent: walking, standing, lying down, sleeping, touching and making things. There is a respect and compassion for the body to exist and live on its own. I see these forms and states in my daily life. They may not seem significant, but they are the behaviors that have sustained us.

In the paintings, I want the form of the body to be a little bit pretty—it’s more of an image than a realistic body. The figures in the paintings are using their hands and feet to support themselves, using each of their own gravity. That’s why they have big hands and feet. When the figures lie down, they adhere to the terrain like flowing, flexible forms, resisting gravity in their own way.

Small Mountain (2023) depicts a scene where a person is scraping and gathering soil to create something. I wanted to emphasize the fingers as pillars by portraying them vertically. Due to the strong fingers, the bold traces of fine soil would draw diagonal lines, and I hoped that the contour lines from the shoulders to the legs of the figure and the lines of piled-up mounds of soil would intersect, creating a similarity in form.

WW: *You previously mentioned that the places in your paintings are imagined, yet rooted in lived experience. Can you tell us about some of the real places that have influenced your work? What qualities do they have?*

GP: I think everyone has a basic type of landscape that comes to their mind when they think of the word “landscape.” For me, the landscape of my hometown, Cheorwon, has been ingrained in me since childhood and resides in every part of my being.

The rugged terrain of the deep mountains, the chilling presence of the military demarcation line, the mixture of friendliness and cruelty in the small villages, and the wildness of the landscape. The countless flocks of crows next to fields, the tiger-patterned Jindo dog tied up on the way home,

and the corn covered in blue onion bags, the red villas on the hill and the chestnut farm next door seen from the rooftop, the harsh events that might have occurred in the dark blue mountains, the minefields and the demilitarized zones where nature’s rawness and menacing coolness coexist, the gathering of injured migratory birds, and the remains of buildings destroyed by past wars.

These things come together to create a space in my subconscious mind. When I start painting, I decide the entire canvas with my brushstrokes, rather than sketching a specific landscape. In this process, the physical sensation and emotions related to the geographical space of Cheorwon that I possess seem to emerge naturally, and I enjoy this unfolding process.

WW: *Over the past five years, you’ve come to be known for your kaleidoscopic paintings and expertise with color. How do you determine when to work in only black and white? What ideas come up?*

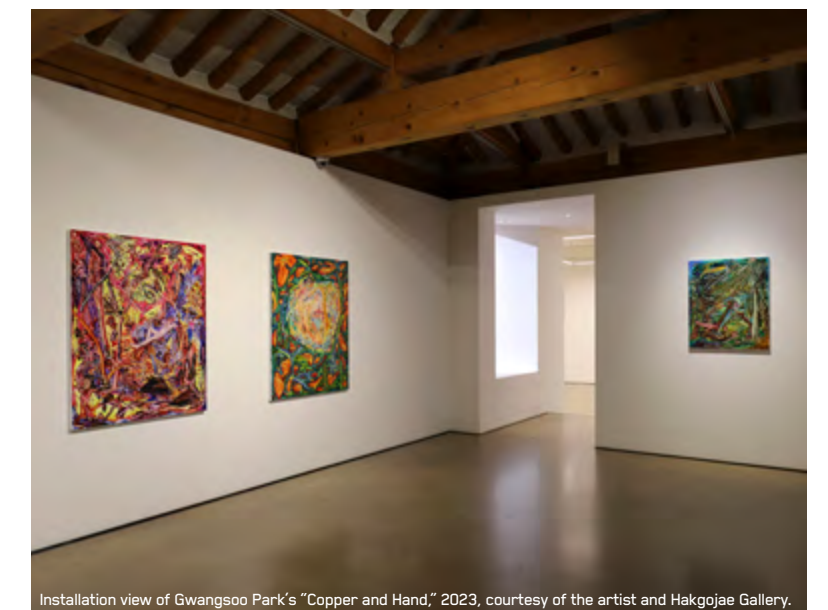
GP: I’ve been working in black and white for a long time, since the beginning of my artistic career: the basic shapes of the painting, the dots and lines without color, manipulating their thickness and length.

In black-and-white paintings, when drawing the lines, black paint is pushed along, revealing the white background where the paint has been wiped away, emphasizing volume and contrast. The boundaries of the form are not clear-cut, appearing more ambiguous and undefined on both sides. In my previous artist statement, I mentioned, “The black lines become outlines of the forest, then darkness, then branches. They are constantly changing roles, expanding this world.” I still find that when I draw in black and white, the lines are constantly changing roles, giving the painting a sense of movement.

When working with multiple colors, I choose two or three colors first. As they are painted on the canvas, I enjoy the process of the distribution of vibrant colors created as these colors meet and interact. I explore the states that may resemble landscapes, objects, or even appear as light or material. It’s like molding shapes while kneading clay. I try to create as many extreme collisions as possible, rather than just using different colors. I begin with a simple idea, and the thoughts evolve naturally as the painting process unfolds. When the colors intersect sufficiently, a figure emerges from the boundaries. Therefore, the title is also decided after the drawing, as time passes.

WW: *Many of your paintings address essential themes of creative cycles and seasons. Are there any artists, writers, philosophers, or makers who influence or inspire your exploration? Do you see yourself as working in a clear lineage or community?*

GP: My inspirations range from people to environments, from artists I admire like Pierre Bonnard, Philip Guston, and Hong Seung-Hye to the timeless music by Bach, the end-of-the-century ambience of nineties Japanese animation, colorful images of flora and fauna, the mood of Korean idol music videos, and the walkway in front of my house. Rather than following a specific lineage, I find myself pursuing what I desire. What I consider important is the natural integration of these influences into my current artistic space.



Installation view of Gwangsoo Park’s “Copper and Hand,” 2023, courtesy of the artist and Hakgojae Gallery.

TO WATCH

Installation view of Sungsil Ryu's solo exhibition "The Burning Love Song" at Atelier Hermès, photo by Sangtae Kim.



Sungsil Ryu

Creating artwork that encourages us to question our relationship with social structures.

By Eliza Jordan

Sungsil Ryu's artistic practice focuses on the mechanics of materialistic desire in modern-day Korea, "influenced by the complex intertwining of traditional Korean Confucian values and the United States-led neoliberal global order," she told *Whitewall* recently. She graduated from Seoul National University's sculpture department in 2018, and her work in video, installation, and performance employs a unique style of dark humor. In her "Cherry Jang" video series, for instance, she embodied a new persona, cloaked in heavy makeup and accessories like chunky earrings, and a ticking time bomb strapped to her forehead. Its satirical narrative spoke to the general tone in South Korea in response to North Korea's missile program, with "Cherry Jang" poking at literacy, status, manifestation, and death.

In exploring Korean culture and sociopolitics, Ryu focuses on "the nature of the individual who creatively appropriates already existing structures for their own purposes." With work currently on view in *Transmediale 2024* in Berlin (January 31–April 14), Ryu shared with *Whitewall* how her upbringing and current feelings about Seoul influence her art's focus, and why she may be stepping away from the one medium she's known most for.

WHITEWALL: *Since graduating with a degree in sculpture, you've deviated from fine art to create more multimedia works. Was creating more digitally a natural evolution?*

SUNGSIL RYU: I still find myself attracted to the traditional medium of sculpture, and while I was in school, all of my works were sculpture and installation art. I first experimented with video art around the time of my graduation show. I was intrigued by what I could make with video art, and the response from the art world also wasn't bad. Since then, I started to become more interested in digital platforms. Even though it wasn't my intention, I'm now mostly known as a digital-based artist. That said, in the future, I don't know if I will still be working in a digital medium.

There is also a more complicated reason for why I wanted to make video art. My adolescent fascination with Chris Cunningham definitely played a part, and I also felt like there were too many narratives I wanted to tell for me to just stick to sculpture. Still, the most decisive factor was my realization that video offered the most efficiency and freedom in terms of distributing my work. Efficiency and freedom are important to me, so that really was the deciding factor.



Portrait of Sungsil Ryu, courtesy of Seoul Art Space Geumcheon.

WW: *CHERRY-BOMB (2018) was the first work you made after school. Why?*

SR: This work was a collaboration with fellow artists of the art collective Eobchae. At that time, and kind of always, there was a lot of alarm over North Korea's missile program. I noticed that there were a lot of South Korean YouTubers who saw this rather serious world event as material for making "entertaining content" that could get cheap views by using exaggeration and outright fabrication. The work *CHERRY-BOMB* is about a fictional Korean-American streamer named Cherry Jang who combines talk about North Korea with her own theory about the apocalypse to scare her viewers. Ultimately, the work implies that all this talk is "empty" and that it's all about this one person's desires. The video, which consists of six minutes of edited footage, can be watched on Cherry Jang's YouTube channel.

WW: *How does being based in Seoul continue to inform your projects?*

SR: I was born and grew up in Seoul, but honestly, even though I'm not sure why, I don't feel any real attachment to living here or any particular sense of pride in it. For me, Seoul is just an efficient place for workers where they can maximize the productivity of their labor.

My parents are from Jeolla Province in southwestern Korea. Historically, that part of Korea has been discriminated against in terms of politics, economic development, and society in general. In order to succeed financially, my parents came to Seoul out of necessity, and they eventually were successful enough to buy a house in Gangnam, so you could say that they achieved their dream.

That said, they regularly suffered disadvantages and unfair treatment because of where they were from. Because of that, they were even more hyper-focused on becoming "real Seoul people" or "real Gangnam people." For them, becoming a "real" Gangnam person both proved their superiority and served their purpose of getting revenge against the world.

WW: *As someone who grew up in that environment, what does Seoul feel like to you now?*

SR: Seoul feels like a battlefield where countless people from outside Seoul come seeking to restore their honor by achieving success. This experience of mine has had a significant impact on how my works simultaneously illuminate aspects of Korean society and materialism.

There is a common idiom in Korea: "In Seoul, you can get your nose cut with your eyes open." The phrase is a commentary on the

mercilessness of life in Seoul. That is, even if you have your eyes open, there are still people brazen enough to cut your nose off and steal it. The idiom probably derives from when naive countryside people arrived in Seoul for the first time and were taken advantage of by ruthless grifters and scammers.

To me, Seoul is a low-trust society where everyone watches out for themselves. There is a cruelty to Seoul where distrust and suspicion are kind of everyone's default setting. Nevertheless, that said, as a Korean person, I feel that being able to work in Seoul is actually quite a blessing. Compared to other cities outside Korea, the cost of living is rather low, and it is easy to get materials and find fellow artists to work with.

WW: *Last year, you had a solo show in Seoul titled "The Burning Love Song" at Atelier Hermès. Why was your persona Lee Daewang centered in this narrative?*

SR: Lee Daewang is the CEO of a fictional travel agency for the elderly called Big King Travel. He is the stereotypical entitled baby boomer Korean man in his sixties who is hated by the younger generation. This character has been an important part of these works since the beginning, but I have never used him as a main character. So I thought it would be good to expand on his narrative through the Atelier Hermès show.

By depicting the pet crematorium he is opening, I wanted to reveal that within this stereotypical character, there is also a kind of hidden purity and complex psychology. Yet, this "purity" is not necessarily in pursuit of some "greater good."

WW: *Many of your works have ended in hypothetical funerals. What does death, or "the end," signify to you? Why is this important to include in your work?*

SR: In my works, death always implies an eternal afterlife. That is, ghosts of the deceased always appear "alive" in my works. For example, *Goodbye Cherry Jang (2020)* is a video of the funeral of Cherry Jang after she dies from overwork. But Cherry Jang, as a ghost, crashes the funeral and delivers her own eulogy to the people in attendance. In *Mr. Kim's Revival (2019)* as well, a deceased grandpa becomes a ghost and appears in front of his grandchildren. So, for me, "death" and "the end" aren't synonyms. That said, the "eternity" that I invoke in my work is far from the beautiful, peaceful version of eternity spoken about in religion. It is more about the never-ending desires of humans, like the cursed fate of Sisyphus.

There may be something romantic about "eternity," but I also think there is something terrifying about it. I use these characters that never die as a medium to create a kind of infinite loop between the world of the living and the afterlife.



Sungsil Ryu, *I'm Not Dead*, 150 x 200 x 280 cm, motor, mixed media, 2019, courtesy of the artist.

TO WATCH

Portrait of Yeonsu Ju, courtesy of the artist.



Yeonsu Ju

Crash landing into the endless “what ifs” behind her paintings.

Sarah Bochicchio

For Yeonsu Ju, painting is an alternative to verbal language. Where conversation may leave behind some unarticulated residue, her vibrant canvases convey emotions more completely. Her subjects seem to jostle, moving around to reveal portions of raw linen, creating space for new experiences, meetings, and loves.

Yeonsu began painting in 2017 and, for almost as long, has been inspired by Gijesa, a Korean memorial service in which ancestors are honored with a meal on the anniversary of their death. She often portrays dining scenes, where different versions of herself pour tears, feed each other, use scissors to cut pasta, or melt away. Yeonsu is their host, both in the social and transsubstantive sense; she choreographs the party, and she sees herself as being consumed during the meal. She is creator, participant, and sacrifice.

Whitewall spoke with Yeonsu about her process, her guests, and the endless “what ifs” carried within her work. Elucidating and expanding upon the scenes she depicts, she discusses her paintings as if they are living things that are constantly in motion. Ultimately, they combine specificity and openness in a way that is inviting and unsettling, loving and compulsory—like a family dinner.

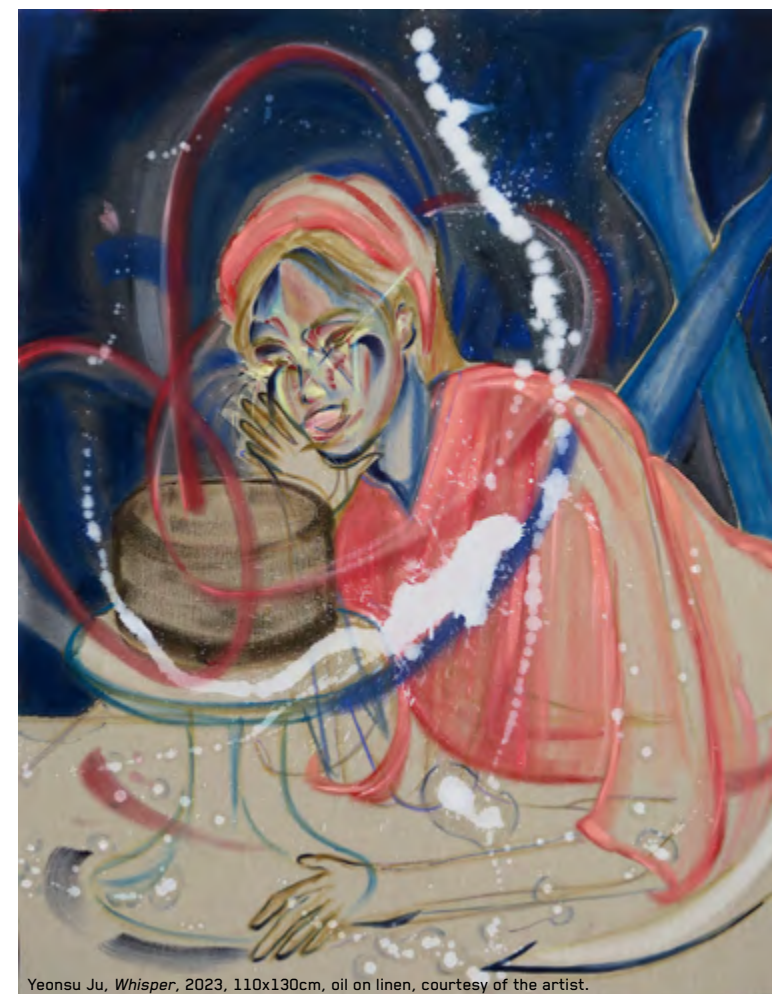
WHITEWALL: To start, when did you first start painting?

YEONSU JU: I started oil painting in 2017 in Milan when I was there as an exchange student of sociology.

WW: You studied sociology before taking your degrees in art. What inspired that shift?

YJ: My too-muchness, love for painting (and painting for love) and possibility of finding the language. Painting is a very direct and instant message. I just looked at my old works in 2017 to answer this, and I can tell why I decided to pursue this career. I can still feel all the emotions in there.

“I want to live in your closet”—I once said this to my lover. I used to say this instead of telling him that I want to live with him, which motivated my old work *Closet*. I was never good at speaking my mind through verbal/text language when it comes to love. As Jacques Lacan mentioned, there are things that cannot be signified in text—I always felt there were things left behind, unspoken. At some point,



Yeonsu Ju, *Whisper*, 2023, 110x130cm, oil on linen, courtesy of the artist.

I had to invent my own way to say how much I love you. And I felt, painting can be the language that delivers my heart in a way that consensus language cannot do. Or a direct crash into your senses without a command of signifying.

As soon as I saw the possibility of it in painting, I could not resist the urge to go further to see what I can find.

WW: Do you see a relationship between your sociological and aesthetic interests?

YJ: I cannot pinpoint exact influences between the two, but certainly studies about the Frankfurt School, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida built a basic structure of how I perceive painting.

WW: You were born in South Korea, and went to school in Seoul—how did being in London influence your practice?

YJ: I think there are two big influences—one is realization of physical/spiritual/cultural distance and difference, and the other is artsy experiences that London can offer.

It is funny that if you live abroad, you come to value your heritage/tradition more. There are some important moments that I have lost and missed as I was here . . . like my granny’s last days and funeral. The idea of Gijesa in my painting appeared around that time—I wished to reach out to her in the most familiar and loving way.

Regarding artsy experience, being in London offers me endless shows to admire beauty of delicacy and excellence. I remember the time I wrote a letter to my friends with excitement about how heartbreakingly beautiful it was, after I first watched *Romeo and Juliet* by Kenneth MacMillan, performed by the Royal Ballet.

Easy access to world-class performances in London allowed me to bring rhythm, movement, pause/hold, jump/burst, softness/hardness, et cetera.

WW: From what I can tell, you seem to let the surface of the canvas figure into your compositions. Could you tell me about how you begin a painting? What is your process?

YJ: I let it be. My process starts from gazing. I stare at reference images for one to two hours. Every image speaks its own feelings. During this time I get to be in a certain state—like overly confident, fuming in a calm and cold way, or just too sad. When I feel I have digested the image enough, I dive into painting—more like drawing at this stage. Eyebrows and eyes—usually

these appear first. Then it grows into a figure with lines. After I successfully set the composition, I start to put colors. At this stage, I try not to treat all space equally to bring rhythm. Facial expression is traces of emotional crash. Some part you hit fast/slow, harsh/gentle, sharp/dull, heavy/light, et cetera while some parts are barely touched. With that movement on the surface that rhythm brought, figures (who I see as an empty vessel carrying desires) can freely come and go on the surface of the painting. So to speak, raw linen functions as entrance and exit for the figures in my painting. Through that, they can appear and disappear. When I feel they sing and dance there, I see the painting is finished.

WW: You have written about how you are inspired by Gijesa. Who are the people you want to honor in your work? Who are the people you invite to your dinners?

YJ: I get inspired by many people that I love(d), but at the end the one I am calling to my dinner is lover(s) in my past and future.

WW: You have mentioned that you paint yourself into your canvases. To what extent do you feel you are representing different facets of your current self versus exploring different selves you have lived over time?

YJ: Hard to tell, as my current self is wandering the past with endless “what ifs.” But I guess, if I have to choose one, it will be my current self reflecting the fact that my figures are not ashamed of talking about desires anymore.

WW: Your paintings possess a great deal of movement, though your figures cannot be excused from the table. There are moments in your work where it feels as though the objects have more agency than the figures. Do you think there is something compulsory about meals / the act of eating?

YJ: My dinner is forced for both parties—those that are invited and myself. The table works as the last bastion to keep guests with me. In my painting, the figure is the host but also a sacrifice. It is prepared for guests, therefore, not allowed to leave the table. Guests cannot leave as dinner hasn’t finished yet. Before you eat them, you can’t leave. And . . . I believe after they eat them, they don’t want to leave.

WW: There are moments in your work that remind me of Cecily Brown, particularly her banquet scenes. I was wondering if she is someone whose work you think about? And, in general, who are the artists who matter to you?

YJ: Cecily Brown is one of the great artists that I love and think of. I learn different aspects from different artists. For instance, from Cecily Brown, violently fluid paint application. Francis Bacon, for sure (I think he is the one I admire the most), Gabriella Boyd. These three are currently what I am looking at.

From my experience, when I see a great painting, it hits me, and I was not able to think more than anything but the image itself. Similarly, I aim to see and make it as an impression of the scar in my heart, or as if it crash-landed on me.



Yeonsu Ju, *Feeding table*, 2023, 120x150cm, oil on linen, courtesy of the artist.

SITE VISIT



Maison Louis Vuitton Seoul, photo by © Yong Joen Choi, © Gehry Partners, LLP and Frank O. Gehry, courtesy of Louis Vuitton.

THE SPLENDOR OF SEOUL FLAGSHIPS

A cross-cultural shopping odyssey through innovative and breathtaking artistry.

By Erica Silverman

A sonorous crossroads of Korean tradition and modernity, the blossoming capital city of Seoul deeply inspires with a conglomeration of street markets, Buddhist temples, fantastical skyscrapers, and K-pop activations. The glittering metropolis is enveloped by five UNESCO World Heritage Sites, reflecting the nourishing elements of Mother Earth onto contemporary landmarks including the neofuturistic Dongdaemun Design Plaza, N Seoul Tower, Lotte World Adventure, and International Finance Center Seoul.

Designated the World Design Capital in 2010, the South Korean cultural hub continues to uplift human connection through innovative and breathtaking artistry. Home to extraordinary flagship boutiques of the world's elite and historic fashion houses, Seoul beckons international visitors for a cross-cultural shopping odyssey. Here, we shine a light on the splendid architectural and design details of Louis Vuitton, Dior, Chanel, Hermès, Gentle Monster, Acne Studios, Gucci, Fendi, Van Cleef & Arpels, and Max Mara.

LOUIS VUITTON

In 2019, a revitalized Louis Vuitton Maison Seoul was unveiled at the pinnacle of Gangnam District's elegant Cheongdam-dong. In a spirited partnership between esteemed architects Frank Gehry and Peter Marino, the illustrious site of the brand's longstanding boutique provided fertile ground for a lyrical new structure, which invokes both the enchantment of Korean tradition and the sweeping forms of the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris.

Marking Gehry's inaugural work within South Korea, the white stone building hypnotizes with the visionary's signature curvaceous glass designs and terraces winding to and fro across the

facade. Drawing energy from the graceful gestures and snow white costumes of the Dongnae Hakchum (Crane Dance), as well as the stately 18th-century Hwaseong Fortress, the boutique appears as if on a constant voyage into heavenly clouds. Passersby bask in the cheerfulness of Gehry's kaleidoscopic paper trees, which make way for the shop's wondrous interior; five floors feature Marino's rigorously collaged spaces enhanced by a "floating" staircase, fifty-five Objets Nomades interior design elements, the Espace art exhibition concept, and Louis Vuitton's archival treasures.



DIOR

Dior's creative director, Maria Grazia Chiuri, debuted the *maison's* first runway presentation in Seoul with the opulent Fall 2022 collection, leading to a ravishing Seongsu-dong concept boutique. Within the enlivened district, a shining, metallic mesh facade—reminiscent of the artistry found throughout Dior's couture ateliers—welcomes visitors into the historic brand's bespoke paradise. Sans roof, the edifice's interior boasts a fragrant garden recalling Mother Nature's gems spread throughout Korea, in addition to Monsieur Dior's adoration of the natural world.

A glistening glass showcase offers narratives of the brand in

fairytale-like assemblage—including a sculptural wooden capsule conjuring the dynamism of a skateboard ramp. The preeminent Korean designers Jeonghwa Seo and Kwangho Lee have filled the regal space with contemporary furniture fused with organic materials, while Dior's alluring *toile de Jouy* print appears on *hanji* paper as an ode to time-honored Korean craftsmanship. For full immersion in the brand's storied universe, the Korean digital design firm d'strict reveals an otherworldly journey into the founder's childhood home—a re-creation of the legendary Granville villa, overflowing with vivacious roses, is visible from the Café Dior in pure cinematic style.

SITE VISIT



CHANEL

Chanel celebrated the evolving vibrancy of Seoul with the city's debut flagship boutique opening in 2019, joining the nine boutiques spread across South Korea. In distinguished Cheongdam-dong, the world-renowned architect Peter Marino conceived the chic and minimalist sanctuary of onyx glass and lava stone, toasting both the historic city and brand's pioneering, stylish innovations. Once inside the decadent locale, sleek gray stone flooring leads a path to seven floors of diverse collections and creations within a graphic ivory, black, and white interior.

In the spirit of Gabrielle Chanel's dreamlike Parisian abode, 31 masterpieces of contemporary art fill the walls with memory and meaning. The Korean luminaries Ik-Joong Kang, Lee Bul, and Lee Ufan lend their singular artistry, placed in compelling dialogue with the site-specific *Sound Barrier*—as well as a commissioned portrait of the brand's enigmatic founder—by the German visionary Gregor Hildebrandt. Custom-made sofas and antique furnishings are intermeshed with a glowing Anis Light by Christophe Côme and glazed stoneware by Andrée et Michel Hirlet, culminating in a luminous Chanel Seoul encounter.



GENTLE MONSTER

Gentle Monster's unprecedented Haus Dosan space appears as a powerful, brutalist vessel of creative connection within Seoul. Branded as "HAUS 0 10 10 1" in respect to the forward momentum of quantum mechanics, the flagship concept store introduces visitors to the enlightened house alongside the Korean beauty brand Tamburins and sweet delicacies from Nudake. When visitors enter the first-floor lounge, the overarching theme of "Unopened:Future" becomes visible with soulful and riveting activations.

The second floor is a supernatural fantasia where the brand's

coveted optical eyewear is displayed within electrifying media installations by the London and Berlin-based artist Jonas Lindstroem. Born from Gentle Monster's robot lab, the six-legged *Probe* on the third floor receives guests exploring the latest sunglasses with audacious hospitality. The cultivated fourth floor Tamburins flagship space embraces the organic world in black-and-white, with artworks by Casper Kang, Chulan Kwak, and Mercedes Vicente. Across BIF, Nudake's "Taste of Meditation" offers an avant-garde dessert table beside a philosophical media installation by the Italian visual artist Andrea Artemisio.

SITE VISIT

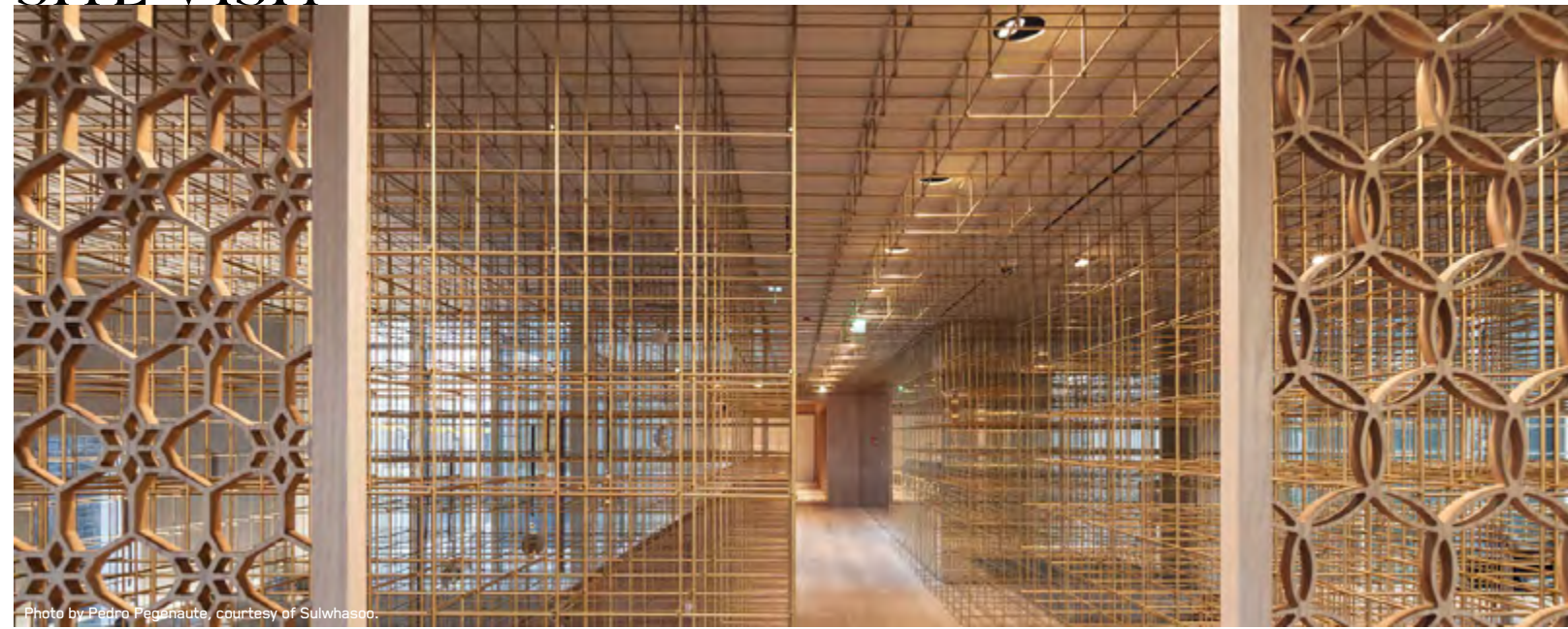


Photo by Pedro Pegenaute, courtesy of Sulwhasoo.

SULWHASOO

From 2014 to 2016, Neri&Hu Design and Research Office embarked on the holistic renovation and interior design of a five story Seoul building for beloved Asian skincare brand Sulwhasoo. Originally built in 2003 by Korean architect IROJE, the radiant new edifice was poetically titled “The Lantern,” invoking both the practical and fantastical elements of the sculptural, portable lamp—as well as its virtue in the region’s history.

In this vein, the rapturous flagship boutique was born, fully embracing the fundamentals themes of journey, memory, and identity,

which ardently connect to Sulwhasoo’s enlightened spirit. Through an hypnotic orbit of mirrored surfaces, frosted glass, and lacey brass structures, visitors find firm footing on vast oak floor boards. Geometric wooden display units ebb and flow like tender mountain ranges, culminating in sleek stone blocks which spotlight the long-standing brand’s captivating product lines. From the soulful basement spa of shadowy brick and gray stone, to the joyful roof terrace with transcendent city vistas, “The Lantern” is a moveable feast of Asian wisdom.



Courtesy of Hermès.

HERMÈS

In December 2023, Hermès welcomed local and international visitors alike to its freshly remodeled boutique by the Parisian firm RDAI, inside the Shilla Hotel. Unfolding on two resplendent floors, the distinct homage to the *hanok*, an ancestral Korean house, uplifts thriving elements of the Dansaekhwa artistic movement in an idyllic, pastoral location. Cemented in 1997, the brand’s first Korean site blooms with contemporary savoir faire, beginning with a polished storefront of blue-gray enamel ceramics, glass windows, and a patinated bronze awning.

Ethereal Grecques lighting beckons guests within the rust-hued interior, where a utopia of tones, textures, and treasures awaits. Silk, wood, and Havana stucco design moments intermingle with trademark touches by the Korean textile expert Hyunjee Jung. A blush-colored staircase echoes the terra-cotta wall of *myungjoo* silk, while woven leather walls guide the eyes to an open-air garden from the brilliant mind of the landscape architect Jeong Wook-ju.



Courtesy of Fendi.

FENDI

In February 2023, Palazzo FENDI Seoul opened its doors to the international glitterati within effervescent Cheongdam-dong. Positioned among fellow premier luxury retailers, the FENDI Architecture Department imagined an awe-inspiring cosmopolitan landmark, where a towering structure of angular stainless steel is softened by LED arches reflecting the maison’s beloved headquarters in Rome. The flagship’s four floors sing with meaningful, diverse marbles of Arabescato Vagli, Patagonia Black and White, Blue Roma, and Crystal Blue, placed in charismatic dialogue with champagne

metal, steel, and robust cement columns.

The house’s dazzling collections are displayed against handmade plaster, invoking quintessential pequin stripes, atop gleaming tables of bronzed glass by the Italian designer Roberto Sironi, and beside mirrored works of art by the New York-based visionary Fernando Mastrangelo. A divine hanging bridge transports clients to the FENDI Privé arena, where sun rays shine through a skylight onto sumptuous FENDI Casa furniture in a peaceful blue palette.

SITE VISIT



Courtesy of Acne Studios.



Max Mara Flagship Store Seoul, photo by Lee Cheol Hee, courtesy of Max Mara.



Courtesy of Acne Studios.

ACNE STUDIOS

Designed by the architect Sophie Hicks, the streamlined Seoul address of Acne Studios emerges as a vast, self-contained lightbox, embellishing the city's multidimensional landscape in a frosty shade of futuristic silver. Slivers of stone and grass decorate the entrance, and visitors are whisked up organic, angular stairs where a neon Acne Studios beacon resides.

Echoing the building's rectangular design, a square-shaped

entrance gives way to two minimalist floors displaying the house's forward-thinking fashions. Four pairs of enormous concrete columns stabilize the structure—enveloping all in a harmonious space of heathered stone, glass, and metallic surfaces. Daylight fills each corner with a celestial glow, while a sensual, twisting staircase interplays with free-form furniture in pure Acne Studios elegance.



Max Mara Flagship Store Seoul, photo by Lee Cheol Hee, courtesy of Max Mara.

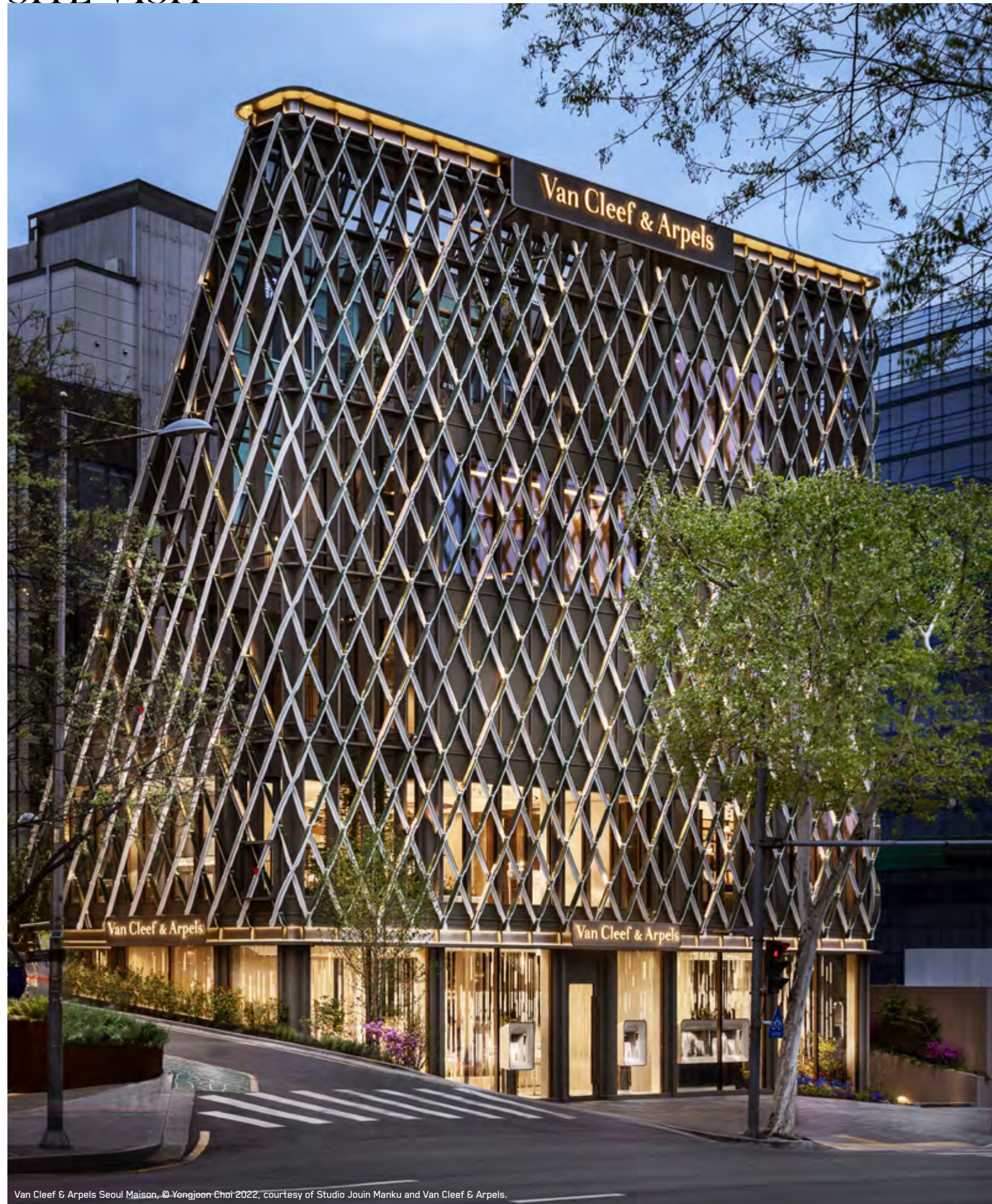
MAX MARA

In 2019 Max Mara presented its inaugural flagship boutique, nimbly designed by Duccio Grassi Architects, as a lustrous Shangri-la in Seoul's fashionable Gangnam neighborhood. Greeting the bustle of the street at 434 Apgujeong-ro with magic and mystery, the minimalist facade houses a glossy parade of tall windows leading up to a geometric grid of lights, mirrors, and washes of charcoal.

Within the intimate store, silky oak wood floors and tranquil

walls of Ceppo Stone transport visitors to the luxuriant interiors of Milanese palaces. Meticulously curated materials, including handmade finished brass, etched iron, and burnished iron, are interlaced with natural stones from floor to ceiling and stunning furnishings throughout. Sculptural seating in jewel-toned velvets rests atop plush rugs alluding to flora and fauna, while Max Mara and Sportmax collections abound in a singular journey of transcendent Italian craftsmanship.

SITE VISIT



Van Cleef & Arpels Seoul Maison, © Yongjoon Choi 2022, courtesy of Studio Jouin Manku and Van Cleef & Arpels.

VAN CLEEF & ARPELS

Van Cleef & Arpels established its historic roots in Korea in 1989, and ushered in a new era of spirited, global connection with the *maison's* latest flagship boutique in 2022. As if a twinkling, larger-than-life jewel had landed within the chic Cheongdam-dong district, the Seoul Maison is a visually arresting structure of metallic latticework, meant to conjure images of poetically overlapping reeds in the house's signature lozenge motif.

Spearheaded by Jouin Manku agency, the architectural design integrates a wealth of natural beauty with the store's unique

surroundings—from its perch on the south bank of the Hangang River to the nearby seven mountains embracing the poignant city. Under the evening stars, the boutique emits an inner glow with a creatively veiled system of lights. Beneath the sun, five floors visibly salute the magnificence of Mother Nature with labyrinthine gardens created by the Korean landscape architect Seo Ahn, walls and ceilings enhanced with organic *hanji* effects, and a “garden of the arts” exhibition space—rejoicing in the warmhearted union of French and Korean heritage.



Courtesy of Gucci.



Courtesy of Gucci.

GUCCI

This year, Gucci's second Seoul flagship, Gucci Gaok, introduces unparalleled hospitality and a sweeping array of brand collections within a masterful design landscape. Situated in legendary Itaewon, a cross-cultural mecca due to the nearby ancient city of Hanyang, the store's gracious Gaok title alludes to traditional Korean homes and welcomes visitors with vibrant enthusiasm. The Korean artist Seung Mo Park's surreal facade beckons those walking by into a simulated forest that meditates on the fragility of our natural environment.

The surrounding neighborhood's engaging atmosphere continues

with a graphic parade of circular lights across floor and ceiling, juxtaposed with shimmering, metallic surfaces that are enhanced by both modern and traditional furniture. Across four floors, classical decor meets prismatic, disco-era nightclub elements for a jubilant shopping experience. Private client realms with wooden boiserie, luxurious couches, and floral-adorned carpets spark the ultimate relaxation, while the top floor's Gucci Osteria da Massimo Bottura Seoul merges Italian and Korean fare immaculately in a verdant space that salutes the Italian Renaissance.



MMAM Spring/Summer 2024, courtesy of BFA.



MMAM Spring/Summer 2024, courtesy of BFA.



Portrait of Hyun Park, courtesy of MMAM.



MMAM Fall/Winter 2024, courtesy of BFA.

HYUN PARK

Celebrating family, emotion, and art through clothing with fashion house MMAM.

By Eliza Jordan

Concept Korea is a global fashion initiative sponsored by Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Organized by the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), it is aimed at assisting Korean designers and promoting their work in hopes that they break through in the global fashion scene. Since 2010, the program has been on the official New York Fashion Week calendar, presenting group runway shows that highlight the talent, ingenuity, and styling prowess of contemporary Korean fashion designers.

For its Spring/Summer 2024 presentation, Concept Korea staged an engaging show with KIMMY.J, CHARM'S, and MMAM. The latter stands for Maison Modern Art Museum, is a brand spearheaded by the designer Hyun Park that explores the value of family through graffiti embroidered onto pieces. Often, classic silhouettes are emboldened with these visuals, which are inspired by doodle drawings—a child's first visual language. Innately, these spark a yearning for play and remind the wearer of their own lineage.

Filled with off-kilter garments featuring tags and buttons in unexpected places, as well as plenty of pleats and asymmetrical cuts, MMAM's Spring/Summer 2024 line was genderless, ageless, and sizeless. *Whitewall* spoke with the designer about how it also focused on self-acceptance, and what artists she's gaining inspiration from for MMAM's next collection.

WHITEWALL: *MMAM stands for Maison Modern Art Museum. Why was this the name you chose for your brand?*

HYUN PARK: *A maison is a precious space where various human traces remain, from birth to adulthood. I felt that all unconscious behaviors and traces that occurred in that space are abstract art and modern art.*

WW: *The brand highlights the value of family through elements of graffiti embroidered into classic silhouettes. Why graffiti?*

HP: MMAM is a brand that reinterprets the human instinct to long for childhood. When a child is born, they cry or babble to express their thoughts, and when they get the tools to express them, they begin to scribble.

The child draws something to express an opinion. A young child who cannot control the strength of their fingers expresses the innocence they want to communicate. The form of the picture is a doodle drawing, but it is also a representation of another opinion. At home, where doodle drawings are first seen, children begin to express their thoughts to parents for the first time. I was inspired by these unconscious scribbles and actions to develop the motif.

WW: *How would you describe the aesthetic of a typical MMAM garment or look?*

HP: I want to show that clothing is part of modern art that artistically expresses symmetry and asymmetry.

WW: *MMAM's signature graffiti details are inspired by doodle drawings, evoking a child's first visual language. Why is remaining playful important to the DNA of the brand?*

HP: The brand started with doodle drawings. While presenting my master's thesis in 2016, I developed wearable artwear using doodle drawings. Rather than maintaining a playful side, the brand is being developed by taking inspiration from unconscious behavior. The designs are inspired by unintentional patterns, unconscious behavior such as the shape of a folded blanket, or the colored paper children play with. By reinterpreting the human instinct to yearn for childlike play and expressing these behaviors, we hope that MMAM will become not just clothes with a wearable function, but clothes that people will want to own for a long time with new inspirational artistry.

WW: *Your Spring/Summer 2024 collection focused on self-acceptance through a genderless, ageless, and sizeless line. How does this approach create a reflection of who you might think MMAM is made for? Or is this a reflection of who is wearing MMAM today?*

HP: I create designs with the hope that everyone at home can share them. I don't think any clothes are just for me. My goal is to make pieces that are passed down to from generation to generation and build onto the memories that the clothing already holds. I hope that when a child grows up and wears their parent's clothes, they will not feel uncomfortable at all. We design them with the hope that the clothes themselves will shine when worn by someone regardless of size, age, or gender.

WW: *How does being in the Concept Korea program impact your efforts to be seen?*

HP: These days, the ways of expressing and showing things that never existed in the world have become truly diverse. I believe that it is difficult to promote Korean fashion on the world stage and grow into a global brand through individual efforts alone. Expertise requires a variety of capital. I believe this is only possible with the support from the government.

WW: *How would you describe the fashion scene in Seoul right now?*

HP: It is no exaggeration to say that it seems like only yesterday Koreans wore hanbok, our traditional garment. The fashion has rapidly changed into modern styles in a very short period of time, so the clothing continues to show structure and detail through the tailoring and craftsmanship alongside modern trends.

WW: *Have you started working on MMAM's next collection? If so, what unique artistic elements will it feature?*

HP: I really like abstract art. I look up to artists like Jackson Pollock and Cy Twombly and study their works and chronology.

I am trying to connect these works with my own to create MMAM's new season. I will develop more new fabrics and patterns in the future and make MMAM's clothing art pieces people want to wear. I want to make clothes that customers will want to hold on to for a long time like a work of art.

WW: *What are you hopeful for in 2024?*

HP: I always hope to become a global brand, not just a Korean brand.



MMAM Spring/Summer 2024, courtesy of BFA.



Decomposition Farm: Stairway, 2022, courtesy of Yong Ju Lee Architecture.

YONG JU LEE

Seeing everything as architecture, while celebrating 10 years of his architectural firm.

By Andrew Huff

It can be a challenge for an architect to pivot between various project types—it’s easy to get typecast as a designer who makes private houses, or public installations, or other civic projects. This is not the case for the Seoul-based architect Yong Ju Lee, who throughout his decade-long career has developed an astounding portfolio of projects across these various sectors. Public parks, a fire station, an art gallery, building facades, and artfully considered architectural installations and pavilions of varying scales comprise some of Lee’s singular oeuvre of completed works.

Equal parts architect, artist, and educator, Lee has honed his craft and continues to push the limits of what he is able to accomplish, both through the materials he selects and the conceptual rigor behind a built entity. In a city where inventiveness and creative ingenuity are celebrated, Lee has created an architectural practice that is both local and global in his outlook on the importance of understanding architecture’s impact on the human condition.

Whitewall interviewed the architect about the first 10 years of his career, key projects, and what he has forthcoming.

WHITEWALL: *As you enter into your 10th year of operating your firm, what are some of the most significant ways in which your process as a designer has changed over the last decade?*

YONG JU LEE: Halfway through my career as a professional architect, the focus was mostly on realizing designs within the given budget. It was about creating a visually appealing outcome with limited resources, considering the choice of materials and construction techniques. However, in the past five years, as I have taken on the roles of a professor and researcher at the same time, I have placed more emphasis on the background of design.

While I still, of course, value the quality of the final output, I find greater significance in the ideal perspective views, particularly in my role as an educator. This can be said of storytelling as design process and contemplating the role that design should play in society.



Portrait of Yong Ju Lee, courtesy of Yong Ju Lee Architecture.

WW: *At what point did you decide you wanted to become an architect?*

YJL: I always had a desire to become a creator of some sort. I was really passionate about movies, but I lacked the boldness and open-mindedness to pursue a career as a film director. Architecture seemed to be the most similar field to filmmaking and looked like a conventional profession. Additionally, I believed that architecture had a strong aspect of engineering compared to other design fields. To me, this indicated that architecture would have a solid intellectual background in the design process. Now, I believe those thoughts right to some extent. As a creator, I work on realizing things people have never perceived before, much like movies I wanted to make. And I put together all the knowledge from concept to design and construct to get proper outputs.

WW: *What ways did your time in New York, while studying at Columbia, influence your approach to the built environment?*

YJL: When I enrolled at Columbia University, it was renowned as one of the most radical architecture schools. The faculty comprised many architects and theorists who were dedicated to pushing architectural concepts to their limits, realizing the initial concepts. Even though many of their ideas were just left as concept sketches, how solid and convincingly they presented their ideas still impacts me today. I am not sure what other colleagues studying there think, but for me, treating the design in continuous context was the most important lesson I received, rather than massaging the shape as an isolated volume.

I acquired valuable skills in developing ideas within my mind and translating them into tangible designs for the real world. Sharing ideas through discussion or criticism and expressing my own thoughts on any given issue were another significant lesson there.

When it comes to talking about New York, it was a city where it was okay to do the most bizarre things. There was always someone weirder than me, and there was a mutual respect of indifference towards each other. The emphasis on pushing boundaries and pursuing unconventional approaches encouraged me to think beyond the conventional constraints of architecture. I believe that the way I currently work, which can be described as a method that only architects can do, is something I have learned.

WW: *It is remarkable how seamlessly you are able to pivot between the worlds of art, architecture, and academia. It’s something many designers strive for, but you are able to accomplish this in an authentic way.*

YJL: Everything is architecture to me. I don’t have a sense of classifying art, architecture, education, and other things. While there are differences in terms of functionality, materials, structure, and their utilization, ultimately, as mentioned before, I believe that in the aspect of the process of materializing ideas, they are all the same. Regardless of the project, I approach it from the perspective of an architect, and I consider everything I create to be architecture. I hope that regardless of the scale or function, people would recognize the results as a reflection of my work, thinking, “This is the outcome because that architect created it.”

WW: *A careful examination of material permeates your portfolio of projects. Can you talk about your interest in exploring the possibilities of various building materials in your practice?*

YJL: Materiality is essential in architecture. From structural systems to finishes, choosing the right materials is a core task. During design development, I try to set most sequences in a parallel way, rather than linear sequence, in that concept sketch, design, program layout, materiality, construction type, and others are developed simultaneously. In particular, to actualize complex forms intricately designed according to a concept, a material study from the early stages of design is indispensable.

Moreover, environmental problems are another key issue to contemporary designers. As an architect, I am particularly interested in exploring the use of new materials to address the significant proportion of carbon emissions attributed to building construction. With building-related carbon emissions accounting for the highest share in overall emissions, I am trying to mitigate this impact.

WW: *Your 2018 public project in Seoul, Root Bench, became an international sensation, garnering coverage from a wide range of media outlets. Were you anticipating or hoping for this reception as you were conceiving of this project?*

YJL: Of course, I didn’t expect to experience this sensation while working on the project. It was a relatively simple project. A public organization from Seoul City approached me, asking if I could reinterpret and realize one of the winning proposals from a public sketch competition. I chose the clearest idea with broad coverage, titled “Tree Root Bench,” submitted by a teenager. The description depicted an undulating radial bench resembling organic roots, with a tree at the center. I spent only a few days developing the idea by adapting an existing algorithm from the “reaction diffusion system” that I was already working on for another project. The tree part was removed during the design phase, and all the decisions were made swiftly.

People sometimes say my projects are too complicated to understand, but *Root Bench* is not. That might be because it was originally from others’ thoughts, which is properly well balanced with my design approach.

WW: *Many architects dream of having the opportunity to complete public work, and share their abilities as designers with a wider audience. How have these opportunities to create public spaces shaped your process as an architect?*

YJL: I don’t know why, but I have not had that many private clients since the beginning of my career. I have just tried what I could do, and they were mostly public installations and competitions. Architecture is always for the public regarding its scale and its position in the context.

Unfortunately, even when people are experiencing architecture every day, they do not perceive it. People think of a luxurious house, fancy interior, or real estate as architecture. Expanding the boundaries through art, this tendency becomes even more pronounced. But architecture and art are everywhere. I aim to awaken people’s interests in the spatial value all around them. I wish individuals can experience unusual refreshment in their routines through my works, even if it’s for a short moment.

WW: *What projects are you working on currently?*

YJL: Public installations and exhibitions like the *Root Bench* are always ongoing, ranging from permanent to temporary ones. As a researcher, I also lead the robotic fabrication studio at the university, which involves some digital fabrication projects.

As mentioned earlier, I recently have had an interest in new composites as architectural materials for sustainability. Mycelium from a fungus is getting popular in the design field now. I also have been looking up mycelium for application to a sustainable building material. It is just a beginning stage as a project, but I am trying to 3D-print mycelium eventually on a large scale. It will take time to find proper viscosity and develop a pressing machine. Designing overall shape and toolpath for the robotic arm are another challenge for the next step. I am constantly working on presenting various perspectives of architecture to the public.



Decomposition Farm: Stairway (detail), 2022, courtesy of Yong Ju Lee Architecture.



SEOKWOON YOON

Seeing fashion as a visual form of the artmaking process with his eponymous brand.

By Eliza Jordan

In 2017, Seokwoon Yoon graduated from Pratt Institute in New York and began working as a junior graphic designer at GAP. Two years later, just months before the global coronavirus pandemic began, his desire to visualize conceptual ideas and explore the boundary between fashion and art led him to launch his eponymous label.

For its Spring/Summer 2024 collection, “Oneirataxia,” the fashion designer gained inspiration from the blurring between fantasy and reality, as well as Gut rituals performed by Korean shamans. Details in the line were created to connect the invisible spirit with the physical human being, including S-shaped slits that express flexibility and Jeju Gime—inspired textiles that speak to the paper decorations used in Jeju exorcisms.

In celebration of the Seokwoon Yoon brand’s fifth anniversary, *Whitewall* heard from the Korean designer about how he views fashion as comprehensive art and why sharing the process behind his creations is just as important as the collections themselves.

WHITEWALL: How would you describe your fashion brand’s evolution in the past five years?

SEOKWOON YOON: When I first started, due to COVID-19, there were less opportunities to communicate with people. I tried to communicate in a new direction. I tried to approach in a creative direction and present a new vision. Various collaborations and exhibitions were planned, like new forms of collaboration and sustainability with Air Busan.

WW: Your latest collection, “Oneirataxia,” refers to the state between reality and fantasy that differs by one’s opinion. Why was this theme important for you to explore?

SY: A desire to explore a new world. This was always the beginning of a curiosity about something that doesn’t exist now. The

unpredictable future has aroused curiosity and interest. The constant desire to explore boundaries also played a part. For example, fashion and art, or the boundary between the present and the future, or between reality and ideals.

WW: How do the clothing and accessory designs and details represent the beauty found in this situation?

SY: It has always been considered important to visualize conceptual ideas. This is because I can gradually find my identity in the process of doing this. So I tend to try a lot of new experiments. For example, there is a real flower painted with silicone on the fabric. This expresses the desire to keep the moment by substituting time that can pass in a moment into a medium using flowers and trapping it with silicone.

WW: This specific emotional and mental state is one the identity of your brand embraces. Why?

SY: My own experience is the most important factor in the process of conceptualizing and in starting a collection. First, I begin to conceive and complete my collection using my own photos or art pieces. So I say that my identity is included in the collections I’ve been doing so far.

WW: You mentioned that your label “presents a new direction on the boundary between art and fashion.” How would you describe what that is?

SY: I think fashion is very closely related to art because fashion is a comprehensive art. The outcome is important in the process of making clothes, but it is important to share this process with people.

WW: Your brand takes inspiration from Gut ritual—rites performed by Korean shamans that wish good luck for families. Why is this important for the brand to embrace?

SY: My attempt to find the boundaries of something beyond this world is the performance that connects the invisible spirit with human being.

WW: What details seen in Spring/Summer 2024 represent this link?

SY: Among the tools used by shamans, Gime was inspired by the role of connecting the mind and people. S Shape expressed flexibility. Putting the ID in the chest wanted to express the process of people finding their identity in reality.

WW: Where does Seoul fit on a global fashion stage?

SY: Seoul is a fast-changing and innovative city. It pursues a lot of new things. Therefore, I am looking forward to it in global fashion.

WW: What are you working on next?

SY: I’m preparing a collaboration work with a global brand. We are also planning to meet new buyers and people in Seoul, and the next collection will be on display for six weeks instead of a fashion show.

WW: Where would you predict the future of fashion is?

SY: Fashion’s future is unpredictable. That’s what I am looking forward to.





Haegue Yang

**Searching for the unknown,
and following the mysterious
flow that takes her there.**

KATY DONOGHUE

Haegue Yang is often on the move. Such is the life of a successful international artist presenting multiple projects around the world throughout the year with a studio practice split between Berlin and Seoul. In the span of one month last fall, she staged *The Malady of Death* in New York for the Performa Biennial 2023, debuted a new work for the Thailand Biennale (on view through April 30), and saw the opening of the second stop of her touring solo exhibition “Continuous Reenactment” at the Helsinki Art Museum. And her 2024 is shaping up to have a similar breakneck pace, looking ahead to a survey show at Hayward Gallery in October. In speaking with *Whitewall* late last year, she described her tendency to travel as something to flow with, rather than fight.

Yang’s work is deeply researched. She has long been interested in indigenous communities and rituals, how people maintain connections to shamanism or paganism, even when they’ve fallen out of practice or acceptance by the ruling body. We see that connection to animistic rituals in her sculptures covered in metallic bells, her use of drums, her works in paper. Yang’s installations elicit the desire to touch, to hear, to move, to transcend. They tap into multiple themes, just as they invite multiple perceptions. This makes sense, given that the artist described sensing multiple selves within her, not always in harmony.

The artist shared with us how she’s always in search for the unknown, and why she’s not afraid to tackle a difficult subject.

WHITEWALL: *In December, your work Enveloped Domestic Soul Channels – Mesmerizing Mesh #208 (2023) debuted at the Thailand Biennale. It revolves around the paper home altars of the Hmong, an indigenous group in East and Southeast Asia. What was the starting point for this work?*

HAEGUE YANG: An invitation to a biennial differentiates itself much from the one for an institutional show, especially this one, taking place in Chiang Rai, in northern Thailand. Bordering Myanmar and Laos, and also close to Yunnan, a province of China, Chiang Rai is a mountainous area, known as the Golden Triangle, lying at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong rivers. In 1949 thousands of defeated Kuomintang soldiers came from Yunnan Province into the region where these three countries meet, and they seized control of the opium business. The remnant of Kuomintang soldiers became forebears of the private narcotic armies operating in the Golden Triangle, which continues today in Myanmar, the world’s second largest producer of illicit opium and a significant cog in the transnational drug trade since World War II.

It’s a typical peripheral area with weak governmental control, remote from the legitimate power, but culturally rich due to the diverse influences. I was especially interested in the rich hill tribal culture, such as Ahka, Karen, Lisu, Yao. In fact, over 20 different ethnic minorities have flourished in this area.

All the artists were invited for a site visit in Chiang Rai. The experience was so different from visiting art institutions and art galleries in major cities like New York, London, or Paris. The location was kind of a starting point, not only for me but also for many of the participants of the biennial.

WW: *The work comes from your research in hanji and shamanistic paper folding and cutting that can be found across many cultures. How did that apply here?*

HY: With this series of paper collages, titled “Mesmerizing Mesh” and made of folded or cut *hanji*, I was interested both in the formal features and spiritual orientations of indigenous animistic rituals. These vernacular animistic beliefs were seldom supported by any central governing power and were even frequently heavily suppressed by the major power. Yet, they have survived over a long period of time and remain as a part of the culture, such as shamanism or paganism. I’m so into the vitality or resilience of those so-called minor streams of orientation that have existed over time in civilizations.

I was unconsciously looking for something similar, and there were all these hill tribal cultures and the Lanna culture in general in the north of Thailand. And then “Mesmerizing Mesh” as a series already existed. *Enveloped Domestic Soul Channels – Mesmerizing Mesh #208* was conceived when I found out that one of the hill tribes was using the same type of paper to cut their in-house shrine. And that was the Hmong tribe.

The central object for a lot of shamanistic traditions in many different geographic areas is actually a drum—a wooden frame and animal skin over it to make the sound that accompanies chants and ritualistic rites. Paper is actually proof of a highly civilized society, since papermaking is such an advanced technique. Paper props in shamanism are therefore rather rare, making them an exceptional craft, even within the marginalized field of shamanism, which is my artistic interest in this collage series.

WW: *In terms of the installation, there is this structure that the collage sits within. Is that particular to the region as well?*

HY: It’s inspired by the shamanistic altar that the Hmong people make at their home, which is decorated with papers carrying abstract motifs and patterns made by folding, cutting, and unfolding paper. And then there are some incense or offerings and some of the shamanistic props and tools. In Korea, nobody would have the altar at home throughout the seasons. Having this kind of constant altar at home and living with it was a practice I didn’t know of. It’s a sacred site; it looks like a house within a house. And by having an altar at home, each of their places becomes a sacred site.

I was looking into the Hmong tribe and learned about their immigration as refugees in the late seventies to the United States due to the Laotian Civil War. In the U.S., there is a huge population of Hmong people. I was interested in their diaspora and how they continue their traditions even in the U.S. despite their dispersion, since they can have an altar at home. It’s my speculative thought that maybe this portable altar enabled them to migrate so far without being completely uprooted.

WW: *You have that sacred space wherever you are.*

HY: Yes. So it’s about Thailand, about Chiang Rai, but also it’s about the Hmong and their migration. As an artist, my production evolves, as my research develops. I’m continuously traveling somewhere, and there is a kind of flow to follow up with. I sometimes have a feeling I’m only following this mysterious flow as if I’m a piece of drifting wood in the river.

WW: *Speaking of travel, in another part of the world you have a big show at the Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), “Continuous Reenactments.” For an exhibition like that, that includes a broad range of your work, and is your first solo show in Finland, what is the starting point there? Is it a site visit or a conversation with the curator?*

HY: My working process at the exhibition at the Helsinki Art Museum (HAM) was somehow the opposite of the way I worked at the Thailand Biennale, meaning, less site-specific. First of all, “Continuous Reenactments” was conceived as a second staging of a traveling exhibition, previously at S.M.A.K. in Ghent, which was titled “Several Reenactments.” With the accumulative title I wanted to give an idea about the shows evolving while traveling and that they are connected with each other.

Many of the productions or selected works were identical, yet more works were added to the checklist since the space of HAM is so much larger. However, the central works are the same, and both exhibitions have a strong sense of self-referentiality.



Installation view, “Haegue Yang: Several Reenactments,” S.M.A.K., Ghent, 2023 © Dirk Pauwels.



Installation view, “Haegue Yang: Continuous Reenactments,” HAM Helsinki Art Museum, 2023 © HAM/Kirsi Haikola.



“
I often sense multiple selves in
me that are contradicting
”

WW: *Two major pieces are on view, Handles (2019) and Warrior Believer Lover – Version Sonic (2023). The latter is a re-enactment of a 2011 sculptural ensemble, which has evolved into a group of pieces. Can you tell us about how this piece evolved?*

HY: *Warrior Believer Lover* was a sculptural ensemble of 33 individual pieces comprising electric cables and objects drafted over clothing racks, which were so-called “Light Sculptures.” That gigantic production was special, since it was an incredible explosion of being so expressive, which was entirely new to me at that time. I often sense multiple selves in me that are contradicting, even opposing, meaning, multiple Haegue Yangs, and some of these selves do not always allow but rather stop oneself to go. I think *Warrior Believer Lover* only came out because I somehow succeeded in letting myself go and be mercilessly expressive. I was kind of missing that vitality and extra generosity to myself, and I wanted to celebrate it again.

But funnily enough, *Warrior Believer Lover* in “Sonic” version, meaning they are made with metallic bells instead of electric cables and clothing racks, became junior-sized in terms of their physicality, especially in their height. In the 2011 version, it was as if one was walking in a cornfield. The crops were so high that when you walked between the sculptures, you became one of them. Whereas here in this sculptural field at HAM, it’s as if you’re walking in a rice field. Your lower body is still embedded with the sculptures, but your upper body and sight are completely free. So it was a kind of re-enactment, but in a different materiality and also a different physical modality.

WW: *I wanted to ask about your “Sonic Guard” series, which covers the floor. Can you tell me about that?*

HY: So far, I’ve produced two “Sonic Guard” pieces, and we have one here in a corner. As the title suggests, it guards something, while covering though not fully obscuring it. The intended scenario would be that of guarding over something. I think there are two aspects here that interest me. On one hand, it’s the sculptural aspect. I have attached bells for quite a while to a sturdy and hard frame. The bells are only on the surface—they provide the visual surface, but the form is given by the frame.

At some point, I realized that I wanted to use the bells in a purer way, so there were two different productions that came out; one was “Sonic Rope,” and the other “Sonic Guard.” And both are kind of soft sculptures. They don’t have a fixed hard shape and are rather flexible. “Sonic Guard” feels like a fabric, but of course is heavy, since it is metallic and is so cold. I was interested in the interaction between what is underneath and how the sonic fabric lies over it.

And I was interested in how to give a soul to that material. I can boil down my artistic interest to the matter and the soul and how these two elements interact with each other. In this case, “Sonic Guard” is guarding ordinary food containers—the most common metallic kettle, steel pot, tin lunch box, and rice bowls.

WW: *Talking about object and soul, you use sound in so many ways in your work, and it can really connect the viewer with the soul. Music has this cellular stimulation. What do you like about working with sound, with music?*

HY: Music and sound are two different things, and what I often use is sound rather than music. However, there are a few cases where I mobilized musical pieces alongside my installations. Music is composed, and there is an affiliated authorship that it could function as a reference, whereas sound

functions more as an element to me. It’s more open, porous, and elemental. The sound of bells is an especially archaic sound, without any descriptive melodies, remaining basic and fundamental, with rhythmic beats that remind us of an archaic resonance—almost cosmic sounds. It’s that basicness I’m interested in.

Whereas the use of musical pieces creates a cultural reference. In the Helsinki show, I mobilized two musical pieces, *Sacre du Printemps* (1913) by Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) and *Images* (1968) by Isang Yun (1917–1995). Listening to *Images*, we are reminded of Yun’s complex biography as a political dissident during the Cold War, since *Images* was composed during his imprisonment after being illegally abducted and falsely accused of being a North Korean spy.

WW: *You staged The Malady of Death at the Performa Biennial last November. It’s based on Marguerite Duras’s 1982 novella of the same name, and you’ve staged it several times in different places and spaces. How do you approach each new staging of this work?*

HY: You’re asking about three very different types of works. I think it’s interesting to talk about all three, one right after the other. For biennials, I go to certain places; it’s kind of an adventure with new places. And then this institutional show comes from the accumulated progress of sculpture-making, and is a culturally minded excavation. Based on literature, *The Malady of Death* is a staging project and a time-based piece. I’m mostly busy with exhibitions, so it is an extremely exceptional activity, an extracurricular activity as a sculptor. But there is one thing that has something in common with the Helsinki exhibition, which is the idea of revisiting, over and over again, this repetitive and recurring element, which also builds a conceptual aspect, whether I revisit Duras or my previous productions. And I see Duras as a conceptual artist, as I sometimes see myself.

As an artist I often observed how other artists and creative minds are being reduced, misunderstood, or illuminated only from one side, which feels so brutally unfair. *The Malady of Death* could be read as my personal endeavor to bring out the conceptual aspect of Duras’s writing in a less reductive way, but still by rendering them in contemporary, shareable forms. Each time I learn and discover so much, but at the same time I am so lost within it. Being lost in it seems to me evidence of not having lost any complexity of it.

And the notion of voice in that book as well as the voice as a medium on stage is so attractive. We were talking about sound and music, and now in *The Malady of Death* I’m talking about the voice as a medium. It’s a medium to read, a medium to listen to, a medium to see. The way Duras renders the notion of voice is so complex. Her sentences are clear but the meanings are complex. To the question of a journalist, “Why are your books so difficult?” Duras said, “Is your relationship with your mother simple?”

What’s wrong with being difficult? Why are you looking for simplicity? Why is that the right thing to do?

WW: *I know you have a calendar full of exhibitions for 2024, including a survey show at the Hayward Gallery in October. In the studio at the moment are there things that you’re thinking about, even themes or materials?*

HY: I’m continually processing what comes my way, while I focus on both; one aspect is project-based works, the other one is the studio production, which is happening every day. But as an artist, one always and eventually has to look for something unknown. One looks for something without knowing what it is.



Installation view, “Haegue Yang: Continuous Reenactments,” HAM Helsinki Art Museum, 2023 © HAM/Kirsi Haikola.



Haegue Yang, *Enveloped Domestic Soul Channels - Mesmerizing Mesh #208*, installation view at “The Open World,” Thailand Biennale, Chiang Rai, 2023 © Studio Haegue Yang.



Minjung

Kim

Deepening her mastery with a dedication to material, art, and the self above all else.



By Sarah Bochicchio

When Minjung Kim talks about her work, she describes her materials as her collaborators. For decades, Kim has worked with *hanji*, a Korean paper made from mulberry trees, and ink made from the trees' smoke, meaning that she understands its intricacies and behaviors better than most people know themselves. She can anticipate how the ink will pool or dissolve, what it will look and feel like to intervene on the paper's surface or burn its edges. Kim considers the paper an extension of her own skin; they are a continuous loop, just as the paper and ink represent the complete life cycle of a mulberry tree.

Now in her sixties, Kim discusses her practice, life, and career with the frankness that comes with mastery. She has spent almost her entire life being told or knowing that she would become an artist, but to pursue her work has required an intense internal strength. When she moved from Korea to Italy in 1991, for example, her techniques were off-trend, out of step with the turn toward photography and film. Despite external pressures and a difficult life, Kim has only pursued her own inclinations, rather than falling prey to these vicissitudes.

Whitewall caught up with Kim before her upcoming solo show at Almine Rech. As we spoke, she shared more about her initial interests in artmaking, finding success later in life, and where her strength comes from.

WHITEWALL: *My first question goes all the way back to the beginning. I know you've spoken in other interviews about how your mother knew that you had a talent for art. I wondered what it felt like for you making art at such an early age, and if you also recognized that you were talented?*

MINJUNG KIM: You know, when we are young, your whole world is your family or your parents. How could I know I was good? Whenever there was an art competition, I always received the first prize, so my mom would say, "You are very talented." And when I received such prizes, I felt like maybe I was indeed talented. My mom was very intellectually left-wing. After the war in Korea, there was a time when the children of left-wing individuals couldn't pursue certain professions. They were awfully oppressed by the dictator. Looking back now, I understand why they would say, "You are talented." We were not allowed to become teachers or judges. I had aspirations to become a judge; I always talked about wanting to punish bad people. However, they would say, "You're so talented, you should pursue art." Our parents pushed me in that direction, and I didn't question it. However, they never imposed their left-wing views on me. Then, I had private art teachers, private calligraphy tutors, who would say, "You are talented." So I truly believed it. When you're young, you're often too inexperienced to decide what you want to do. We were Korean kids, very respectful toward our parents. So, when our parents decided that we were going to pursue a certain path, we believed it too. Now, at 60 years old, I realize that I was born to be an artist.

WW: *And you never stopped practicing.*

MK: I have never stopped doing artwork. Your personal life can be very challenging, and mine was no exception. It was not an easy life. However, throughout my life, I prioritized and accommodated being an artist and never ceased working.

As you may have read in my biography, I came to Italy. I have a deep love for the Renaissance, which is why I chose to settle here. However, my chosen medium of paper was not well received in the art world during the nineties, a time when photography and video were in vogue. When I presented my artworks to galleries, they often dismissed it, saying, "You don't work with oil paint." At that time, I just kept on going. I persevered. Success comes so late, so I couldn't stop working.

WW: *Did you feel like the resistance to your work was the same in Italy as it was in Korea, or did it have a kind of different quality to it?*

MK: Well, upon my arrival, my professor said, "Since you're in Italy, why not embrace something new? That means you should change your medium." I had been working all my life, till 28, 29, with paper. It's like completely changing your color if you abandon it. Like after exclusively eating rice for years and suddenly switching to only meat.

I thought that being in this country meant I had to change my skin. But I didn't change it; I stuck to what I knew best and could do well. I'm very stubborn. I said thank you, but no. And of course, nobody paid much attention to me at the time. I aimed for success at the age of 60. I observed what people typically consider a successful artist, and I realized they often can't carry on for too long. With success comes a lack of freedom to drastically change your work. So I planned it. I said, "Nobody look at me."

Then, life progresses; you get married, you have children. Your career isn't the main focus anymore. True success isn't about external achievements. A successful life is when you're happy, and when you have your own identity. You keep on growing your strengths. This, to me, is a successful life. And whatever you pursue, you'll have the results of that fulfilling life.

WW: *What you're saying is so interesting, given the art market, where so many trends seem to crop up.*

MK: When we decide to be artists, we understand what we are committing to. We are not seeking success or money. However, in the younger generation, artists immediately associate being an artist with financial gain or success. Furthermore, art schools often focus on teaching students how to exhibit their work rather than fostering personal growth and character development. Observing these young artists, they tend to discuss similar themes.

Typically, artists shouldn't talk because we are dealing with something where there is no language. There is something beyond. Perhaps I cannot fully explain all that I do (also, the more you explain, the weaker your art becomes). I perceive art as a sacred relationship between God and humans. You are born to fulfill this role. That's what I feel.

WW: *You're saying that art is a kind of divine inspiration, and I'm wondering if that is part of the reason why you connect so much with the Italian Renaissance?*

MK: I am drawn to the Italian Renaissance because of my appreciation for skills. The Renaissance era was renowned for its mastery of skills. Despite limitations imposed by religious constraints, artists of that time managed to express themselves in remarkable ways. Skill is essential because it empowers one to create even in the absence of words.

Immersing oneself in a chosen material is crucial. Personally, I worked with paper for 40 years, and despite feeling like I had explored every possibility, there was always something new to discover. Mastery deepens over time as one becomes intimately familiar with their chosen medium. For me, working with paper feels like an extension of my own skin. This deep connection allows for true freedom of expression with the material.

WW: *What you're describing requires intense personal strength to keep going and to keep to yourself. I see so much in your work that it has its own atmosphere. And I wonder if for you that atmosphere is a version of yourself*

MK: Yes, I believe so. I used to live in Milan, but I moved to the countryside because I didn't want to see people. I adore people, but it's poisoning; being constantly surrounded by them can be draining. I find solace in melancholic isolation. Throughout my life, I've strived to create situations that offer the best circumstances and conditions to create solitude and my art. So I think whenever I do something, maybe it comes out like you describe.

I had a miserable life. So, if I don't burn this very simple paper, I could kill myself. It served as a form of discipline, to survive. But at the same time, I've always considered myself an artist who creates beauty. I never aimed to evoke feelings of anger or sorrow.

WW: *I know mulberry paper is very chemically stable. I was thinking about that in relation to the kind of constancy and cyclical nature of your work. Is the chemical stability of the paper something that you think about when you're working?*



Portrait of Minjung Kim, photo by ©Gregoire Gardette.

“When I got to 60 years old, I recognized
I was born to be an artist”



Minjung Kim, *Mountain*, 2009, ink on mulberry Hanji paper, 75x136 cm, British Museum Collection, courtesy of the artist © Minjung Kim.

MK: When I was young, my father practiced calligraphy and often used mulberry paper. So this paper was everywhere in the household during that time. It's not that I consciously chose it because I knew about its consistent chemical pH, no; rather, I am grateful that I was exposed to such high-quality paper from a young age.

Some people ask me if I'll make my own paper, and no, I never think of it. Master papermakers already produce fantastic paper. Why should I waste my time and take away their jobs? I typically purchase paper from Korea; I buy around 100 kilos of paper, and then send some to New York. I consume it all.

Paper is already a form of minimal art. When I see the paper, when I do any action involving it, I feel I'm violently interrupting its profound silence and peace. I really serve the paper, and it often tells me what I should do. I like this collaboration with the material. Even though it's so thin and delicate, paper possesses a strong character, unique traits, their inherent acceptance. I have to learn about their character. With the paper I became humble. Working with this material makes me a better person.

WW: *It makes you listen and respect its agency. I'm interested in this and the isolation that you cultivate. Do you feel that you have to be in a certain state of mind to start working?*

MK: When you attend a dinner party, you're excited, so happy. You need time to calm down. I need a few days to settle down. I like being around people; I'm endlessly curious. However, at some point, I understood that life is too short, as we often say. I've come to understand that I was born to be an artist. Now, at 60 years old, I cannot afford to waste time. So many people say, when they see my work, I am almost like a monk, when they see my work. But no, in reality, I'm anything but serene. That's precisely why I do what I do—it helps me find inner peace. If I were already as calm as a monk, I wouldn't feel the need to pursue this profession.

WW: *Is it almost like you're emptying yourself when you're working?*

MK: It's the only problem of the soul. All the emotional negativities make us sick physically and mentally. It's all about your ego. Ego decides. Ego judges. The ego wants to be accepted. When it comes to artwork, focusing is essential. Repetition is meditative. Although I don't like to use this word now, because everyone uses meditation, and I don't know how much people really do. However, when I'm burning paper, that's exactly how it feels. If you're not fully focused, you burn your fingers. With repeated movements, it becomes automatic. You lose yourself, and transcend your own ego. And I believe this is truly beneficial for me.

WW: *I wanted to ask about your "Mountain" series. When I look at it, it feels like it is not a vertical depth, but a horizontal depth, sort of like an interior mountain. But given the title, I wondered if you felt it was more about landscape?*

MK: You're a sensible person. You understand. At that time, I was in Italy without any inspiration for new art. So I decided to venture to the seaside,

thinking, "We'll see what happens." I ended up in the Positano area, where I rented a room, and this is what I painted.

This room overlooked the cliff by the sea [makes crashing sounds]. Then I was thinking, "Can I paint the sounds of the water and of the tide? How can I paint the sounds of the tide?" I never sketch my artwork. I started painting. I looked at it, and it seemed like a mountain. I liked the duality—it was my intention to paint water, and it transformed into earth.

WW: *When I look at these pieces, it makes me pay attention more to my own breathing, the quietness of existence. I imagine the watercolor touching the paper. It creates a second set of music.*

MK: You know, the ink I'm using is made by the smoke of the tree. They burn the trees, then the smoke goes up, they take it, and this becomes ink. So basically, you paint with smoke. If you think about it, the paper is made by the tree, and from the tree they make ink, and the ink you put there is a transformation of the same material, so they're harmonious. The basic material itself, whatever you use, is ready-made art. So art is everywhere. And you don't need that much intervention.

WW: *What I like so much about all of this is the cyclical quality. The life cycle of the mulberry also seems to parallel your own interests. In the smoke, I see the sfumato or the chiaroscuro of Italian art. These components naturally gravitate toward each other.*

MK: You talk very well. When you do interviews, you have to have the same spirit for it to be easy to discuss. You have what is in your mind, and it comes out of another's mouth.

WW: *I also wanted to ask, besides the materiality of your work, do you feel there is something innately Korean about what you do?*

MK: I lived in the West for more than half of my life, but still I have strong Koreanity. But Koreanity is changing now. Young Korea is BTS! So I cannot say what is Korean now, but I am Korean of my time.

I was born in the sixties, and we have parents who were in the Korean War. We know poverty, how our parents sacrificed. Our parents' generation worked hard. I'm very Korean—who-is-born-in-the-sixties. I still have the old, very traditional Korean mind. Somehow, we are a victim of our own time.

WW: *And your parents lived under the Japanese occupation too?*

MK: Yes, my parents, and they got independence. We had 36 years of Japanese colonization. Then Russia, America, Europe decide to divide the balance of power in our peninsula. All these things are our inheritance. Tragedy. We feel it. For thousands of years, we were continuously invaded by China, Japan, and Russia. And we had a lot to take as a small country. We are survivors. Koreans are very practical people.



Portrait of Minjung Kim, photo by ©Sebastiano Pellion di Persano, courtesy of Almine Rech.



Minjung Kim, *Regeneration*, 2024, mixed media on mulberry Hanji paper, 47 x 41,5 cm, photo by © Minjung Kim, courtesy of the artist.



Lee Ufan

Creating certain mysterious phenomena that
engage viewer and place in equal measure.

BY ANDREW HUFF
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TETSUO KASHIWADA



Few living artists have had careers as rich and layered as Lee Ufan. Born in Haman-gun, South Korea, in 1936, Lee is well known internationally for his thought-provoking bodies of work and public installations that span a wide range of materials and artistic processes. Equal parts painter, sculptor, philosopher, writer, glass-breaker, and wanderer, Lee has spent his career observing his ever-changing surroundings in order to create work that astutely responds to the elements he encounters.

The early trajectory of Lee's career as an artist did not begin conventionally. When he was two months into studying painting at the prestigious College of Fine Arts at Seoul National University in 1956, an unexpected trip led him to go to Japan, where he ended up staying and studying philosophy at Nihon University in Tokyo. Lee had an undeniable interest and curiosity for art, and his studies commingled and led him to find like-minded individuals who were eager to bring forth work that connected intangible notions through physical forms and actions. This led him to help found the movement Mono-ha (School of Things), which focused on an exploration of materials as an artistic modality during a moment when Japan saw an intense amount of industrialization. At the same time, other groups around the globe were grappling with similar notions and frustrations, in particular Arte Povera in Italy, which also considered how everyday materials could be used and recontextualized into art objects.

Seeing Lee's work in person is a truly memorable experience. There are certain visceral elements, like the tactility of his materials, highly detailed application of paint, and tension between juxtaposed objects, but there is also empty space. The work considers the viewer's approach to it, adding to the already rich experience of examining his creations. He has an uncanny ability to capture the passage of time and movement around the world with his deceptively complex assemblages and works. Whether you are in front of one of his larger-than-life public sculptures or a minimalist painting on a wall, Lee provides his viewer with mental and physical space to fully immerse into his work.

Whitewall spoke with the artist ahead of a busy 2024 about some of his recent exhibitions, how he works in his studio, and some of his future hopes and dreams for showing his work.

WHITEWALL: *Last year, you opened a retrospective exhibition at the Hamburger Bahnhof, which brings together 60 works made over just as many years. Can you talk about the process of installing this show?*

LEE UFAN: My artistic activities began in the late 1960s when the modern worldview was coming to an end and people were seeking a new beginning. In other words, the avant-garde was being asked to deconstruct egocentrism and attempt a dialogue with the outside or the other. My work was mostly involved in violent and destructive acts, such as breaking glass with stones or disorganizing neutral steel plates. It started with the rejection of capitalistic productive production and gradually developed into a work that pursues the existence of things and their relationship with humans. In my paintings, I visualized the phenomena of fundamental elements of things through action, rather than the expression of personal images. Thus, over a long period of time, it has become my basic attitude to let what is made and what is not, and what is painted and what is not, meet.

WW: *Though you were born in Korea, you have spent a great deal of time living and working abroad. How have these experiences outside of the country you were born in continued to influence and frame your vision?*

LU: I spent my entire life as a wanderer due to various circumstances, so I naturally developed a sense of externality and otherness. From the perspective of philosophy, my thinking has also deepened in a way that emphasizes variable relationships rather than fixed existence.

WW: *Parallel to the conceptual rigor behind your work, you are also an exceptional writer. Where do you get your best writing done?*

LU: I do not have a special place dedicated to writing activities. At home in Japan, I am surrounded by family and friends and immersed in everyday life. In Paris, however, there is a lot of stimulation, loneliness, and a language barrier; my imagination spreads its wings.

WW: *Can you describe your studio setting? How important is maintaining a sense of consistency or equilibrium in your space to your artmaking process?*

LU: My established studio is located in Kamakura, Japan, and Paris. I create the largest paintings in a very small and narrow space. I work alone every day without an assistant. I consciously breathe and concentrate my energy, so the production is very small in a given time.

WW: *In your career as a painter, you have created and continue to make works for carefully organized series, including "Winds," "With Winds," "Correspondence," and "Dialogue," which is ongoing. At what point did you know when one series was completed and when a new one might emerge?*

LU: My motifs are mainly generated from the relationship with the external world, so when they are organized and shaped to a certain extent by my internal world, they are divided. Then another externality comes into play and changes my thinking.

WW: *What is your favorite part of bringing an artwork into the world?*

LU: My works are not completed in themselves but are sublimated into expression in a relationship with a place or a viewer. As a result, the scene in which the viewer is confronted with my work is a phenomenal sight in which a certain mysterious phenomenon is taking place.

WW: *You have forged meaningful relationships with builders and architects, including Tadao Ando, throughout your career. What role does architecture and the built environment have on your process as a sculptor? As a painter?*

LU: When my work is displayed, a place is opened there. The work is not a finished structure but a variable space in which the architecture and its surroundings mingle together.

WW: *You recently opened a remarkable museum in Arles, France. What does it mean to have this opportunity to exhibit your work in a context you have designed yourself?*

LU: Provence is where some of my favorite artists stayed, including Cézanne, Gauguin, Picasso, and Matisse. I especially feel an exotic image from Arles, where Roman culture flourished despite being part of France. As an admirer of ancient cultures, I was drawn to its unique history and its provincial location far from Paris, so I decided to create a space to showcase my work there. I feel that I did not choose Arles, but rather that Arles called me.

WW: *Your ability to contextualize your work in a physical setting is so exacting and carefully considered. I am curious to hear if you have any particularly significant relationships with curators who have helped you see your work in new ways or have helped you reconsider an installation of your own work?*

LU: An exhibition at a gallery is organized either by the curator's initiative, the artist's idea, or by the curator and artist in consultation. I often design my exhibition in consultation with the curator, but sometimes I take the initiative. The design also depends on the time and place of the exhibition. In any case, my work is not object-centered, but rather is established in a close relationship with the space, so it should be an exhibition that takes advantage of the space.

WW: *Are there any contexts in which you have not yet and hope to show your work?*

LU: I would like to hold a sculpture exhibition not in a white cubic space but in an urban space or even a desert with no cultural elements. I also would like to display my paintings and sculptures together in a flexible space which is a typical venue for contemporary art, such as the Tate Modern.

WW: *Do you have any upcoming projects or exhibitions you are working toward this year?*

LU: In mid-April this year, I will be showcasing my paintings, sculptures, and ceiling paintings at the new Berggruen Foundation in Venice. And from mid-May, I will have an outdoor sculpture exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. In September, I will have a solo exhibition of paintings and sculptures at the New South Wales Museum in Sydney, Australia.



Lee Ufan, *Relatum - Cotton tower*, 2014, steel, reinforcement bar, wire fence, cotton 330 x 300 x 250 cm, installation view of the exhibition "Lee Ufan Versailles," at Château de Versailles, 2014, © Lee Ufan, Adagp, Paris, 2024, courtesy of the artist and Mennour, Paris and Pace, New York



Lee Ufan in his studio, photo by Tetsuo Kashiwada.





“ I spent my
entire life as
a wanderer ”



Exhibition view of "Lee Ufan: Response" at kamel mennour, 2022, © Lee Ufan, Adagp, Paris, 2022, courtesy of the artist and kamel mennour, Paris.





Lee Ufan, *Relatum - Dialogue X*, 2014, steel and 2 stones, 350 x 900 x 1800 cm, view of the exhibition "Lee Ufan Versailles" at the Chateau de Versailles in 2014, © Lee Ufan, courtesy the artist and Mennour, Paris and Pace, New York.

MINSUK CHO

Creating civic engagement and sociocultural potential with “Archipelagic Void” at the Serpentine Pavilion.

BY ELIZA JORDAN



The 2024 Serpentine Pavilion, “Archipelagic Void,” opens this summer, designed by Minsuk Cho of Mass Studies. From June 7 to October 27, the multi-space installation continues his study of public-centric projects that spark social engagement. For the Serpentine Pavilion’s twenty-third iteration, Cho imagined a site of five islands encircling open space. This central void, aimed to evoke hope, will act like a traditional Korean *madang* courtyard that hosts gatherings and activations year-round.

The five satellites consist of the Gallery, acting as a welcome center; the Auditorium, serving as a gathering space; the Library, featuring a calm respite; the Play Tower, hosting a netted structure; and the Tea House, honoring the Serpentine South building’s historic role as a tea pavilion with a reimagined Korean tea house. “Archipelagic Void” offers various paths for the visitor to venture.

Cho’s creative practice is centered on contributing to culture and society beyond the physical landscape. After studying architecture in Seoul and New York City, he worked for OMA in Rotterdam and later co-founded his first firm, Cho Slade Architecture, with his partner James Slade in New York. Just over 20 years ago, he returned to Seoul to open Mass Studies, where he has designed an array of projects including Pixel House (2003), the Korea Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo 2010, Space K Seoul Museum (2020), Won Buddhism Wonnam Temple (2022), and Pace Gallery Seoul (2023).

Under construction now in Seoul are a handful of other Mass Studies–designed projects, including the new Seoul Film Center (Montage 4:5), the Dangiinri Cultural Power Plant (Dangiinri Podium and Promenade), the Yang-dong District Main Street (Sowol Forest), and the Yeonhui Public Housing Complex.

From Seoul, Cho shared over a video call with *Whitewall* details behind his first U.K. structure, “Archipelagic Void,” and what dream project he’s still working toward ten years later.

WHITEWALL: *This summer, “Archipelagic Void” by your architectural firm Mass Studies opens at the Serpentine Pavilion. You began by asking what can be uncovered and added to the Serpentine site—after over 20 iterations have been seen there. What did you feel you uncovered or wanted to add?*

MINSUK CHO: In architecture, as in everything, it’s the consequence of what has happened before. Architecture occupies space. Everything has a life span—even what we consider a permanent building. It also occupies time. The history of the Serpentine Pavilion is unique because I don’t think there’s anywhere in the world, maybe the Isa Shrine in Japan, that rebuilds as a ritual. It’s become this modern-day ritual of sorts. There’s this whole built-on narrative side that the brilliant architects and artists have been exploring. We were thinking about how to contribute, then we looked at the previous ones.

WW: *Have you visited the site before? Did that impact your approach?*

MC: I’ve only visited once, almost 20 years ago in 2005, for the Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura pavilion, which was brilliant. It was also on a rainy day, and I was all alone. Me and architecture. It was a very rainy, typical London moment, but it was interesting because it contrasted. Media portrayed this ecstatic moment—a bright, sunny day filled with people—and YouTube videos showed the opposite of that. It was a kind reminder of what architecture can do, and the full range of possibilities, especially at a public space. There can be a very quiet moment and a hyperactive, collective, exhilarating moment. It’s also a continuation of the history of Kensington Gardens, which has a very important history with the city of London and how it became a very civic, public space.

So, we wanted to give many choices, and that’s where this “archipelagic” idea came about. It’s not part of our script, but in a way, it can be compared to a traditional way of eating. We have everything everywhere all at once. It’s not a coursed meal, we don’t have a main dish on the table, but it’s a constellation of many things. Hot, cold, spicy, mild, old, fresh. Everyone can sit together but compose their own meal and choose their own courses. Here, we’re exploring how to be generous in a very particular way, and in our case, it’s about giving many choices to play with. The majority of it is completely geometric. A circle eight times, a rectangle six times, and then the rest is free form.

We thought the circle was exciting, but maybe we could invert it. We’ve been doing many of these circular domes and ways of organizing it, because when it’s almost an arena, there’s intimacy with varying degrees of enclosure with regards to the porosity. Our intuition was to create this empty void at the center.

Typically, a pavilion is about cleanness—a new world that you’re invited into where you’re uplifted. But for this, it seamlessly connects to the

surroundings. For the five pavilions, we tried to make it as site-specific as possible. It’s not a blank slate, *carte blanche*. There are boundaries with the trees and the Serpentine South building. Each building, each island, has a dialogue with its surroundings. What we get at the end is five covered spaces that have very specific activities that can pick and choose from. As a result, you have void and five in-between spaces between these five wings.

WW: *“Archipelagic Void” shifts away from the architectural framing of a built center and explores it instead as an inverted void. This represents a departure from previous structures and proposes new possibilities and narratives, which is a futuristic way of thinking while still honoring the past. Why was this idea important?*

MC: Multiplicity and oneness at the same time has been an important theme for us. Especially at this time, and in certain moments earlier in this century and in the beginning of my practice, new technology will allow us to unite and communicate freely, but then it becomes something else. There’s a compartmentalization of the world, and that’s why architecture has become more and more compelling. There is a way to bring different people with different backgrounds and heterogeneous conditions together and make them, not forcefully, interact in a gentle, civilized way.

Frederick Olmsted of Central Park mentioned a commonplace civilization, even though he was interested in what was happening with slavery in the South and he was skeptical of community, just like now—what was happening in that moment, beginning of this modern democratic America. But he had a hope for that, and in a way, this pastoral strategy became almost a theme park for people from other oppressed societies. It wasn’t this formal European park about showing the geometrical domination of human power. This is something I’ve been more and more interested in.

WW: *The Tea House honors Serpentine South’s historical role as a tea pavilion. How did you explore the history of the site for your reimagined space?*

MC: They wanted us to come up with a covered space for the rain—a semi-outdoor space for two hundred people to gather. Previously, it mostly served coffee. But as we looked into the history of the Serpentine Gallery south building, it was built as a tea house in 1934. And then it became a gallery and lost its function, and of course then there are other amenities around it in the park. I thought it would be interesting to bring that outside and serve coffee, but they weren’t very enthusiastic. [Laughs] I’m not so familiar with U.K. culture, but I kind of knew they’re known for tea drinking.



Minsuk Cho, portrait by Mok Jungwook, courtesy of Mass Studies.



Missing Matrix (Boutique Monaco), 2008, photo by Kyungsub Shin, courtesy of Minsuk Cho and Mass Studies.



Southcape Spa & Suite-Clubhouse, 2013, photo by Yong-Kwan Kim, courtesy of Minsuk Cho and Mass Studies.

From 2010, our practice has been involved with a tea company in Korea. It's a very interesting parallel with this pavilion. There's a beautiful tea plantation since the seventies, which is on Jeju Island and their mission was exactly the same. Our culture is lost almost maybe because of the American influence with coffee, so they've been doing this in a very organic way. And they've been doing pavilions over the years, so that taught me how much you have to deal with specific, natural contexts. There's an ecologist side, and the green field. There's a sensitivity I'm trying to show at the Serpentine in a way—how we try and engage with the surroundings. We're still working on it, but we're thinking of bringing the company with us and running it there, showing a modern way of serving tea.

WW: You've said, "The aesthetic of the invisible brings us back to the aesthetic of the void and the infinite, which need not produce anguish, but hope. That could be the new ambition of architecture." How does this void evoke hope?

MC: It goes back to Taoism—Laozi—and the famous scripture on the wheel analogy from the 4th century BC scripture, *Tao Te Ching*. It has two circles. Our circle touches the ground, and there's an inner circle that's empty that connects the spokes—30 of them. What makes the wheels move is the void at the center. It says, "Thirty spokes join at one hub; emptiness makes the

cart useful." I also looked back on the aniconism in Buddhism, when it became an organized religion, around the third century, and reflected on the many interpretations of emptiness throughout history and across different cultures. King Rashukha, who promoted Buddhism as redemption, at the very beginning, created the depiction of an empty throne—not the Buddha statue. Slowly, they created a person sitting in the middle, now well known as Buddha—something every temple has. It used to be that it was surrounded by all the trees and guardian animals, but there is an empty throne. It was beautiful in that sense.

WW: The central void will act like the madang, a courtyard in old Korean homes that accommodates an array of activities—from everyday affairs to large collective events. What does your personal history with a space like this bring up?

MC: Madang is flexible and very pragmatic. It's not an aesthetic one, with a rock garden or a sculpture like Peter Zumthor's one, which I admired very much. In our void, it performs like a *madang*, a Korean courtyard. During fall, we harvest red chili pepper and dry it to make red chili pepper powder. Sometimes weddings happen. Sometimes there are extensions of a kitchen. In kimchi season, they make hundreds of cabbages there. It's a pragmatic way, a ritual, from individual to collective. That's what happens.

For the Serpentine Pavilion, we look at it like a lens—what lens does to light. It makes light converge, and it also inflects. It could be a destination to gather, like an arena for lectures and performances. But there are ten access ways—five islands that are open and then in between. So people will come from ten different directions and choose their way through. It's not a pavilion that we can describe in one way. It's the same meal table, where we generously prepare. It's nothing forced, just a gentle suggestion. Five covered spaces, and six open spaces—eleven spaces that you can pick and choose from. We're making wheels rotate.

WW: How do you anticipate others feeling in this space?

MC: The nice thing about this Korean typology, the *madang*, is that even if you are four people, it can be rectangular, one-sided; L-shaped, more rich; or C-shaped, four-sided. And the nice thing about rich people is that they don't make a McMadang out of it—a McMansion—but a series of intimate-scale madangs. What I also like about this is the material we use, timber, also has limitations. The palace is an exception, but mostly, you cannot build this huge madang. In our culture, modesty is embedded.

Madang is about intimacy. It doesn't reveal everything to everybody. A lot of pavilions are like, "Wow!" You take your snapshot, and it becomes an experience you enjoy, and then you leave. In a way, architecture

has become somewhat of a spectator—not really a genuine participant. Often, you have the, "Wow! Let's take pictures." And that's become a big activity now. I imagine people to come and ask, "What is this? Oh, you can sit here." On a sunny day, maybe you'll look up at the sun and then tree, and see under the tree a building, and see people on the other side of the timber structure.

This traditional Korean architecture, *madang*, works in a similar way. There's intimacy, but also a tactile quality to it. Old Korean houses barely have furniture in them. We sleep on the floor. There's also always a stone plinth and a raise to keep away from the wetness. A timber structure starts, which becomes our seating and sleeping—with a futon or something to make it cushy. This pavilion offers a lot of that.

Architecture also mediates the human body and the topography. Serpentine Pavilion, many people don't realize, has a subtle slope for the park to drain when it rains—almost a two-foot difference from one side to the other. We created a plinth at the same elevation height, and the auditorium has a very low bench for children, and it slowly grows. Both benches on each side become almost the height of a stool. When you cross the void to the tea house, it becomes the height of a bar. It's an interesting perspective of people using the same planes, but in different ways with the body. We want to optimize the space and make the most of what's given to us.



2018 Daejeon University Residential College, photo by Kyungsub Shin, courtesy of Minsuk Cho and Mass Studies.

WW: Just over 20 years ago, you returned to Korea to open Mass Studies after studying and working in other countries, including the United States and the Netherlands. How would you describe how the architectural landscape has changed since you returned?

MC: I left Korea for New York to be a grad student in 1989, and my plan was never to go back. At the time, there was a military regime and it was a dictator era. It was a rough moment with demonstrations all the time. Close friends, very smart ones, were going to jail. Architecture was a passport to live somewhere else. I thought it would never change that much, but thankfully, somehow, my country was changing. The blossoming of contemporary culture owed a lot to the late 1990s—when Kim Dae-jung, the first democratic president in 1998, who got the Nobel Peace Prize, passed away, but he gave to us the freedom of expression, movies, and important books that were forbidden to read. Almost explosive things were happening.

When I came back to Korea, I was surprised and had to get used to it, because it wasn't the country that I left. Architecture is interesting because the modernity of the 20th century almost became like *Titanic*. It sunk, and became another era, and created all this discourse. When I came back, there was another universe happening. Things were blown up and created faster. It was kind of scary, but at the same time, it was an exciting interpretation of mistranslations, maybe appropriated from what came from the West. It was quite amazing because I thought I'd come back to a quiet place and do my own little thing. It wasn't a goal to be known outside, let's say, because it was so exciting to be part of social change. It demands a lot of raw energy. The Korean film director—the one of *Parasite*—is of the same generation. It's coming out of the age, of that milieu. In the last 20 years, he tried to produce socially engaging commentary, at the same time as us, but in entertainment. It resembles our compressed history. We have to move fast, so we're practical.

After coming from the West, what I called this was two architecture camps, which are ever-more polarizing. Systemic and heterogeneous. One is about taking over the world, ninety-nine percent of the construction, they build so much and always in a very systematic way. They feel guilty and brave at the same time. The, "Whoops! Look what I've done. I've built a city!" And then heterogeneous. They're very serious, follow discourse, sensitive,

and very angry. They don't get engaged much, but have a connection. It's polarizing. It used to be ninety percent to ten percent, and now it's ninety-nine percent to one percent.

I thought being guilty and angry is not very healthy to be an architect, but I can consider being brave and sensitive a practice. That's what I call systematically heterogeneous, or heterogeneously systematic. It straddles the in-between. That's been my approach.

We're broadly interested, but we don't want to be part of the redundancy of the machine. We can contribute to any genre. It could be a very big blockbuster architecture—which is dangerous, and we do less of—and we can do small things in a systemic way. It's not a big project, yet it's a big media focus. The siteless idea can also be applied. Small reactions to fragments.

I consider architecture like the Go game. It's not black stone, white stone. Black is what we do and white is what the world does trying to win us over. It's about the constellation we're creating. But it's always about looking to the past, and a few steps into the future, and trying to create a meaningful constellation. Maybe each architecture itself is not the goal, but how it contributes to larger relationships.

WW: Aside from contributing to culture, what do you feel all of the projects Mass Studies has produced have in common?

MC: Social engagement. I set out to be an architect to understand the world around me, other than myself. And engage with the world, if not contributing. The social intention has always been at the core of our practice. Even if we're building a tower for developers, it's always about the inventive way to organize these vertical matrixes to create more social possibility. The communicativeness and gregariousness.

Often, you have to bring new engagement to certain types of genres of architecture. You have to go against them, almost like a Trojan horse. It's tough, but we didn't lose that intention—connecting. More and more, we're interested in the connection between the people, and taking down the wall to be part of the urban fabric. And we're interested in the connection with other narratives: people, space, and time.

ARCHITECTURE ITSELF IS NOT THE GOAL, BUT HOW IT CONTRIBUTES TO LARGER RELATIONSHIPS



Rendering of "Archipalegic Void" for the 2024 Serpentine Pavilion, courtesy of Minsuk Cho and Mass Studies.

Korea has offered interesting projects, like a new city from reclaimed land. There's a known history, so it is a layered moment in history. That's relevant for Korea because it's fast growing, but also fast shrinking. Depopulation is crazy. This is the least fertile country and the first country that will probably go extinct early. Don't get too excited! [Laughs] We are very modern, and there are good things and malaise that comes with it. We are the guinea pig.

WW: Do you have a dream project? Something you've not yet created but would like to?

MC: The DMZ—the demilitarized zone. It's left over from the tragic 20th-century geopolitical conflict on the Korean Peninsula between North and South. It's a no-man's land and nature preserve that's four kilometers wide and about three hundred kilometers long. The demarcation line is only a ten-meter difference and falls in the valley, crossing with tunnels we discovered. You can't access it from both sides.

So, almost a decade ago, we proposed to start a seed bank and appropriate the tunnel. The artist Jae-Eun Choi initiated a project named "Dreaming of Earth"—and part of it was a commission for the design of a

seed bank and data vault named DMZ Vault of Life and Knowledge. Rather than erecting new structures, this repurposes one of the existing incursion tunnels manually excavated by the North Koreans across the Military Demarcation Line and discovered by the South in the mid-1970s. It preserves the ecology of the DMZ and transforms past aggressions into a healing suture across the region to inspire a collaborative effort between the North and South in the safe keeping of mankind's treasures.

One side would be like a written ecology library because there's a protection of life by the seeds—the biodiversity, which is very important. This territory is very important because it was untouched by humans and now there are two thousand species and more than a hundred endangered species. So it would be great to have this collaboration with the North and South, taking the politics out of it. All the digital knowledge becomes evaporative, so this is like the microprint. A Rosetta Stone for the 21st century—the selection is very important. All this ecological knowledge that can be in one site and extend from a tragic point. And all the seeds will be preserved in there. It would be a beautiful thing.

It's kind of a silly dream, but a longtime goal for me. It can bring people together.



KIM YUN SHIN

Encapsulating the enlightenment
of natural and spiritual life
through sculpture.

BY ELIZA JORDAN

At the start of this year, Lehmann Maupin announced the joint representation of Kim Yun Shin with Kukje Gallery in Seoul. The news marked the first time in the pioneering artist's career, spanning nearly seven decades, that she will be exhibited by a commercial gallery. For Kim, the institutional support sped along international presentations, beginning with a selection of never-before-seen paintings alongside her acclaimed wood sculptures at Frieze Los Angeles (February 29–March 3). Not even two weeks later, her first solo show in New York opened, entitled "In Focus" (March 14–April 6) at Lehmann Maupin.

Regarded as one of the first women to formally train as a sculptor in Korea, Kim was born in the North yet raised in the South. Her firsthand experience of both World War II and the Korean War provided a tragic look at the atrocity conflict brings, and even separated her from her family members—many of whom she hasn't seen since. In the 1940s and '50s, migrating to South Korea and deciding to make art became a form of resistance, reflection, and expression. During this period, when art movements were formed to battle the nation's opposition to art, Kim received her bachelor's degree in 1959 from Hongik University in Seoul and her master's degree in 1964 from the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Five years later, she began teaching sculpture at Sangmyung University, and co-founded the Korea Sculptress Association alongside other women artists.

Kim's artistic practice reflects natural and constructed environments, culture, and spirituality. Her sculptures, typically carved from solid wood, embody aspects of the primordial world and aid in her quest to become one with the Eastern philosophy of yin and yang. For the past 40 years, Kim's work has also been split between Buenos Aires and Seoul—a duality that affords her two separate studios and a creative practice rooted in dynamic urban fabrics and nature. With a deep reverence for organic materials, as well as an openness to a nomadic and independent lifestyle, Kim has shown her work around the world. Sculptures rooted in Korean *kanok* architecture, which utilize an architectural technique called *Gyeolgu-beop* to fit pieces of wood together in carved slots rather than nails, gained acclaim, paving a path to a practice centered on traditional and contemporary techniques.

This spring for the 60th Venice Biennale, Kim will present a selection of wood and stone sculptures in an exhibition titled "Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere" in the fair's Giardini section. The pieces on view will visualize her experience as a foreigner, showing her acceptance and reflections of differences between life in Korea, Europe, and South America.

On the heels of her 90th birthday, Kim shared with *Whitewall* how her career in art has evolved and why it remains inextricably linked to nature, regardless of where she is.

WHITEWALL: *Recently, we saw your works at Frieze Los Angeles in Lehmann Maupin's booth, including some of your wood sculptures and a series of never-before-seen paintings. What was this presentation's focus?*

KIM YUN SHIN: The focus was primarily on my painting series, titled "Songs of My Soul," along with wood sculptures. "Songs of My Soul" is a long-standing series of paintings that captures the musical elements perceived from my paintings and my senses absorbed while painting. The wood sculptures were created from the trees I found in Argentina and are from the series titled "Add two add one and Divide two divide one." These sculptures, revealing both the outer bark and inner flesh of the wood, will allow you to understand my creative processes of becoming one with the Eastern philosophy of yin and yang, as well as nature.

WW: *We also saw your first solo exhibition at the gallery in New York, "In Focus." How does this presentation exemplify what your practice is known for?*

KYS: At the exhibition, the audience will have the opportunity to see the paintings and wood sculptures, and all the works in the exhibition have originated from nature and my inner self. My art is a process of immersion, a union with nature. Art is life, and life is art. I hope the time I have invested in my work and the message about art is effectively conveyed to the audience.

WW: *Typically in your practice, you use solid wood to embody the primordial world—the world of origin. Why is wood the material you choose to work with, even today?*

KYS: Having experienced war in my childhood, I have come to understand the importance and the enlightenment of life. Trees themselves evoke a strong vitality and a primal sensation. This is why I am drawn to wood as a material. On the other hand, trees possess a life force that surpasses the human life span. Therefore, they also connect us to our ancient world and origins.

WW: *You were born in North Korea, yet raised in the South, in Seoul. What do you wish others knew about your migration out of the North and into the South, where making art was possible?*

KYS: Having experienced both World War II and the Korean War, I witnessed the atrocities and deaths that come with a war. War is tragic. I long for my childhood home, and I miss my sisters and family members whom I haven't seen for 70 years.

WW: *You're regarded as one of the first women to formally train as a sculptor in Korea. What was the art landscape like when you began working in sculpture?*

KYS: I am contemporary to the artists who were heavily involved in the Informel and Dansaekhwa. Around the time I began my work, it was the time when art movements were against national contest for art. For instance, in 1957, there were artists who declared anti-censorship, and they were developing an abstract art movement.

WW: *Today, your artworks are often influenced by the structural and spiritual elements of ancient practices. What about these practices do you hope to embody or show in your work?*

KYS: I would like to start with a story about my mother. She set up a ritual of praying with a bowl of clean water in front of her for my brother, who was the only son of three generations in my family. When you consider that art is an expression of one's inner self, I believe it is connected to kinds of wishes and desires. The structural and spiritual elements of ancient practices can be linked to the old habits of humans' longings, and to shamanism.

WW: *What is your relationship with nature right now? How do your works speak to that?*

KYS: Interacting with nature is extremely important to me. I can only start working when I have observed nature for a long time and become one with its original stance. I immerse myself in the life force, colors, shapes, and feelings of nature to form a relationship with it. The artwork fully reveals this process. For example, the title of my sculpture is 合二合一 分二分一 (*Add two add one, Divide two divide one*). It expresses the yin and yang of Eastern philosophy. "Yang" signifies division and separation, while "yin" signifies unity and harmony. There is "yin" within "yang" and "yang" within "yin," and as such, division is for the sake of unity, and separation is for the sake of harmony. Different entities meet to become one and to grow further, they must divide into different entities again. This universal and natural principle is what I express in my work. I create spaces by cutting a piece of wood, contemplating division and separation, and thinking about unity and harmony as I join two or several pieces of wood. I spend a long time looking at a given or chosen log to read the message it offers. Then, with an electric saw, I create facets that would then form harmonious lines. Through these forms and lines, I manifest *Add two add one, Divide two divide one*.



Kim Yun Shin, portrait courtesy the artist, Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London; and Kukje Gallery, Seoul and Busan.



Kim Yun Shin at Frieze Los Angeles 2024, courtesy of the artist at Lehmann Maupin.



Kim Yun Shin, *Song of My Soul* 2016-75, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 47.24 x 59.06 inches, courtesy the artist, Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London; and Kukje Gallery, Seoul and Busan.



Kim Yun Shin, *Song of My Soul* 2016-11, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 47.24 x 59.06 inches, courtesy the artist, Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London; and Kukje Gallery, Seoul and Busan.

WW: *You have two studios, in Buenos Aires and in Seoul. What does having two spaces allow your creative practice?*

KYS: I feel grateful that I have studios in two different cities. I believe that being able to work in two countries allowed me to continuously work without the feeling of fatigue, and having this consistency in creating is my way of repaying such a blessing.

WW: *What about the city of Buenos Aires was interesting to you back in 1984?*

KYS: Firstly, the horizon was beautiful; the land and sky were flat. The people were gentle and kind. Thirdly, there were trees; thick and large sturdy trees were abundant. At that time, Korea had just come out of the war, so there were only dry trees. The species of trees in Argentina were fascinating, and the culture of the people and the traditional culture of South America were also of interest.

WW: *How did moving here expand your practice?*

KYS: The differences in life's culture and materials in contrast to Korea have expanded my work. The leisureliness and peacefulness of Argentina were conducive to working. I selected some cultural elements of Argentina's ancient indigenous people and applied to my paintings. In addition, I was given the opportunity to venture into stone carving in Mexico.

WW: *In 2008, you founded the Museo Kim Yun Shin in Buenos Aires. What was it like being both the artist and the exhibitor of your own work?*

KYS: Having worked in Argentina for 30 years, I accumulated quite a lot of work. As such, it became my lifelong dream to show them all together in one location. In 2008, I fulfilled that dream by opening the first art museum in South America named after myself, a Korean sculptor. I have been having my solo exhibitions there every two years, for which I work tirelessly all year round in preparation. Around the time the museum opened, the vice president of Argentina visited, and every time there was an exhibition, it drew attention

to the extent that the mayor and other important visitors made a point to come and see the shows.

In Buenos Aires, there is an event organized by the city called "Museum Night," and since 2010, my museum has participated annually. For that special occasion, the public transportation to the areas where the participating museums and galleries are free, and art lovers would carry a "Museum Night" guide map, hopping on and off buses for free until dawn, enjoying and appreciating the exhibitions. About eight hundred people would visit the museum in just one night. Normally, I also teach painting to Korean immigrants and host exhibitions for amateur artists, aiming to provide emotional refinement. Being able to fully engage in what I love and contribute to creating a beautiful culture is immensely rewarding for me.

WW: *You most recently shared that you're moving back to Seoul after being in Buenos Aires for many years, yet it's not a complete relocation. Can you share more details with us about how you'll be splitting your time between both cities?*

KYS: I plan to spend about seven to eight months in Korea and about four months in Buenos Aires, where I've left a small space to continue my work. The reason I've relocated all the works to Korea this time is because it has become difficult to send artworks abroad for exhibitions from Argentina.

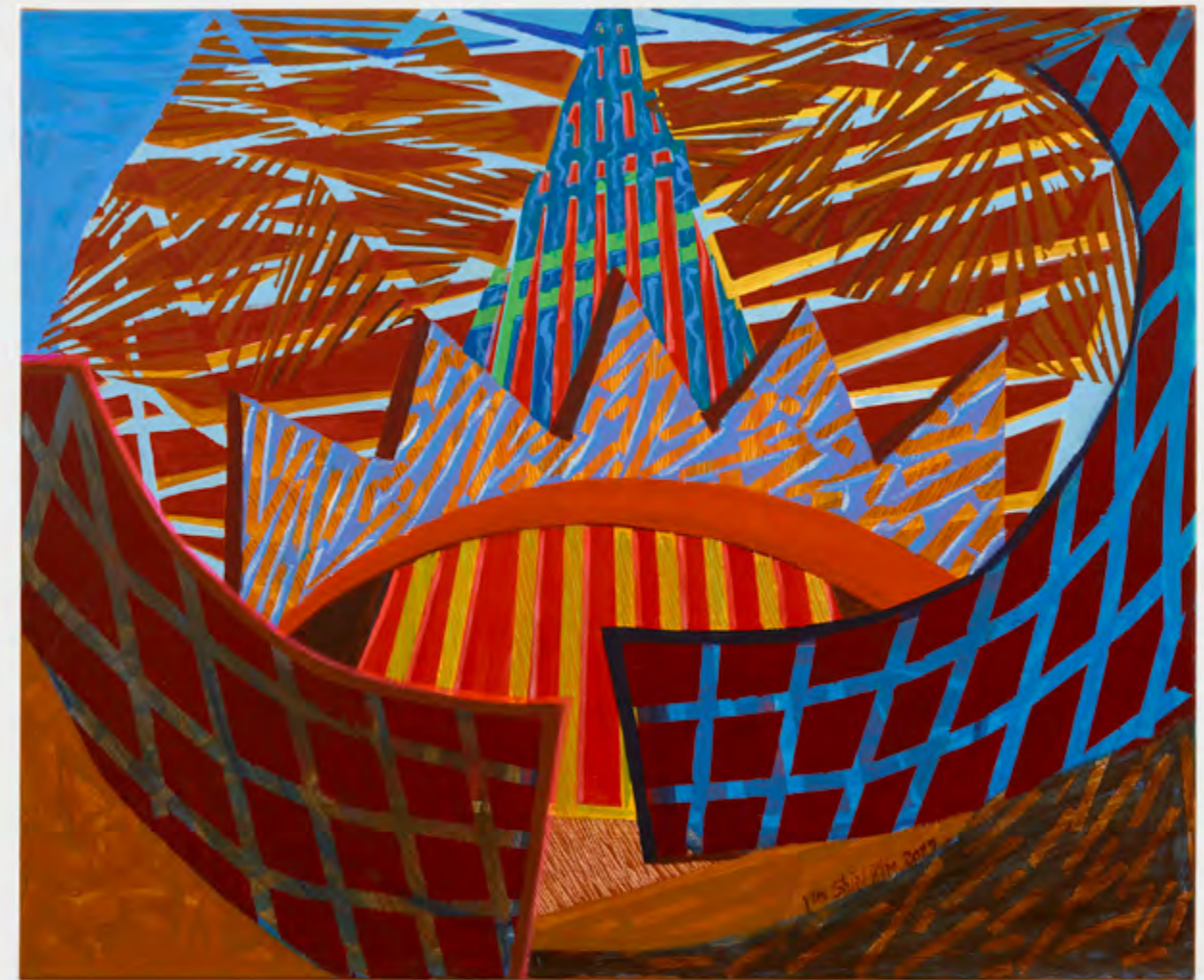
WW: *In April, your show "Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere" will open at the Venice Biennale. What we can expect to see? To feel?*

KYS: The sculptures being exhibited are all inspired by nature. My art is the process of immersion and the union with nature. Art is life, and life is art, in essence. I hope the time I have put into my work and my attitude towards art are well conveyed to the audience.

WW: *What does this show—its title, the artworks in it, and presenting it in Venice—mean to you?*

KYS: I understand that this year's Venice Biennale has invited artists whose

“
MY ART IS A PROCESS
OF IMMERSION,
A UNION WITH
NATURE
”



Kim Yun Shin, *Song of My Soul* 2019-03, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 39.37 x 47.24 inches, courtesy the artist, Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London; and Kukje Gallery, Seoul and Busan.

works are based on their experiences as foreigners and their diasporic experiences. I, too, have experiences of accepting differences and reflecting them in my work while living as a foreigner in Europe and South America. It seems that these themes align well with the roots of my work. My wood and stone sculptures encapsulate the life I've lived across various continents, and participating in the Biennale is an incredibly grateful and amazing event.

WW: *Aside from your exhibitions, what are you looking forward to experiencing in 2024?*

KYS: I plan to focus on ensuring that the works sent from Argentina arrive safely in Korea and to create an environment where they can be well preserved, and I can continue my work. In terms of my artistic practice, I am continuously contemplating the integration of painting and sculpture in an organic way.

LAST PAGE



Miss Sohee Spring/Summer 2024 Haute Couture collection was unveiled in January in Paris. Designer Sohee Park created a bountiful homage to the dazzling city of Seoul in delicate shades of magnolias and cherry blossoms, sending us soaring. Gentle jewel tones evoked upcoming seasons of growth and renewal in supremely feminine garments including body-skimming dresses and hourglass skirts. Poetic reflections of beloved antiques, such as snow-white porcelain vases, mother-of-pearl handbags, and sculptural wooden fans, were deftly translated into backless, multifaceted gowns with sensuous lines and luminous finishes.

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