



National Museum of
Modern and Contemporary Art
Korea

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KIM Whanki, *Dawn #3*, 1964-65, oil on canvas, 176.9×109.6cm, PA7893

New Acquisitions 2013–16 *Samramansang: from KIM Whanki to YANG Fudong*

13 March - 13 August 2017

MMCA Seoul (Gallery 1-5)

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea (Director: Bartomeu Mari) is holding its first exhibition of the year, *New Acquisitions 2013–16, Samramansang: From KIM Whanki to YANG Fudong*, from Monday 13 March through Sunday 13 August.

Featuring a selection of artworks acquired by MMCA over the past four years, the exhibition will highlight each piece's importance in art history as well as the characteristics of each period represented.

121 of the 932 artworks collected between 2013 and 2016 will be showcased. The exhibit title *Samramansang*, which means "all things and all phenomena in the universe," was taken from a piece on display by Kang Ikjoong to underscore the diversity of contemporary art and the boundlessness of artists' expression, ranging from KIM Whanki's modern period works in Gallery 1 to contemporary artist YANG Fudong's works in Gallery 5.

Contrary to planned exhibitions that select artwork based on a certain theme, MMCA's upcoming exhibition builds on the sense of beauty found within each period of the collected works. The total collection embodies a coexistence of distinctive and unrestricted realms of expression and theme, rather than a single main theme. Starting with Gallery 1, which will feature Korean modern art in a chronological flow, the exhibition will look into contemporary art through a number of sub-themes in the four other galleries.

Under the theme "Samramansang," the works in Gallery 1 epitomize the roots and starting points of modern and contemporary art. Kang Ikjoong's "Samramansang" will be joined by KIM Kichang's "Quiet Listening," LEE Qoede's "Portrait of a Lady," PEN Varlen's "Portrait of the writer LEE Kiyeong" and MMCA's most expensive possession ever—KIM Whanki's "Dawn #3"—to narrate of the flow of time through Korean art, moving from figurativism and the New Realism Group to abstraction and modern ink landscape paintings.

The theme of Gallery 2 is "Daily Life." Works on display will include Kiki Smith's "Corsage," which depicts a female body; AHN Changhong's "Bed Couch 1;" and KIM Eunjin's "The Refrigerator."

The theme of Galleries 3 and 4 is "Boundary." Here, photography and media art pieces show the boundaries between the artists' realms of expression and daily life. Works will include Korea's leading media artist LEE Yongbaek's "Broken Mirror," KANG Honggoo's "Osoeri Landscapes" and YOO Hyunmi's "Cosmos series," as well as "Made In – Taiwan, Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar" by LEE Wan who will represent the Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2017.

Themed "Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest," Gallery 5 is a space where visitors can look back on the things they've lost through daily life. Well-known Chinese video artist YANG Fudong's "Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest III" and "Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest IV" will be screened to question what we are losing today and what we should pass on to the next generation.

In addition to helping visitors understand how the MMCA collects and makes use of its artworks, the upcoming exhibit will allow them to understand the flow of Korean modern and contemporary art by introducing leading artists and their works. The exhibit will run through Sunday, August 13 at MMCA Seoul.

Artworks

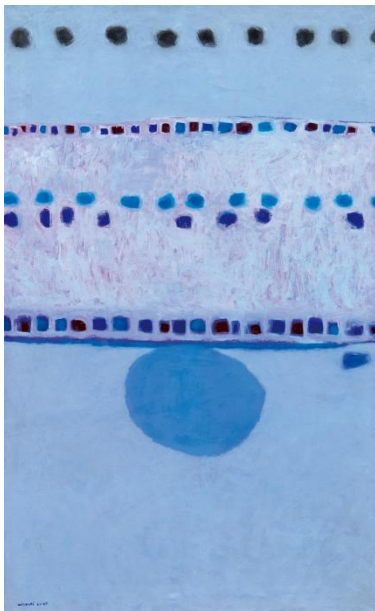
Gallery 1



Kang Ikjoong, after graduating from Hongik University as a painting major, went to the US to continue his study. He currently lives and works in New York City. When he was still in school in the US, he had little time attending school and working to support himself at the same time, and he started to carry around small canvas in his pocket to paint in the subway, which is how his 3x3-inch paintings begun.

The <Samramansang> consists of about 10,000 small canvases to signify that small things can come together to create the magnitude of universe. In the center of the universe is the projected image of meditating Buddha to signify that "All reality a phantom and all phantoms reality (色即是空 空即是色)."

KANG Ikjoong, *Samramansang*, 1984-2014, Mixed media, 50*50*(10)*(400), PA 7462



KIM Whanki was born in a small island village in Jeollanam-do and went abroad to Japan in the 1930s to study art. He is considered among the first generation of modern Korean artists who attempted to create abstract art, which was a very avant-garde activity at the time. In the 1950s, he became fascinated with nature and traditional artifacts such as mountains, moons, apricot blossoms, and moon jars, and used them as his artistic motifs to express Korean sentiments. In 1956, he tried to make his way into the Paris art scene. He participated in the São Paulo Biennale in 1963, and then moved to the New York art scene to try new challenges. There, he was influenced by American abstract expressionist artists like Adolph Gottlieb to expand his artistic horizon to a new level. He then moved completely away from representational art and proceeded to the world of abstractionism.

"Dawn #3" is one of the fourteen pieces that he submitted for a special exhibition upon the request of the São Paulo Biennale in 1965. It shows a clear influence of Adolph Gottlieb and the abstract expressionism that was prominent in the New York art scene at the time. This is also a particularly important piece as it demonstrates the element of "dot painting" which would emerge not long after. This piece was acquired by the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in 2016 and is the museum's most expensive piece to date.

KIM Whanki, *Dawn #3*, 1964-65, Oil on canvas, 176.9×109.6, PA7893



LEE Qoede is one of the most outstanding painters in modern Korean history. As his artistic subject was mostly human, he is an important figure in modern portraiture. "Portrait of a Lady" is considered to have been painted sometime between 1945 and 1950, and was acquired by the museum from a private collector who was an acquaintance of the artist. It is said that the previous owner hung this painting in a corner of his library to admire in secret, as LEE Qoede had defected to North Korea.

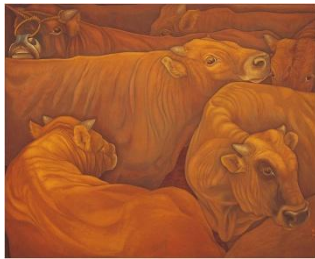
LEE Qoede's important works including the "Crowd" series are mostly owned by his surviving family, which makes them particularly difficult to acquire. "Portrait of a Lady" then becomes an even more important piece that allows us to study LEE Qoede's portraits.

LEE Qoede, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1940s, Oil on canvas, 45.5×38, PA7466



Shin Meekyoung is widely known for her sculptures made from soap. She works in both Seoul and London. The *Translation Series* consists of 16 Chinese-style vases and wooden crates. The vases resemble the Chinese vases made since the 16th century to be exported to Europe and America, and the delicate patterns on the soap vases are inlaid and colored in a similar method used on the original vases. Although in the eyes of the Westerners, these vases are 'Chinese' but, ironically, Chinese people do not consider these vases created to be exported as a part of their tradition. In this context, the wooden crates are installed together with the vases to highlight the transition of meanings from cultural exchanges and migrations.

SHIN Meekyoung, *Translation Series*, 2006-2013, soap, SC7078



Lee Sookja made her debut into the art world through the the National Art Exhibition in 1963, and won grand prizes in the National Art Exhibition and Joongang Fine Arts Prizes in 1980. The <Oxen Herd 3-1> depicts 'ox' as the symbol of Korean people overcoming any hardships with strong will and patience. Three oxen are placed in the center in a triangular composition with four other oxen cropped on the edge to illustrate a scene inside a traditional cattle market. It is one of the most important works of the artist with the delicate, life-like portrayals, solidity of the shapes and rich colors.

LEE Sookja, *Oxen Herd 3-1*, 1987, Stone color on paper, 181.5×226.5, KO-07842



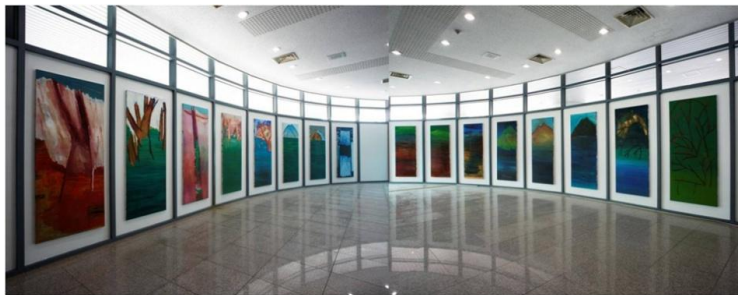
KIM Kichang (1914-2001) won a prize in the 13th Chosun Art Exhibition in 1934 with this work. It was hung on the wall of the Severance Hospital in Seoul and was lost during Korean War. Not much is known about the whereabouts of the work after the war until it was purchased by the museum from a Japanese collector through an auction. The women portrayed in the painting are KIM's younger sister Kiok and his lover LEE Sojeo. LEE is a courtesan, who helped KIM when he was living with his grandmother after death of his mother. KIM's grandmother did not approve of the relationship, and the three met in a living room of some doctor for the artist to create sketches while the ladies sat on the rattan chair. Later on, the artist created the painting on silk from the sketches he made. When he won the award in the Chosun Art Exhibition, Lee, who was suffering from a lung disease at the time, had already left KIM.

KIM Kichang, *Quiet Listening*, 1934, color on silk, 159×314.5, KO 7851



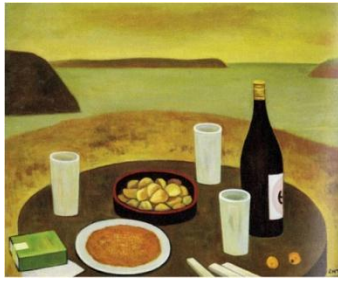
KIM Eunho (1892-1979) is the last royal portrait painter of Joseon Dynasty and the teacher of KIM Kichang. This work is one of the several paintings in his *Mei Lanfang* series. During his travel to Beijing in 1929, he paid premium to watch Mei Lanfang perform from a front seat. KIM was greatly impressed, and thus, created a series of paintings depicting scenes from the performance. Mei Lanfang (1893-1961) is a Chinese opera singer exclusively known for his female lead roles.

KIM Eunho, *Beauty*, year unknown, color on silk, 161×76.6



KIM Heryun, *Tree in the East*, 2012, oil on canvas, sewing, 193*78*(16), PA 7568

KIM Heryun studied German literature and art theory in Korea and went to Berlin to continue her study. After completing undergraduate and graduate courses in Berlin, she received PhD in Science of Art at Technische Universität Berlin. Kim observes mundane objects with affectionate eyes to recreate them on canvases, and since the mid-2000s, she has been painting landscapes to reveal the tragedy in the history of Korea. Through the landscape paintings that sympathize with the wounds and agonies still remain throughout the country, the artist intends to bring a new understanding on the issues of the national division. The <Tree in the East> invites the viewers to turn their eyes to the eastern part of Korea. Sceneries contained in 16 canvases - volcanos in Jeju, islands and oceans of Ulleungdo and Dokdo and the trees standing in the icy winds from the ocean – represent the tragedy of Korea's history and its people overcoming the pain. The canvases are torn apart and stitched back together to suggest the idea of healing and recovery.



JEON Seontaek was born in Jeongju, Pyeonganbuk-do. After graduating Osan School in his hometown, he went to Gawabata Art School to study painting. The <Invitation> seems to be depicting an ordinary table with drinks and snacks, but the artist created the painting with his unattainable desire to invite his family and friends he left in his hometown in North Korea for a drink. All the objects - glasses, bottle and cigarette pack – might seem ordinary and mundane but, the artist had painted them with love and care. The work represents the great sorrow of displaced men.

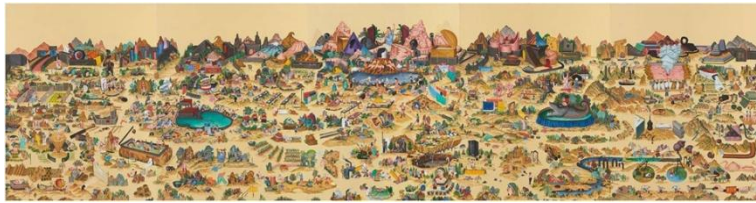
JEON Seontaek, *Invitation*, 1979, oil on canvas, 61x73, PA7474

Gallery 2



Kiki Smith (1954-) is a world-renown sculptor addressing issues of feminism through the medium of female body. She is a West German-born American artist, and has had a great influence among Korean artists by addressing some the major social issues of the 1980s including AIDS, gender and race. In recent, the artist is working with the subject of humans and nature. *Corsage* depicts a woman with a body in realistic proportions holding flowers.

Kiki Smith, *Corsage*, 2011, copper alloy and gold, 172*97*3, SC 7443



KIM Eunjin, *The Refrigerator*, 2011-12, acrylic on canvas, 145.3*112*(5), PA 7567

KIM Eunjin addresses the world of desire, salvation, fear, sanctity and unconsciousness through various mediums. Through the <The refrigerator>, Kim expresses the fear and anxiety of life she felt after the sudden death of her mother. The work starts from the odor inside the refrigerator. The food contained in the refrigerator symbolize the essential nutrients for humans, a storage of desires, the object of disgust and the end or death of another being. The painting is full of religious icons used in Buddhism, Christianity and Taoism to express ambiguity, and the icons are placed in a composition that reminds of the hell scrolls found in Asian countries.



Through the *Bed Couch 1*, AHN Changhong suggests a new perspective in portraits. The artist illustrates female body in a placid, honest manner while eliminating elements of eroticism.

AHN Changhong, *Bed Couch 1*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 210*450, PA 7569



JE Yeoran's experiment that begun in 1992 when she started to apply lumps of paint on canvas using a squeezer. Later on, she established her own method of painting, in which she confronts the canvas through large movements of her body. As a result, her works are not only large in size, but also have a vastness amplified across the primitive openness inside the canvas. In recent, the artist tends to use incredibly various colors that are derived from nature.

JE Yeoran, *Usquam Nusquam*, 2012, 2014, 2015, oil on canvas, 258.5*194*(3), PA 7548



Through the Edge series in the 1990s and the Frame and Window series in the 2000s, CHANG Hwajin focuses on the significance of 'frame' in painting. When describing her works in the Door and Frame series, she says, "Although the frames are constructed anew, it is in their nature that they will someday be destructed and disassembled." Her interest in such structures are naturally expanded to historical buildings, and the <Twenty-Four Windows> is a result of flattening digital images of windows Seodaemun Prison. Through the modifications of the architectural spaces, she diagnoses the distortions of history and memory.

CHANG Hwajin, *Twenty-Four Windows*, 2012, oil on canvas, digital image, 56.5*56.5*(24), PA7119



SON Donghyun, *Logo Type-CocaCola*, 2006, color on paper, 130*162*(2), KO 7538

SON Donghyun reinterprets the elements of traditional painting in his own way. The *Logotype CocaCola* contains a borrowed logotype of Coca-Cola with relevant images placed inside. The artist intends to expand the channel of communication between Korean painting and contemporary world by creating Korean paintings of traditional formats containing Western cultures.

Gallery 3



LEE Yongbaek is one of the most famous media artists in Korea. Since the mid-1990s, he has been creating works in various mediums including video, installation, sound, interactive art, painting and photography. For the <Broken Mirror>, the artist has installed an LCD monitor behind a mirror to show the image of a mirror being broken. This work shows the physical feelings and virtual images of an actual object that is a mirror. Thus, it creates a feeling of residing between the ambiguous boundary of reality and virtual reality, or consciousness and unconsciousness.

LEE Youngbaek, *Broken Mirror*, 2011, video installation, NM7373



YOO Hyunmi, *Cosmos in Studio*, 2013, inkjet print, 194*130*(5), PH 7074

To YOO Hyunmi, the everyday objects around her are planets and galaxies that compose the universe. The < Cosmos in Studio > is an artwork that compresses the entire contents of *Cosmos* series, in which she has created virtual spaces of universe under an assumption that the space that surrounds the artist is a galaxy and the objects in it are planets. For this work, she colored the actual space and objects with oil and acrylic paints before taking panoramic photographs of them



LEE Hyungkoo, *HK LAB-OR*, 1999-2007, mixed media, SC7895,

Altering Facial Feature with H-WR, 2007, Digital chromogenic color print, 121x121, SC 7896

LEE Hyungkoo has been creating works on the subject of human body. When Lee was studying in the US, he was standing in the subway and felt ashamed after seeing how small his hand is compared to that of a Caucasian male standing next to him. He came back to his studio and started to experiment with the size of his hand, which is how he came to work with the subject of human body. He invented a device with a magnifying glass too enlarge his eyes and mouth, and put his hand inside a transparent device with water inside to enlarge his hand. Through these processes, he felt satisfied and continued to experiment with human body. The place for such experiments is the *HK Laboratory*, and the *Altering Facial Feature with H-WR* is the photograph of the result derived in the lab.



The most remarkable feature of the artworks of Sun K. Kwak is that she brings the basic figurative elements of drawings into an open space. In the <Rolling Space>, the organic shapes that gradually penetrate into the space have drawing-like line elements, planes and movements.

Sun K. Kwak, *Rolling Space*, 2015, digital print on poly vinyl chloride, 212.5*626*10.5, DP7817



After studying painting in university, SONG Sanghee works in both Seoul and Amsterdam. With the roots in the reflections on Enlightenment and reason, she compressively addresses issues in politics, society and culture through various mediums. *The Sixteenth Book of Metamorphoses* is an animated pencil drawing based on the *Metamorphoses*, a narrative poem by the Roman poet Ovid that comprises 15 books. The animation shows stories from the Bible, evolution theory, mankind, dinosaurs, whales, oil war and destruction of ecosystem through a delicate balance between science and mythology. The plot, at a glance, unravels an innocent love story among self-creating creatures in the beginning of the world: a human-like amoeba “Khora,” a dinosaur “Plesiosaurus” and the genesis of whale “Leviathan.” However, deep in the plot is a warning message that the human greed for petroleum is slowly killing nature- the silent other and that nature ultimately will be avenged by bringing an end to the world. In the animation, the end of the world is brought by an oil deluge that resembles the Noah’s Flood from the Bible.

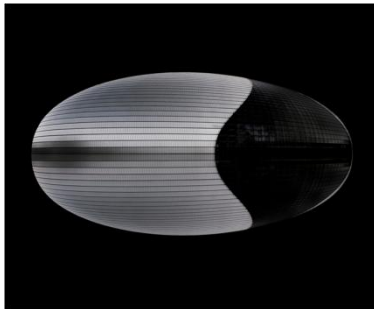
SONG Sanghee, *The Sixteenth Book of Metamorphoses*, 2008-2009, single-channel video, 14min, NM 7518



The Room Inaccessible by PARK Junebum was created based on a classification plan imagined by the artist. Based on the fact that men in Korea live for 79 years in average (as presented in 2011) and his age, the artist came up with an imaginary space that consists of 400 boxes to contain all his memories. All rooms fall into five categories: 1. Time/Term/Period; 2. Space/Location/Place; 3. Person/Relationship; 4. Situation/Event/Occasion; and 5. Matter/Shape. Each of the five categories fall into five sub-categories according to importance, clarity and confidentiality. Thus created are 25 rooms with an additional room in the middle that has a container-like energy source and corridors that connect the rooms.

There are 400 boxes of 17 different types- different proportions and sizes. The number of the boxes and the spaces occupied by them were calculated based on the average lifespan - 79 years - and the artist's age - mid 30s. Thus, the boxes take up about 2/5 – 3/7 of the total space. The boxes are sorted according to the tape attached on them: color, transparency, location, material and pencil mark, and 26 boxes with alphabets written on them for alphabetical classification are placed in a separate room Each box is like a bulky folder that has not been opened. It contains various things that are associated with its category, and if the artist can remember something from looking at the box, the memory, naturally, becomes the content. Rooms and rooms, boxes and boxes are overlapped, crossed and remembered.

PARK Junebum, *The Room Inaccessible*, 2011, three-channel video, color, sound, NM 7446



Through his *a, sf, w and y series*, photographer KDK suggests various interpretations of 'space' from corners of a small room to massive buildings. The term *sf* stands for both 'science fiction' and 'space faction.' For this work, KDK creates an image that looks like a scene from a sci-fi movie by capturing the reflection of an ultramodern building on the water with strong contrast and simplified composition.

KDK, *sf.Be-5*, 2010/2013, digital chromogenic color print, 180*220, PH7089



KANG Honggoo, *Landscape of Osoe-ri 6*, 2004/2014, digital pigment print, 100*261, PH7423

Osoe-ri is a small town between Bucheon and Seoul next to the Gimpo International Airport. Most of the town people left due to the noise from the airplanes, and only few still remain in the desolate town. The artist took photographs of an airplane landing on Osoe-ri to visualize the impact of noise on the town. The dark, depressing atmosphere of the photograph emphasizes the helplessness and loneliness of being neglected by the society.



The artworks of JO Seub can be interpreted in the context of Minjung Art. A group of artists from the late 1990s to the early 2000s including JO Seub have brought a new aspect of humor into Minjung Art. The < Do Bring Seub Back > is parody of the famous drawing of Lee Hanyeol, a democratic activist scarified in the June Struggle of 1987. Although Seub is depicted comically reenacting the death of the democratic martyr in a Red Devils T-shirt, the image is strong enough to reveal and recall the tragic memory from the past.

JO Seub, *Do Bring Seub Back*, 2002/2012, Digital light jet print, 151*116. PH6996



JUN Sojung, *Last Pleasure, A Day of a Tailor, The Twelve Rooms, Treasure Island*,
four-channel video, color, sound, NM 7516

JUN Sojung (1982-) studied sculpture in college and media art in Yonsei University Graduate School.

The Last Pleasure, A Day of a Tailor, The Twelve Rooms and Treasure Island tells the stories of a tightrope walker, a machine embroiderer, a piano tuner and a female diver. Although they do not fall into the category of artists, JUN found an attitude that is similar to that of the artists as she saw them pushing themselves to the limits to reach the ultimate ideal they established. The title *Last Pleasure* was derived from the sarcasm of Kafka's *First Sorrow*, and signifies the artist's ideal- the world that is experienced only by the tightrope walker when he stands high above the ground on the rope. A tightrope walker is a keeper of tradition, yet he belongs in today's society. He moves elegantly and soars up to the sky yet, he is a fool providing people with entertainments. The physical distance between the ground and the rope symbolizes the boundary between the ideal and reality, where the tightrope walker stands. The title *A Day of a Tailor* was borrowed from *A Day in the Life of Kubo the Novelist*, a famous novel by PARK Taewon. From the machine embroiderer keeping his business at the same location for over 40 years regardless of changes around him, JUN saw Kubo the artist. The embroiderer had his prime during the 1970s and 80s but now, good days are long gone as the machines take over. However, he stays the same with his old sewing machine at his side, and his firmness in preserving of the values he believes is somewhat similar to that of an artist. *The Twelve Rooms and Treasure Island* is played in a pair to travel back and forth the boundaries between East and West, inside and outside, masculinity and femininity and the world of reason and the world of myth.

The persons in JUN's work are professionals found everywhere around us, and they all dream of an ideal, where the arts and mundanity are combined in a perfect harmony. However, they eventually go through an experience of disharmony between the two due to many practical issues, and such experience represents the lives of artists, those who go back and forth between the arts and mundanity, ideal and reality and artists and the public like a tightrope walker taking a precarious step on the rope.

Gallery 4



LIM Min-ouk, *FireCliff 2*, 2011, Single channel video, color, sound , 63min. 51sec., NM7869

LIM Min-ouk addresses various circumstances in the modernization of Korean society. She questions on the definition of modernization by pointing out the ones that were omitted in the process, things that are lost, division of the country and dispersed communities, and, at the same time, expresses the time and space that were changed rapidly through the modernization and her condolence on the things that are gone. The < FireCliff 2> shows a conversation between KIM Taeryong, a torture victim and JUNG Hyeshin, a psychiatrist and CEO of Mind Prism. It is a documentary theatre and a location-specific performance. LIM's intention was for a person who was destructed by the government authorities and ideology of the cold war to recover to a normal life. On the stage, KIM tells Jung about his past. By the time his story comes to an end, the door next to the stage opens, and outside the door is a man who was hunted down and took away. All scenes were shoot with an HD camera and thermal camera, and it was named 'Fire Cliff.'



LEE Wan is one of the most well-known Korean contemporary artists in the world, and has been appointed to represent the Korean Pavilion in the 2017 Venice Biennale. For the *Made In-Taiwan, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar*, LEE himself goes to the fields of labor in order to examine Asia away from the dichotomy of East and West and dominant and subdominant. It goes though the production lines from beginning to the end products with the artist's narration, and the end products are installed together with the video as objects.

LEE Wan, *Made In-Taiwan, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar*, 2013-2014, 13min. 33sec., 20min. 55sec., 10min. 58sec., 16min. 26sec., NM7886



KIM Ayoung, *Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You. Shell 3*, 2015, sound installation, six-channel surround sound, diagram, 39min. 38sec., NM7813

KIM Ayoung reorganizes historical stories in fragments to show them through various mediums including video, audio and photography. For the *Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You. Shell 1, 2 and 3* Kim had made an attempt for a new creative writing on the subject of oil. Based on the literatures (including the Bible) with a mention of oil and events such as the oil crisis, KIM wrote a unique story and transformed the story into an algorithm to create another story. As a result, two stories - the original one and the another one that was reorganized through the algorithm – were born. Then, each story was changed into a music- the original one by the artist herself through an algorithm of composition and the reorganized one by a professional composer, and 12 people sang the music in chorus for the *Shell 1* in the series. The *Shell 2* was produced in a form of a musical play with theatrical elements, and the *Shell 3* is a sound installation with an addition of contents produced through a research on oil. The processes of the series were made into a diagram, which is the very core of the work.



KIM Heecheon is an architecture major, and addresses the issues of Korean society seen by the younger generation through unique images that combine virtual reality with reality. In the *Lifting Barbells*, KIM reads four letters he wrote to his girlfriend in Spain aloud in Spanish. He speaks of his feelings and thoughts on his father's sudden death and his feelings on the gigantic city that is Seoul in a calm manner. The combination of reality and virtual reality is one of the most distinguishing features of this work. In 2014 when KIM's father passed away after a bicycle accident in Hangang Park, the route he followed was recorded in the GPS watch he was wearing, which means that the accident in reality was transposed to a digital data.

KIM Heecheon, *Lifting Barbells*, 2015, Single-channel video, 21min. 22sec., NM7887

Gallery 5



YANG Fudong, *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest III*, 2005, single-channel video, 53min, NM7927

YANG Fudong made the plans for the *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest* from 2001 to 2002, and by 2007, he produced total five films for the series. His intention was to show the identity crisis and anxiety about the future of the young people in China as the massive, international consumer culture takes the country over in recent years. Throughout the history, the story of “Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest” was distorted according to the various tellers. YANG, like the many precedents, had created his own story of “Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest” to examine the issues and problems in today’s China and to seek a better future.

※ “Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest” refers to the seven intellectuals of the Wei and Jin Dynasty, those who gathered in a bamboo forest to escape from the politically corrupted society.

To understand YANG’s film, one needs to know a few things. YANG studied painting in university and trained himself to become a video artist. He is one of the artists in his generation, those who have refused to move to the West for their career and insisted to remain in China to create works for Chinese people. He likes Chinese movies from the 1940s, and such taste of his is actually reflected in his works: blurry images in black and white, old-fashioned costumes and dialogues said in a composed manner after a long pause. The seven intellectuals in Yang’s film are not played by professional actors. Instead, they are YANG’s actual friends- the ones he shares his thoughts and ideas with. They are intellectuals in their 20s and 30s, and represent the future generation. Although the film involves many elements associated with the movies of the 1940s, the intellectuals speak the language used by the young people in China today. For *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest*, YANG had created an ‘abstract cinema’ that combine various elements for a symbolic and metaphorical expression.

In the *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest III*, the seven intellectuals escape to a rural village in the southwest to live a new life with nature. Their journey starts on a wagon pulled by oxen. In the rural village, they forget all about their urban lifestyle. Instead, they cultivate the soil, raise animals, read books to live a typical, rural life. They are also engaged in sexual activities. Such rural lifestyle provides the intellectuals with a new experience. The cruelty in the rural village is quite different from that of the city. For example, the oxen are forced to work in the field for their entire lives, and when they become old and frail, they are put to death. The scene where the ox is put to death is the critical moment in the film. The intellectuals accept the customs and ideas of the rural world regardless of their will.



YANG Fudong, *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest IV*, 2006, single channel video, 70min, NM7928

In the *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest IV*, the intellectuals are headed to an island. The film describes the ideal life in a deserted island away from the busy, urban life. In China, there is an old legend about a utopia called 'Taohuadao (桃花道, peach blossom island).' In the film, the island symbolizes the utopia, and in the island, the intellectuals are free of rules and customs. However, they need to establish new orders and systems such as division of labor and rules to create a new world and live as a community. The vastness of the sceneries emphasizes the loneliness of individuals, and the intellectuals are filled with anger as they find themselves selfishly seeking happiness.

At last, they go back to the city just like the seven intellectuals in the ancient time did. Their lives back in the city are continued in the *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest V*.