



LIGHT & SHADOWS
A curated selection of Korean Artists

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The Korean art scene completely bloomed during the last decades and revealed itself on the international art market. Today, we invite you to celebrate Korean artists through our exhibition, 'Light & Shadows', showcasing a curated selection of our best Korean artwork. Korea's art history has been deeply impacted by its past, its rich culture and its philosophy of life inspired by Confucius.

In the 1960s, the art scene got diversified, confronting two practices of art: the Academic one versus the Informal Movement, inspired from the West and Abstract Expressionism. From this moment on, Korean artists realised they could cast their academic knowledge into their new practice of art, playing with mediums, techniques and traditions. The Avant-Garde movement put down roots in the 1970s, placing Dansaekhwa, abstract monochrome paintings, at the forefront. In the 1980's, the Minjung Art Movement has turned Korean art towards nature, using wood, traditional Hanji paper and paints to celebrate the environment, peasants and hard workers while criticising the Americanisation of their society, consumerism and -imperialism. Artists like O Jun, Lee Chul-Soo and Kim Bong-Chun were leaders of such contestations.

This period of time was the breeding-ground for all the artists we present at our exhibition, 'Light and Shadows'. They directly take roots in these mentalities and perceptions of the world. We can recognise a true dedication to nature into Lee Gil Rae's work, sculpting copper welding human shaped trees to glorify nature and to denunciate the terrible impact of human activity on Earth. Chae Sung Pil can also be depicted as a nature lover painter. Indeed, he uses soil collected from different parts of the world to create his paintings. Thereafter, not only do painted landscapes matter but also the medium itself, as it can deliver a message. As a means to heal the nostalgia for his hometown, it gives soil and other natural elements a special place into his creation process.

In the continuum of this thematic, Son Bong Chae, creates three-dimensional trees, oscillating between the memory of Korean traditional painting and the new possibilities LED lighting brings to art, emphasising the timelessness of the scene and so, of nature.

Suh Jeong Min and Kim Ilhwa both found a way to express themselves through traditional Korean paper, using it in an unexpected way, not painting nor drawing on it, but with it. The colours of their artworks flicker under one's eyes when moving around.

Even the paper seems to fold up under the wind, just like the resilience of Pascal's reed in front of the world's changes. Facing Korean troubled history, artists like Bahk Seon-Ghi, Ran Hwang and Seo Young-Deok adopt a more figurative approach to their work of art. While Ran Hwang pins birds or cherry trees outwardly move through the wind, they are the metaphor of a fake freedom of movements: on his side, Bahk Seon-Ghi shows how de-structured things can still delicately leave their print on their environment. As for Seo Yong-Deok, he depicts men and women meditating on the sense of life and of the society they live in. For them, seeing, listening and speaking is agony itself, because these fundamental rights have become the source of suffering. He shapes nude bodies to describe the fragility of life and the fact that the body is the only real thing one can bring with him once dead, unlike all the things accumulated during one's life. Finally, Hong Sang Sik, with his straw mouths absorbing the essence of today's Korean art, shows evidence of its vibrancy and creates the contrasting strength of power and desire.

Please join us in this incredible journey, made of 'Light and Shadows', paying tribute to Korean artists who teach new generations how to accept, understand and deal with their history and culture.

Gilles Dyan
Founder & Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Salwa Chalhoub
Director
Opera Gallery Beirut

Lee GIL RAE

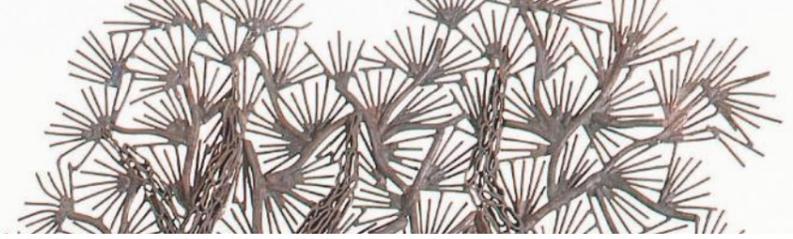
Born in 1961

Lee Gil Rae graduated from Kyunghee University after studying at the department of art education, before he passed his masters in sculpture. For twenty years, Lee Gil Rae has used nature as his muse to craft sculpture from steel and copper pipe. With rapid deforestation, Lee Gil Rae's trees narrate the artificial nature that city dwellers so closely identify with.

The man-made and constructed simulation of nature is apparent in all towns and cities. Nature is removed and confined to make room for the ever expanding population. In his persistent need to create organic forms, Lee Gil Rae takes it one step further in creating man-made nature. He constructs enormous forests of steel and copper, capturing this rapidly depleting resource for eternity.

His works construct a surreal leafless forest that one can meander, spiralling branches unnatural in structure but organic in aesthetic, draw the viewer to witness the intricate exterior that mimics the curves and notches of aged tree bark harmoniously. His sprawling branches fan out, tipped with wisps of copper representing the needles of the pine trees in true homage to Mother Nature.

Lee Gil Rae has participated in several exhibitions in Korea, America and Japan and he features in numerous permanent collections.



Pine Tree, 2013
Copper welding
204 x 115 x 59 cm - 80.3 x 45.3 x 23.2 in.



Chae SUNG PIL

Born in 1972

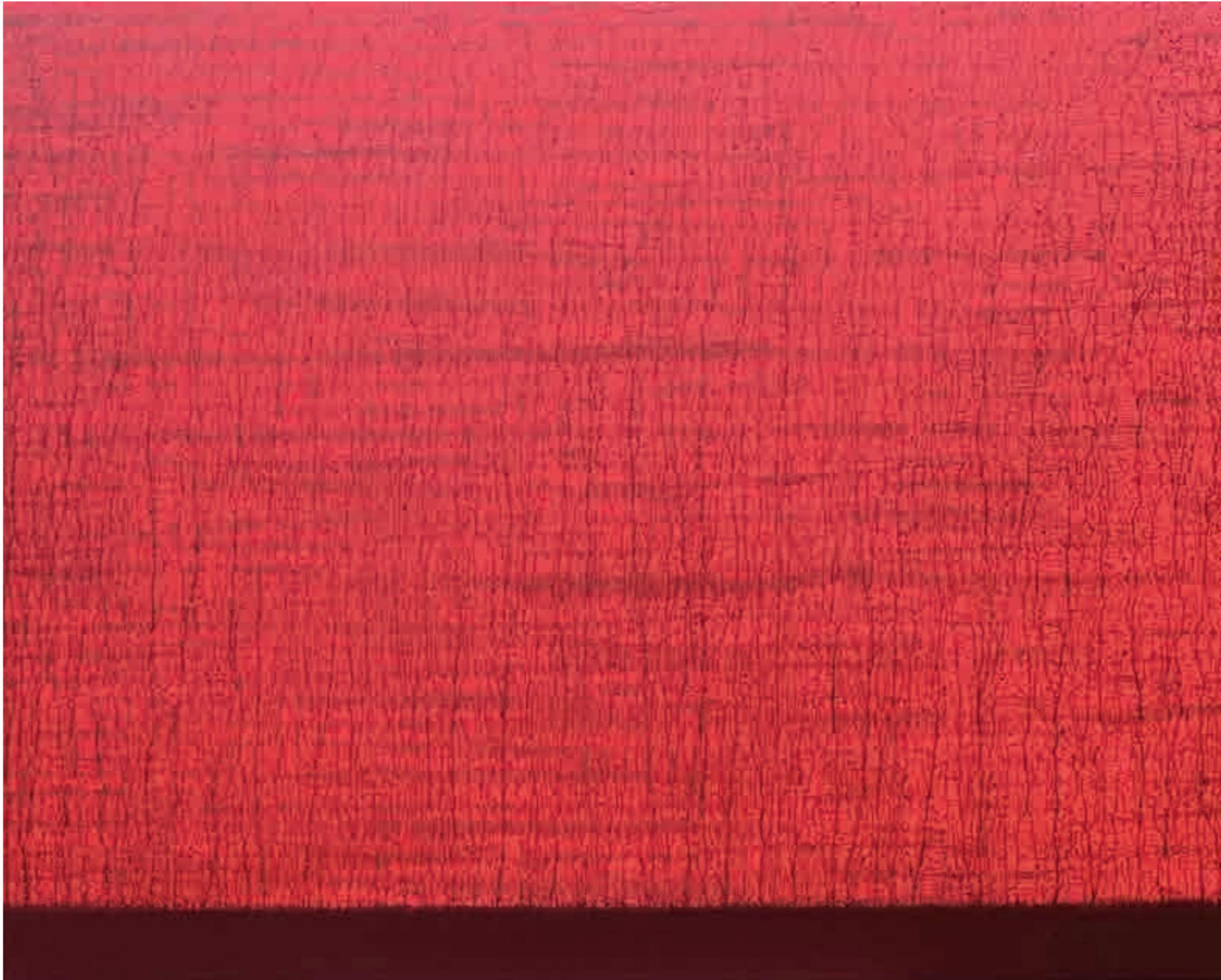
A graduate in oriental paintings from Seoul National University, Chae Sung-Pil is a doctoral candidate for Plastic Arts in the University of Paris. He holds an MA and BA from Seoul National University and a second Masters from University Rennes II. Chae Sung Pil is known for his use of soil to create images of landscapes. When Chae creates works of landscapes not only does his use of soil make his works so unique, but also the subject matters within his works. Especially in an industrialized society, it is difficult to see traditional eastern depictions of landscape settings, such as mountains or hills. Chae uses soil to express his childhood memories and longing to go back to his homeland after many years of living abroad.

Chae particularly focuses on his choice of media and collects soil from different parts of the world. He then uses the collected soil to create his own paint and also works with gold and silver dust. Chae creates visual displays of tautology, where his mountains are made of earth and land is made up of soil, crafting the 3rd dimension on a two dimensional plane that one could almost meander through the barren landscapes. Chae uses his 'spilling method' in which he drips water onto his works to create a marvellous depiction of land and earth. Though the media he uses appears ordinary or mundane, he encompasses all the five elements of nature in his works whereby he utilises parts of nature to create his works, including paper, which is ultimately created from wood, fire, silver dust made from metal, soil, and water. As everyone is influenced by their own culture and environment depending on where they grew up or lived, therefore have their own memories concerning their surroundings, Chae aims to stir a sense of nostalgia and longing for the past among the people who view his works.

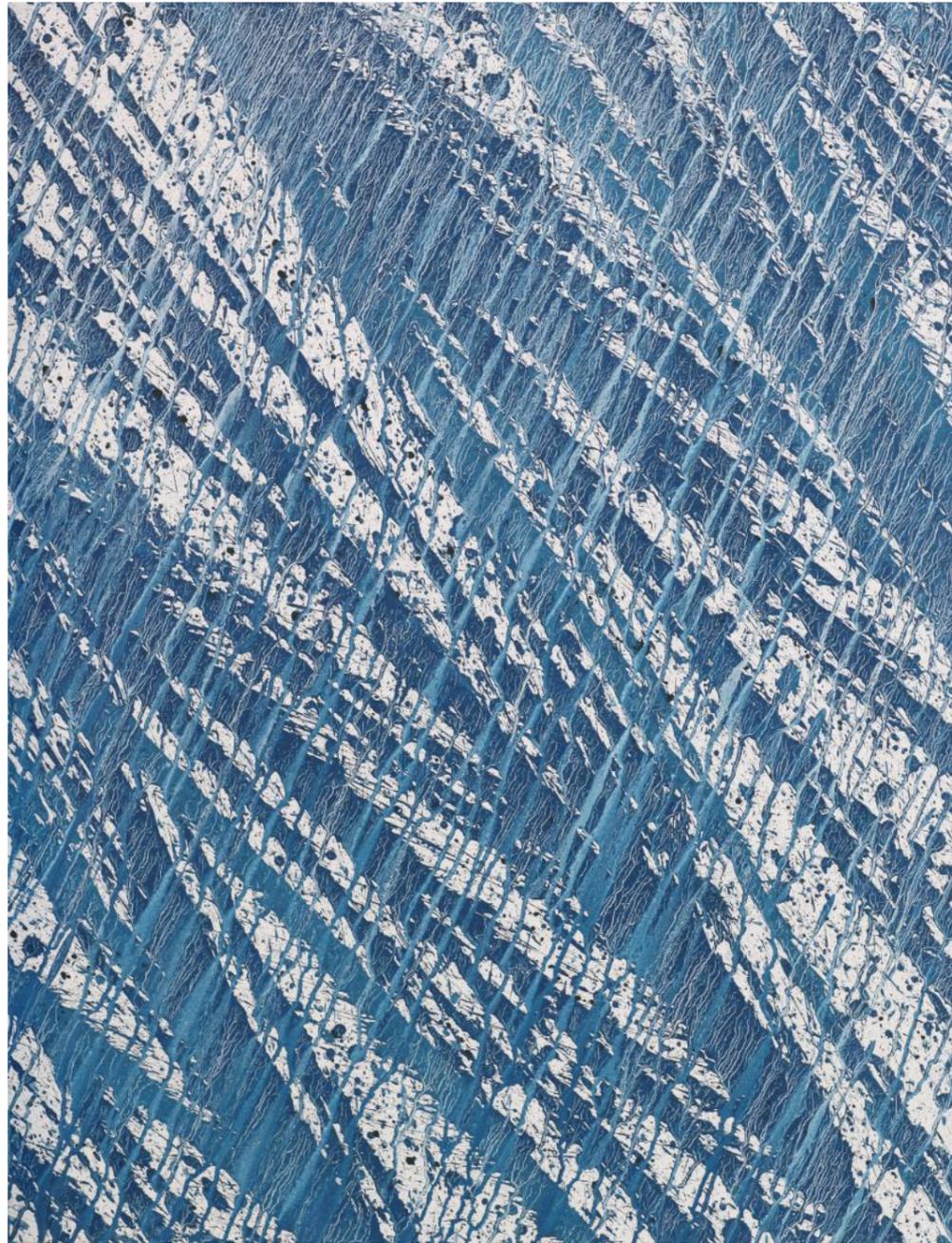
Chae's works have been exhibited in Asia and Europe. He has had solo exhibitions throughout France, South Korea and China and took part in the 2014 London Art Fair, 2012 Art Basel and 2011 London Art Fair as of late. Chae currently resides in Paris.



Terre anonyme (150405), 2015
Soil, natural pigment and India ink on canvas
116 x 89 cm - 45.7 x 35 in.



Terre anonyme (150301), 2015
Soil, natural pigment and India ink on canvas
130 x 162 cm - 51.2 x 63.8 in.



Terre anonyme (141117), 2014
Soil, natural pigment and India ink on canvas
116 x 89 cm - 45.7 x 35 in.



Terre et lune (100707), 2010
Soil, natural pigment and India ink on canvas
122 x 122 cm - 48 x 48 in.

Son BONG-CHAE

Born in 1967

Son Bong Chae was born in Korea in 1967. He studied Fine Arts at Chosun University in Gwangju, Korea, and received his MFA from the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York. A pioneer of kinetic art in Korea in the 1990s, Bong Chae garnered critical acclaim for his illuminated oil paintings on layers of polycarbonate glass. Using trees as a metaphor for cultural uprooting, and as a representation of identity and perspective, his haunting landscapes reflect the fragility of perception and desire for stability within an ever-changing milieu.

Son Bong Chae's works feature in the collections of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Korea, the Gwangju Biennial Foundation, the Gwangju Museum of Art, Korean Cultural Centre in Shanghai (China), and the Samsung Group Private Collection. He was awarded the Duolun Art Museum Residency Award (Shanghai) in 2006, and the Gwangju Artist Award in 2010. His work has appeared in numerous international exhibitions, art fairs and biennials worldwide.



Migrants, 2015

Oil on polycarbonate, LED
94 x 184 cm - 37 x 72.4 in.



Migrants, 2015
Oil on polycarbonate, LED
120 x 160 cm - 47.2 x 63 in.

Suh JEONG MIN

Born in 1962

Born in Korea, Suh Jeong Min passed his BFA at Chosun University and his MFA at Kyonggi University. He is known for his use of hanji, or traditional Korean paper made from the inner bark of Mulberry trees, to create elegant and somewhat imposing works that are neither painting nor sculpture, yet have properties of both. His artwork employs the timeless structures of geometry while simultaneously pursuing an idiosyncratic aesthetic that combines cultural references with unusual formal techniques.

Suh uses hanji originally used for calligraphy, tightly rolled into tubes or overlaid so that they resemble thin blocks of wood, and cut into small pieces by hand to finally be affixed to the support with a rice-based glue. Arranged in concentric circles, in rows, or set on top of each other like stacks of lumber, these paper units have a dense bodily presence. Cut horizontally, vertically or diagonally, they produce light and shade on canvas as existing calligraphic letters form black lines on the surface.

The artist said his works are the result of coincidence and inevitability. 'Instead of drawing my own lines with meok (ink), I find the lines from what others already wrote'. What appears to be a severance from Asian painting in Suh's work is instead a continuity of the practice in a new guise. As a craft unique to Korea, hanji is considered integral to the culture. Suh's use of the traditional material can be seen as an acknowledgment of this craft, while showing how an aspect of culture long superseded by technological changes can be transformed from the commonplace to the exceptional through an artist's innovative methods.



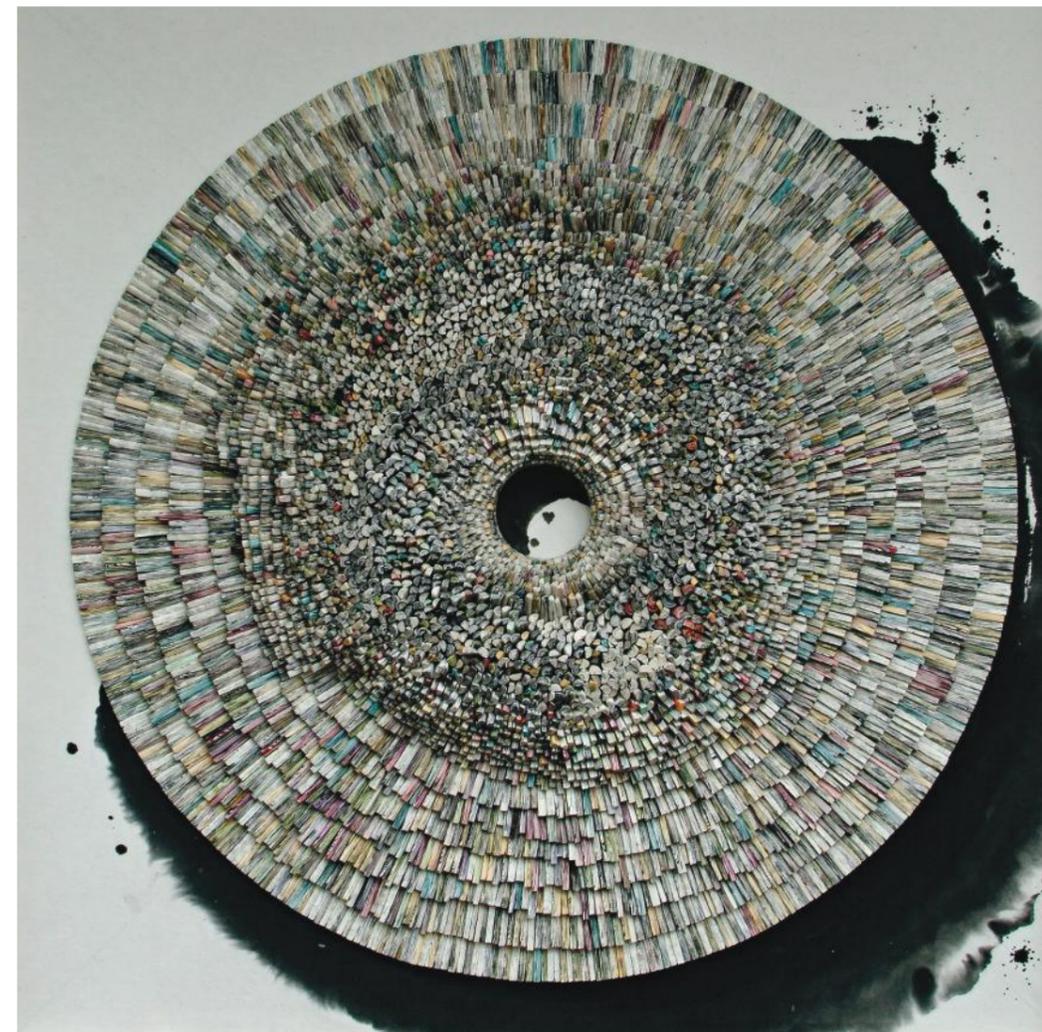
Lines of Travel - 60, 2016
Hand dyed Hanji paper
110 x 110 cm - 43.3 x 43.3 in.



Korea House Roof, 2015
Hand dyed Hanji paper
100 x 150 cm - 39.4 x 59.1 in.



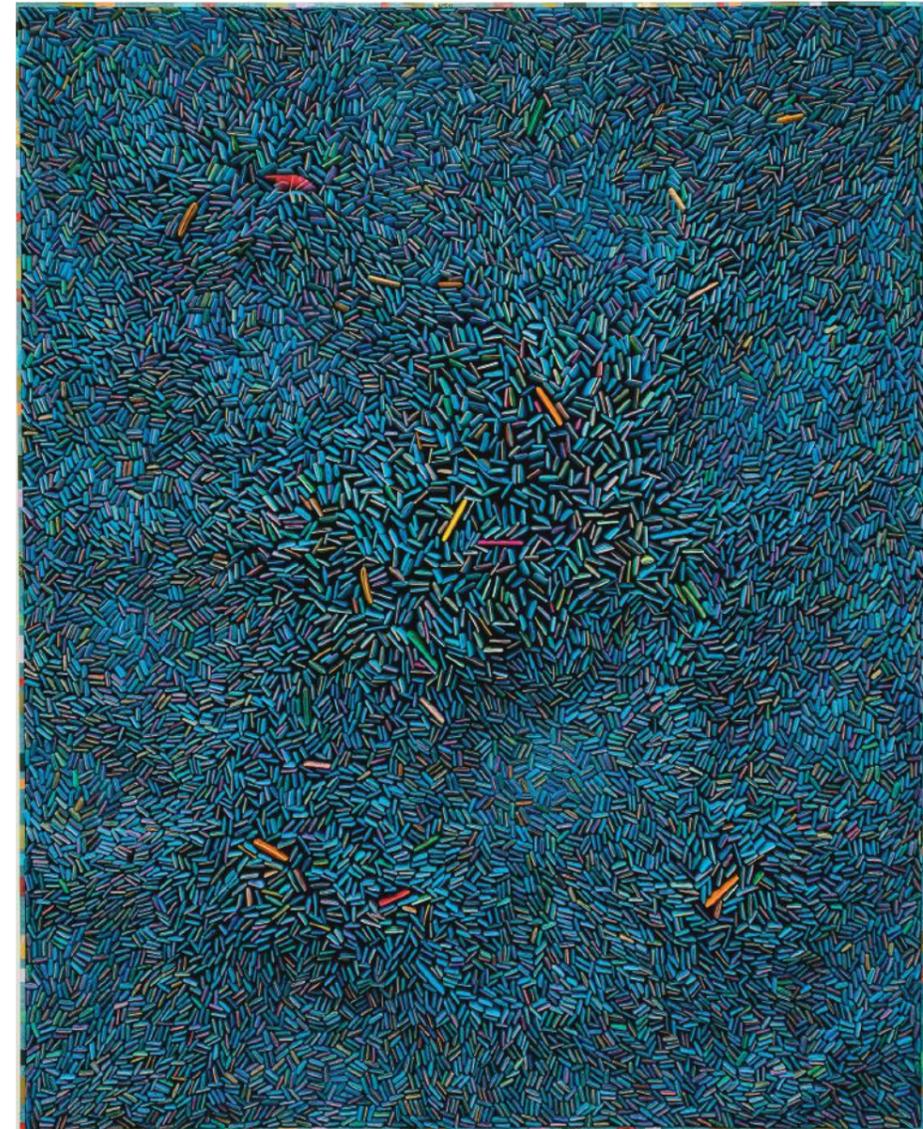
Lines of Travel - 61, 2016
Hand dyed Hanji paper
120 x 120 cm - 47.2 x 47.2 in.



Divine Will 9, 2012
Hand dyed Hanji paper
120 x 120 cm - 47.2 x 47.2 in.

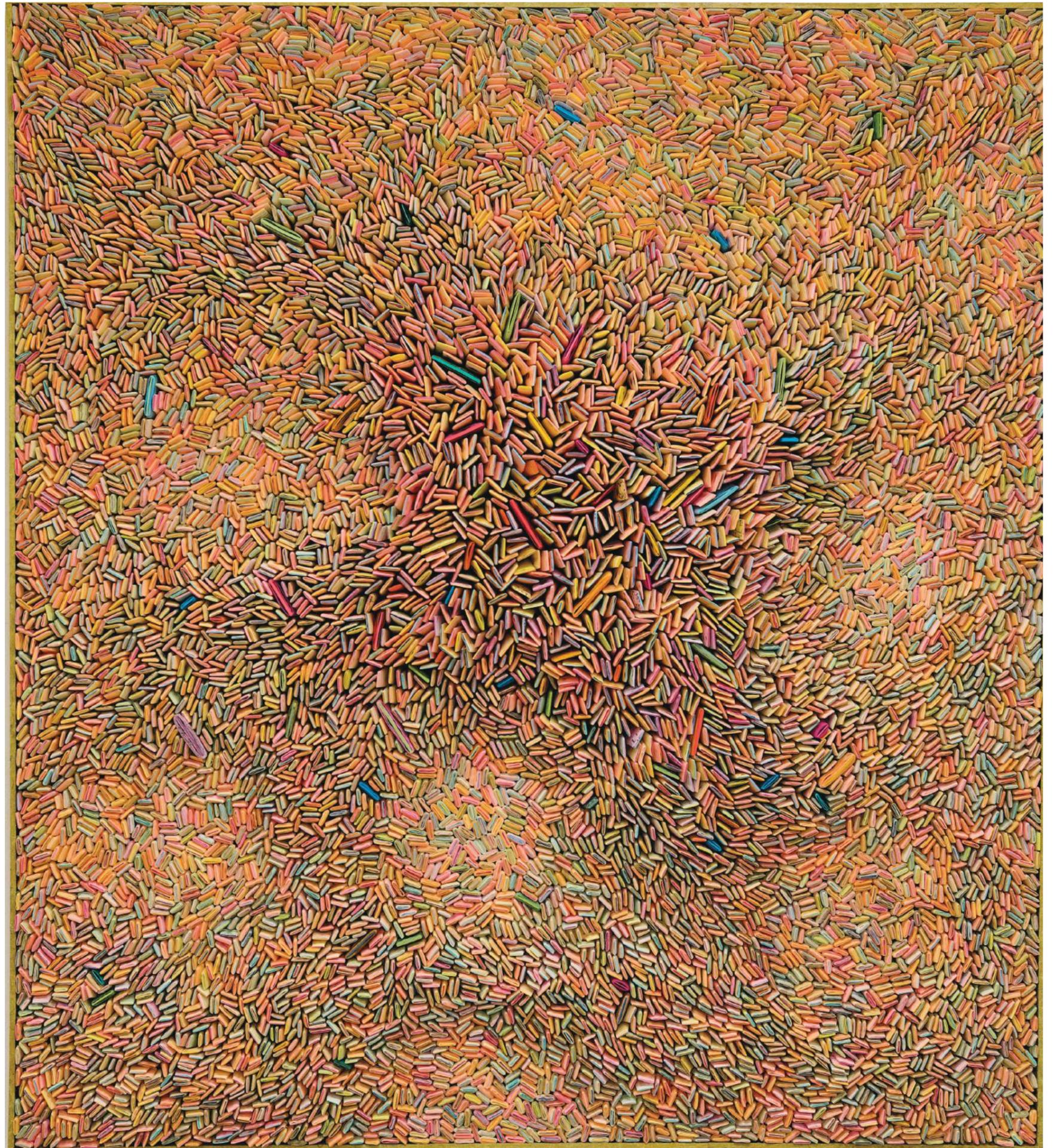
Born in Seoul in 1967, Kim Ilhwa received her BFA and MFA in Oriental Painting from Hongik University in 1991 and 1996, respectively. Using thousands of hand-dyed, cut and rolled pieces of Korean mulberry paper, Kim Ilhwa creates large-scale, textured works inspired by subtle changes in space and environment experienced in the modern world.

Her meticulous “seed” paintings, as she refers to them, won her the 1996 Excellence Award in the 16th Grand Art Exhibition in Korea and the 1999 Grand Prize MANIF Seoul Award. Kim Ilhwa’s works have featured in the Seongkok Art Museum (Seoul), the Guangzhou Opera House (China), and Art Karlsruhe (Germany), among many other private galleries and institutions.



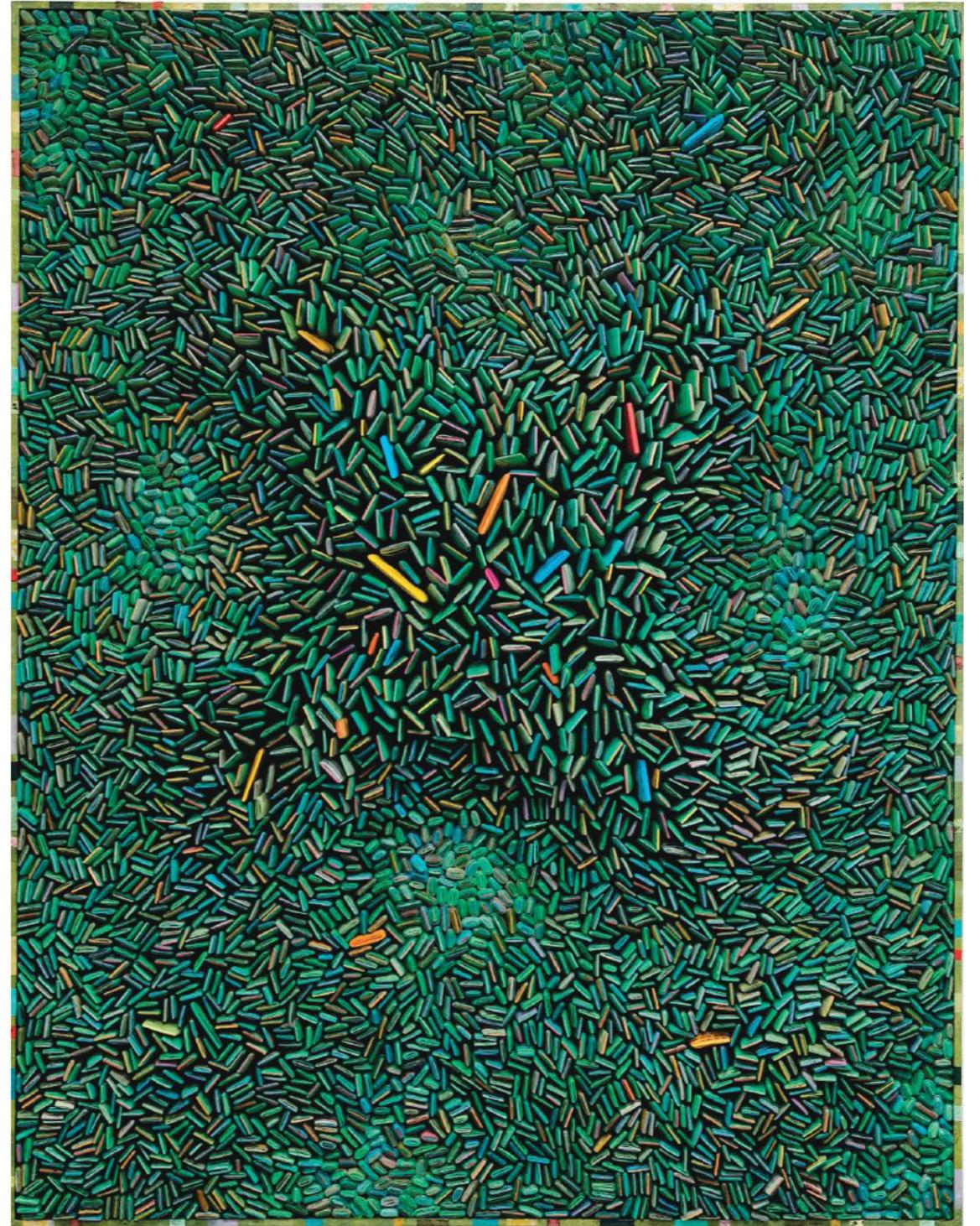
Seed_Universe 64, 2016
Hand dyed Hanji paper
164 x 132 x 15 cm - 64.6 x 52 x 5.9 in.

Seed_Universe 61, 2016
Hand dyed Hanji paper
152 x 132 x 15 cm - 59.8 x 52 x 5.9 in.





Cheonhado, 2016
Hand dyed Hanji paper
152 x 132 x 12 cm - 59.8 x 52 x 4.7 in.



Seed_Universe 65, 2016
Hand dyed Hanji paper
119 x 93 x 15 cm - 46.9 x 36.6 x 5.9 in.

Bahk SEON GHI

Born in 1966

Bahk Seon-Ghi is an internationally reputed and established contemporary Korean sculptor and installation artist who lives and works in Kyeong Ki-Do, South Korea. Following his graduation from Chung-Ang University in Seoul, he spent several years in Europe, studying sculpture at the Accademia di Belle Arti Brera in Milan and at Barnet and Southgate College in London.

Bahk is known for his ethereal installations using natural to create everyday objects such as tables, staircases, frames and circles, which appear to float through light and space. His floating charcoal works accumulate into forms that we perceive as familiar objects, delicately suspended on the edge of existence and obliteration. It questions how the object takes form through our own filters of perspective and memory.

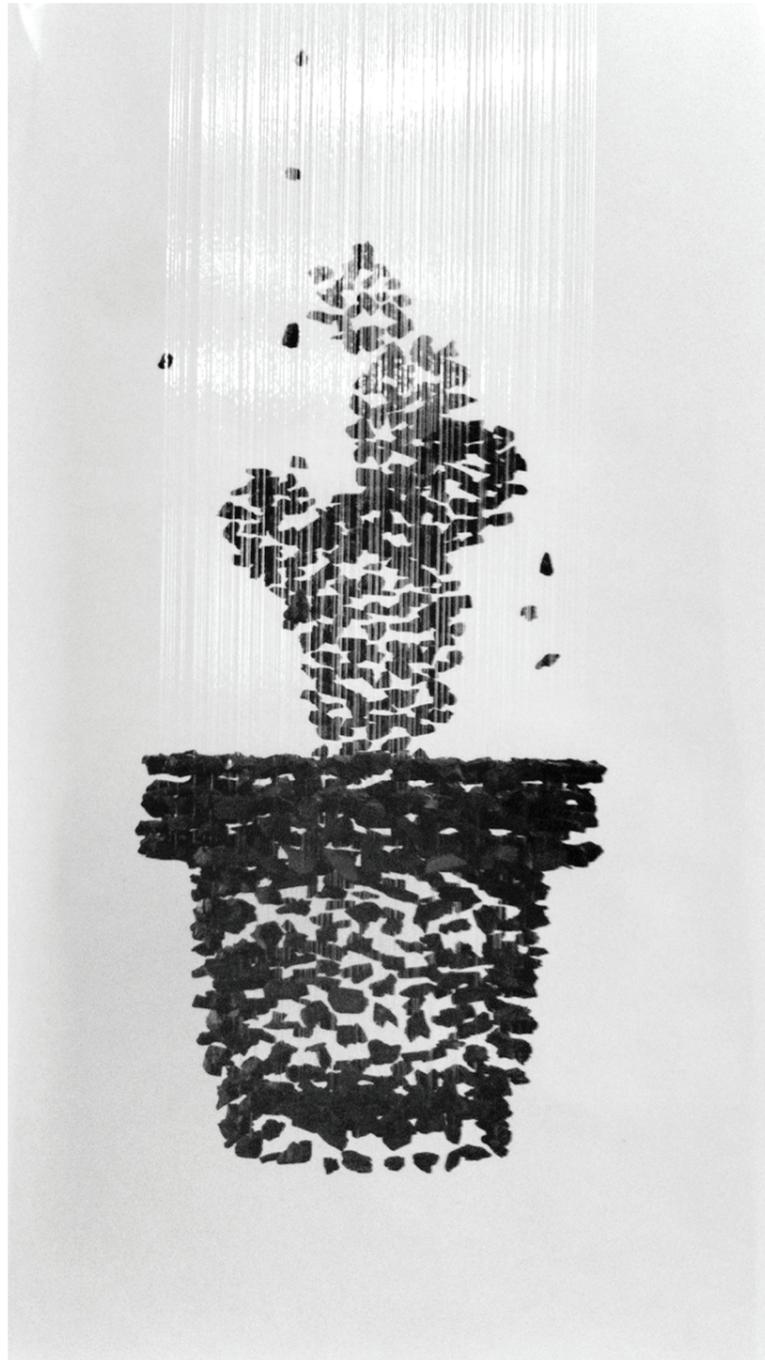
Charcoal, his favorite material, is fundamental in his works with charcoal being the natural substance that holds traditional importance in Korean culture and heritage. Through these delicately suspended pieces of charcoal, Bahk Seon-Ghi presents the viewers with a new perspective of human's relationship with nature. Bahk received the 2009 Kim Chong Yung Sculpture Award and has participated in solo exhibitions in Miami, Korea, Switzerland, Spain and China, to name just a few. His works are part of many prominent permanent collections worldwide.



An Aggregation 201301, 2013
Charcoal, nylon threads, stone
300 x 100 x 400 cm - 118.1 x 39.4 x 157.5 in.



Relationship, 2007
Charcoal, nylon threads, stone
270 x 100 x 100 cm - 106 x 39.4 x 39.4 in.



An Aggregation 20130415, 2013
Charcoal, nylon threads, stone
272 x 72 x 72 cm - 107.1 x 28.3 x 28.3 in.



An Aggregate, 2011
Hand dyed Hanji paper
270 x 45 x 45 cm - 106.3 x 17.7 x 17.7 in.

Ran HWANG

Born in 1960

Korean installation artist Ran Hwang was born in Seoul in 1960. She studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and attended the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the Chung-Ang University in Seoul. Ran is best known for her large-scale and meticulously intricate wall installations made from buttons, beads and threads on painted wooden panels. Using a meditative technique derived from Zen Buddhism, she hammers thousands of pins in a form of selfmeditation.

The repetitive and time-consuming nature of her work becomes a metaphor for the resilience and persistence of nature in light of the mass production of materials such as the ones she uses in her works.

An acclaimed artist in both Korea and the United States, Ran has held exhibitions at the International Museum of Art & Science (McAllen, Texas) as their first Artist-in-Residence at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, the Queens Museum of Art (New York), the Hudson Valley Centre for Contemporary Art (New York), the Chelsea Art Museum (New York) and the Seoul Arts Centre. Her work features in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, the Hammond Museum, the Hermes Singapore Collection, the North Salem Museum (New York), and the Des Moines Art Centre (Iowa).



Ode to Second Full Moon, 2016
Paper buttons, beads, pins on Plexiglas
99.1 x 99.1 cm - 39 x 39 in.



Ode to Second Full Moon_RW, 2016
Paper buttons, beads, crystals, pins on plexiglas
99.1 x 99.1 cm - 39 x 39 in.

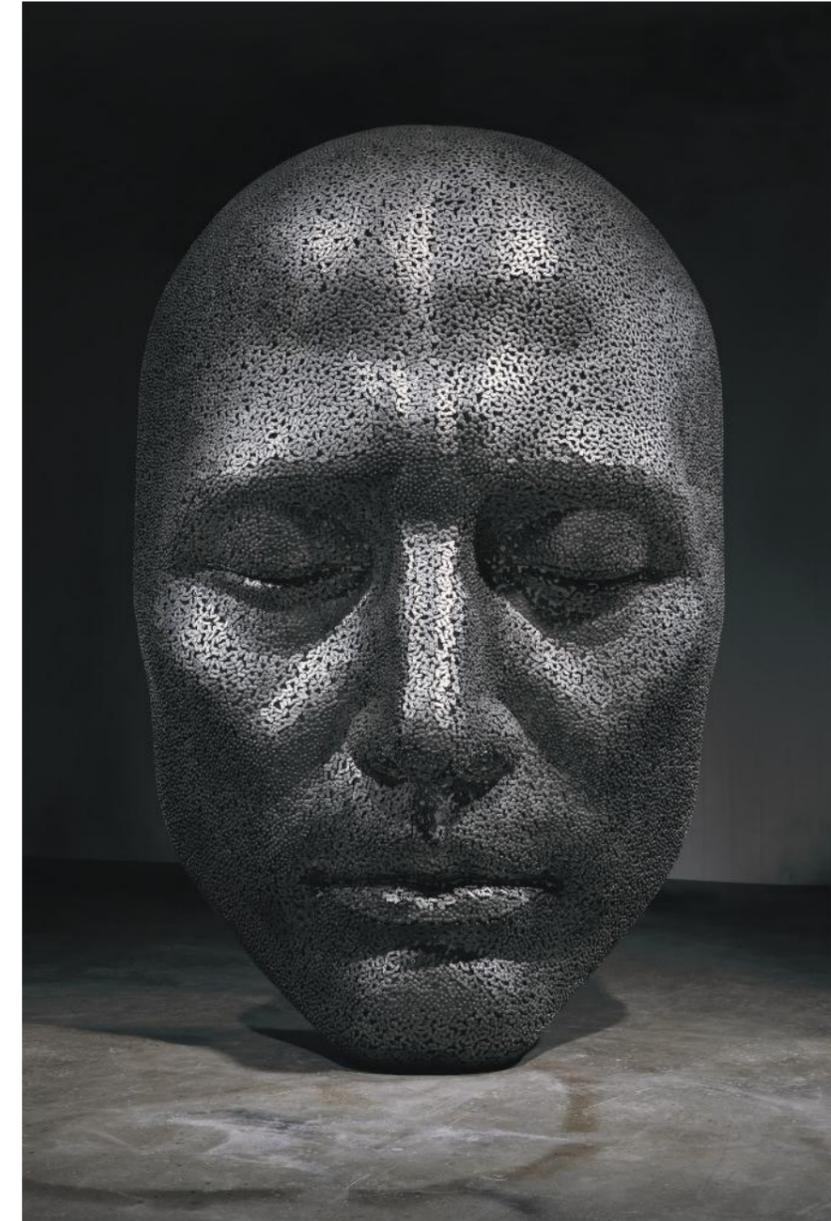
Seo YOUNG-DEOK

Born in 1983

Born in 1983 in Seoul, Seo Young Deok is one of Korea's most formidable emerging artists. He graduated with a BFA and MFA in Environmental Sculpture from the University of Seoul and was the recipient of the 2008 Grand Prize for Undergraduate and Graduate Student Sculpture Competition. Hand welding metal chains and linking them piece-by-piece to form nude figures, Seo reflects, through his haunting sculptures, upon the fragmented world and the modern human struggle within it.

Since graduating in 2009, Seo has held solo exhibitions at the Gallery of the University of Seoul, the Insa Art Centre (Seoul), and Gallery SODA (Istanbul). His work has been exhibited at the Sungkok Art Museum and the Beyond Museum (Seoul), and features in the permanent collections of the Sungkok Art Museum, the Seongnam Arts Centre, the Daekyo Culture Foundation, and the Harley Davidson collection, as well as numerous international private collections.

Seo Young-Deok is a fine observer of the world he lives in. Since his graduation, he has been probing and analysing urban life as an ethnologist. A symbol of post-modern civilization, the city is an inspiration. Through his artworks, Seo Young-Deok depicts a disoriented society where man cannot find his place. Here, chains represent ambivalent and complex ideas; both the symbol of man's technical power and the cause of his confinement. The interlaced chains form a beautiful and coherent whole, giving shape to Seo Young-Deok's characters thanks to a network of connections. Through serendipitous shapes and spaces, these chains move and intertwine, the only constraint being their bond – just like with men and women today.



Meditation 16, 2016
Stainless chain
200 x 130 x 70 cm - 78.7 x 51.2 x 27.6 in.



Anguish 14, 2014
Stainless chain
75 x 45 x 65 cm - 29.5 x 17.7 x 25.6 in.



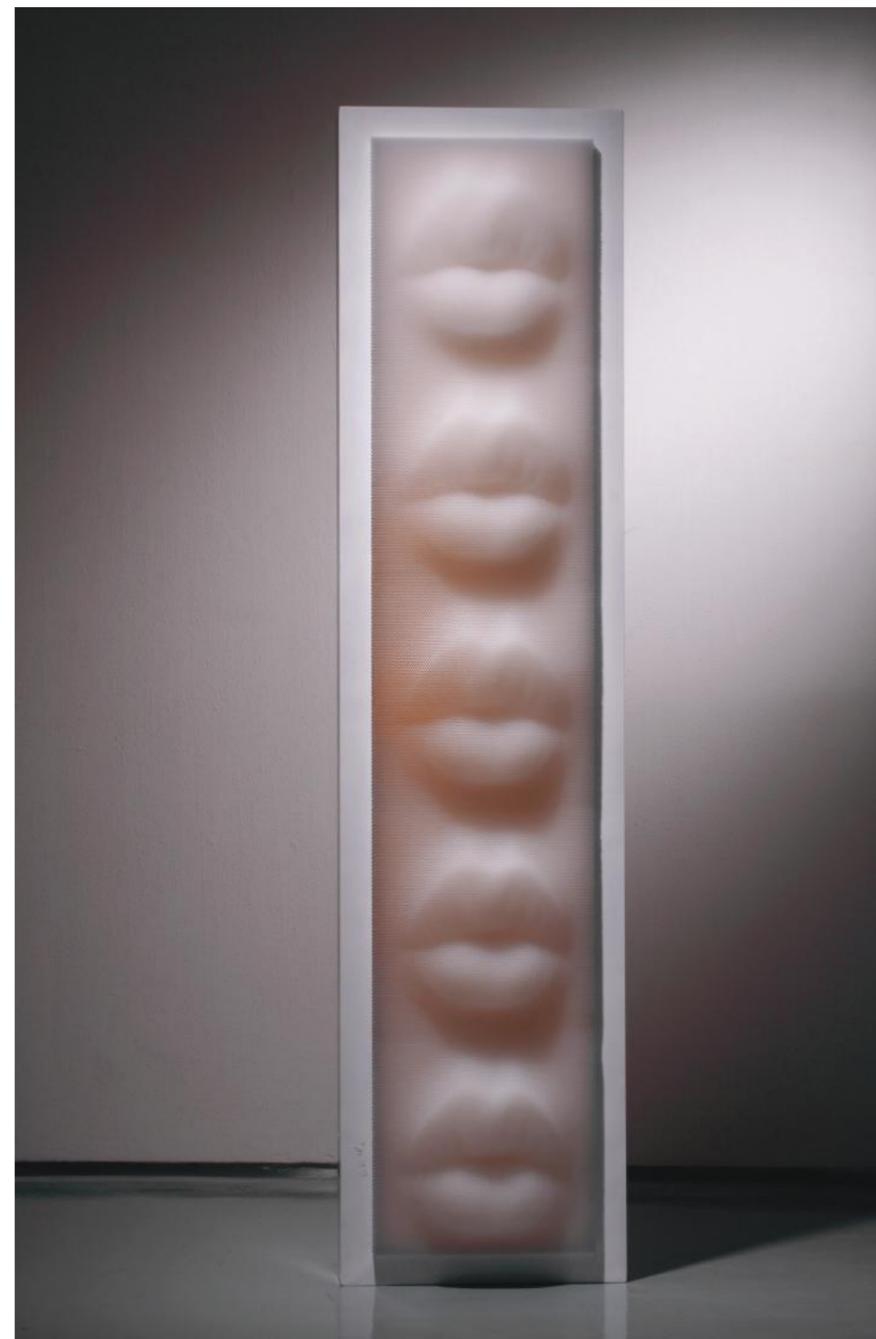
Anguish 18, 2013
Stainless chain
95 x 45 x 70 cm - 37.4 x 17.7 x 27.6 in.

Hong SANG SIK

Born in 1974

Born in 1974 in South Korea, Hong Sang-Sik is a young artist who has taken the art world in South Korea by storm. Armed with a strong desire to create sculptures with easily accessible materials, he has single-handedly transformed our impression of everyday items such as plastic straws into symbols of strength and complexity. With an impressive eye for detail enhanced with a playful perspective, Hong connects the images of power and desire from seemingly weak structures by using numbers to add volume to his images.

With an interest in thematic symbols clearly representing sex and power, Hong creates detailed portraits of facial parts such as eyes and lips with a technique which forces the viewer to experience it from an unusual perspective. With a method of artistically mounting plastic straws onto a vertical platform, Hong forms a reason for us to search for this elusive "image within an image" by playing with the principles of contrast colours. To be placed in this compromising position at the hands of the artist to only "see" what the artist wants us to "see", we cannot help but understand his growing obsession with the very themes he began with.



Five Mouth-Or, 2009
Straws
160 x 32 x 15 cm - 63 x 12.6 x 5.9 in.



Four Mouth, 2014
Straws
70 x 70 x 12 cm - 27.6 x 27.6 x 4.7 in.

OPERA GALLERY