



**njseoul**

new art from the  
korean diaspora

**Gallery Bergen**



**Gallery Bergen** is the art exhibition project of Bergen Community College. The gallery maintains a year-round exhibition schedule including curated shows of all media, performances, readings, and artist residencies presented at its main gallery space in West Hall on the Paramus (main) campus, as well as satellite shows on the campuses at Hackensack (Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center) and Lyndhurst.

**Gallery Bergen**

**West Hall, 3rd Floor, 400 Paramus Road, Paramus, NJ 07652**

**(201) 879-8817**

**<https://bergen.edu/community/gallery-bergen>**



**The Korean Community Center (KCC)** is a 501(c)3 Nonprofit organization located in Tenafly, NJ.

Its mission is to promote healthy and independent living for all ages and to integrate the people with Korean heritage into the greater community through nearly 100 programs focusing on culture and education, outreach, health and social services, and civic advocacy.

The KCC's Vision is to provide practical tools and assistance for Korean immigrants to overcome their language and cultural barriers, and to preserve and promote Korean cultural heritage and social identity through self-empowerment and a spirit of participation and giving while building bridges to American Society.

**100 Grove Street, Tenafly, NJ 07670**

**(201) 541-1200**

**[www.kccus.org](http://www.kccus.org)**

Front cover: Taesook Jung. *Vigorous Life 2040*. Mixed pigments on mulberry paper.

Back cover: Hobong Kim. *Dream, Desire, Oblivion 4*.

# NJSeoul: new art from the Korean diaspora

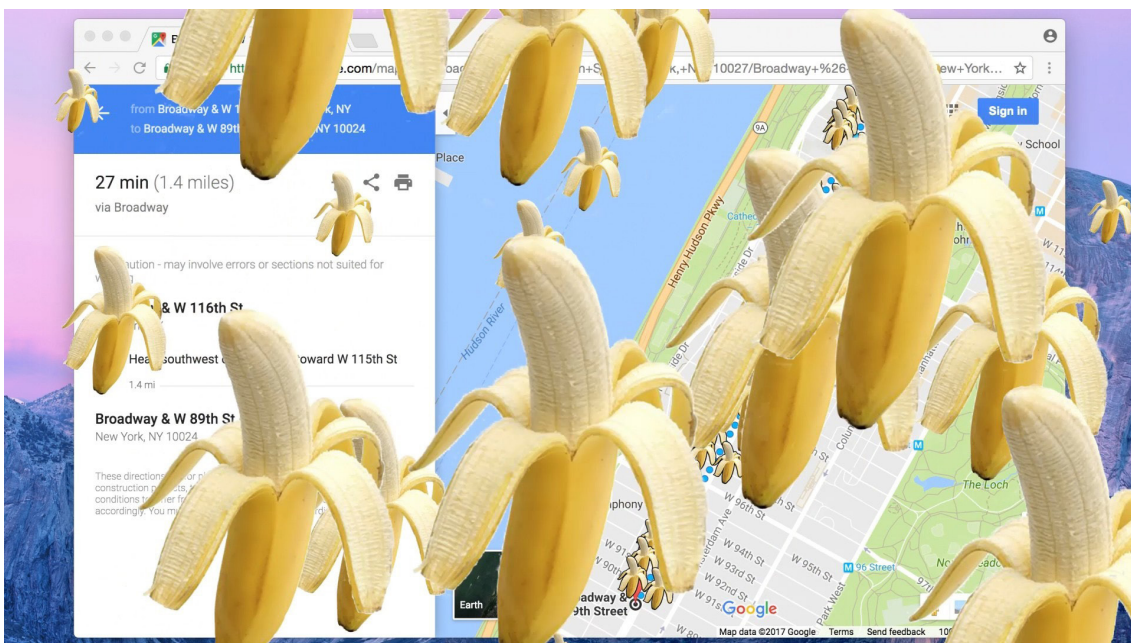
## Curatorial Statement

**Tim Blunk, Director, Gallery Bergen/Curator**

**Hyejeong Grenier, Co-curator**

This exhibition seeks to address how Korean culture has transformed New York/New Jersey/Bergen County while overturning many stereotypes about Korean people and their lives. Most prominent and emblematic among the artists in this exhibition is Joon Young Kwak, a queer transgender artist who grew up in Englewood Cliffs and resides in Los Angeles. The artist writes about their work: "As a queer trans Korean-American, I've often had to deal peoples' commonly misconceived notions of gender, sexuality, race, and beauty. I was inspired to create "Excreted Venus" to imagine a new icon for consumption and identification, thinking—what if the exemplary icon of the feminine divine was one of nonracial formlessness, fluidity, and ambiguity, what then would become of these preconceived notions of gender, sexuality, race, and beauty?"

Multi-media artist Nicole Won Hee Maloof creates drawings and videos that ask us to connect *all* of the dots (or as many as we can find): color theory, racial pseudo-theory, political economy, and popular culture. Her work is not an easy read, and it requires time and space for critical consideration. This is how we can travel the distance from bananas on Broadway to Goethe, to Honduras, and back to Bing Crosby and "White Christmas" - narrated by Siri.



Nicole Won Hee Maloof. Still from *What Color is a Banana?*

Sun You, a Bergen Community College adjunct professor of art, builds delicate, quirky installations of wire, false eyelashes, colorful beads and clips that are reminiscent of Paul Klee's "Twittering Machine."

Myoung Ja Lee, a floral designer from Ringwood, has created an on-site ephemeral floral sculpture that envelopes photographs of the "Comfort Women" who were forced into sexual slavery to serve Japanese (and later, American) troops during and after World War II.

These provocative works appear against a background of contemporary updates of more traditional Korean arts – furniture making by Chung Kim, clothing by Jasmine Park of The Hanbok designers of Fort Lee, and silk embroidered bojagi (cloths for wrapping and carrying parcels) by Kumjoo Ahn. Hobong Kim paints austere scenes finding lone Koreans embedded in crowds on busy street corners with overlaid images of monarch butterflies

- the very symbol of migration. Namjoo Kim's color negative paintings of subway platforms define the stimulus overload and cultural isolation of the newly arrived immigrant.



Detail: Myoung Ja Lee *In My Sister's Place*.

A satellite exhibition at the Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center in Hackensack features photographs from the early 1980s taken by Jinhong Kim on the Korean island of Jeju. His portraits of agrarian life on this semi-tropical island predate the massive development that has since taken place, turning Jeju into Korea's premiere vacation resort.

The Korean Community Center of Tenaflly is cosponsoring this exhibition as part of its ongoing collaboration with Bergen Community College. This fall, for the first time, BCC is offering a US History course in the Korean language. Located at 100 Grove Street in Tenaflly, the Korean Community Center seeks to "promote healthy and independent living for all ages and to integrate the people with Korean Heritage into the greater community through culture & education, outreach, health & social services, and civic advocacy." The KCC maintains its own art gallery with a very active schedule of curated exhibitions by Korean artists from the US and Korea. Thanks to a generous gift from Mr. Jinhong Kim, participating artists in NJSeoul will be speaking about their work at BCC as well as the Korean Community Center during the exhibition.

## Nicole Won Hee Maloof



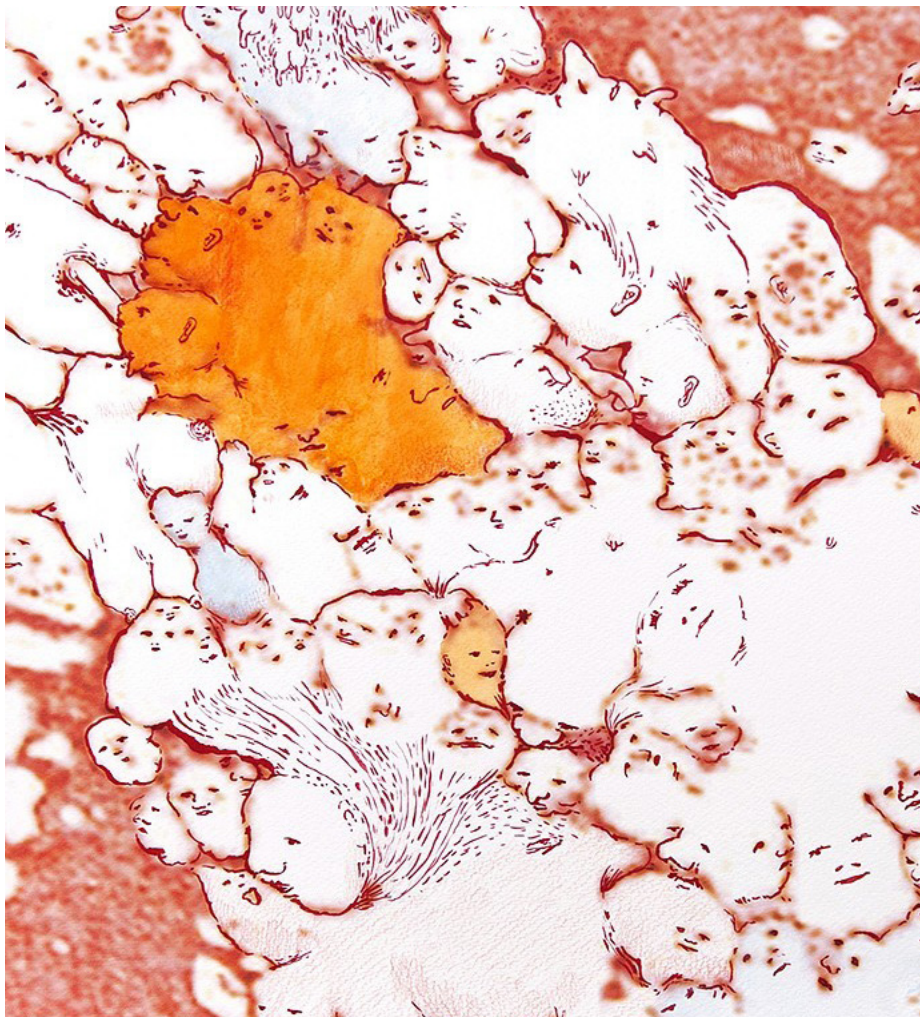
Nicole Won Hee Maloof, *The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of*.  
Crayon and acrylic on polypropylene. 2016

Korean born and Massachusetts raised, Nicole Maloof refuses to isolate the Korean American experience from the interlocking factors of labor exploitation, imperialism, and feminism. After moving to NYC to attain her MFA in Visual Arts at Columbia University, she moved back to Massachusetts, earning a BFA in Painting, and a BA in Chemistry from Boston University. Since then, her fine arts career has taken her from New York to California, and everywhere in between the coasts. She has also exhibited in Chian Mai, Thailand, and Seoul, Korea.

Mirroring her commentary on the multiplex nature of our modern material reality, her practice embraces many mediums, from drawing, painting, and printmaking, to experimental video. Her vibrant, frenetic video pieces navigate the tangled web of our physical, social, and economic realities in a manner that is, against all odds, both refreshing and entertaining: A shower of bananas tumble across a webpage. A Google Maps screenshot of NYC shows us how many places along Broadway you can cheaply and easily buy bananas (over 25!) Using colloquial smartphone imagery and funky internet aesthetics, she drives home the plight of underpaid, chemically neutered plantation workers whose labor continues to be exploited by multinational corporations. Rejecting the stodgy inaccessibility of theory along with the solipsistic academic framework in which it is developed, she hides the bitter pill of her messages in the peanut butter of surreal humor.

Being in a body - especially a racialized body - is stressful. Maloof's 2D work expresses these anxieties, while simultaneously pointing out the absurdity of our flesh. With prickly lines and sheer washes of color, she inks flubbery creatures with dinosaur heads for genitals and genitals for noses, situating them in a world where corporeal boundaries make "the distance between 2 beings" unsurpassable. In her inkjet prints, protean blobs smush up against each other like platelets under a microscope. Multiple faces bubble up from a single amorphous body. Their plasmic nature touches upon a theme Maloof has also explored in her videos-- the self is constantly in flux; human behavior is not limited by biology, but moulded by social forces. As Maloof said, "language can interfere with our ability to see." But her fanciful imagery eludes our ability to interpret them through inculcated associations, forcing us to deconstruct systems that limit our understanding of the world.

**Audrey Kim**



Nicole Won Hee Maloof, *Exercise in Paranoia (b)*  
Ink and watercolor pencil on digital inkjet print. 2015



## The Korean Diaspora

Like other Korean-American artists who were born and their spent childhoods in Korea before continuing their journeys in the US, Lee's work reflects an individual's struggle, progress, and change within different environments. It's a story of the Korean-American artist on a small scale, but when expanded, it is not different than that of every other immigrant in the US.

Lee reinterprets traditional Korean folk art (Minhwa) by connecting it to a modern perspective. Integrating Korean tradition with New York's contemporary life, traditional and modern, old and new, east and west, material and ideal, all coexist harmoniously in her paintings. Lee thinks that people in the contemporary world often confuse the pursuit of happiness with materialistic desire. By portraying a luxurious, modern context in a traditional Korean setting using Minhwa's unique and humorous aspects, Lee depicts the everlasting human desire — the pursuit of happiness — that transcends appearance, time, and era.

However, the luxurious goods and gems in her paintings are not to criticize materialism, but to symbolize and bring awareness to what we really seek in life beyond the materialistic substances. Lee believes that the substance of life is seeking one's happiness, thus human being's life journey is an interaction between these essential desires with its environment.

Most of all, Lee wishes her paintings bring happiness to viewers just as Korean folk art transmits virtue — wishing happiness, longevity, and peace — despite the dark period that they've been through.

(Text courtesy of the artist.)

## Dong Kyu Kim



*The Unanswered Questions #2. Paper receipts, tickets, thread and Swiffer (microfiber cloths)*

My work is mainly composed of paper receipts saved from almost every purchase I have made since relocating to the United States in 2007. Each receipt provides a detailed record of my various activities, along with the time, date, and location of the transaction. I sew the receipts together by hand into rectangular panels that can be hung on a wall or stitched together in the form of a garment. The primary inspiration for my work is JoGakBo, the traditional Korean craft of sewing together small scraps of fabric to create a patchwork cloth. By combining the technique of JoGakBo with receipts from daily purchases I fuse the cultures and values of both East and West to create a new hybrid aesthetic. My work is a form of self-meditation that allows me to examine my emotions and motivations as a Korean artist and fashion designer living in the US. My artistic practice unifies my life and art through the repetitive and meditative act of stitching the small papers together. The receipts I collect record the passing of time and supply both memories and facts of my life. They are also examples of American capitalism, wealth, aspirations, and cultural values. Though they are isolated and insignificant fragments of the past that seem impersonal at first, each transaction represented by a receipt is a defining moment along the journey that formed the essence of who I am today. The process of giving weight to the empty, meaning to the meaningless, is the validation of one's existence.

(Text courtesy of the artist.)

## Namjoo Kim



*On the platform 1. Oil on canvas.*



*On the platform 2. Oil on canvas.*



*On the platform 3. Watercolor on paper.*

## Chung Kim



*Bandaji.* Cherry and walnut. Inspired by traditional Korean dwellings.

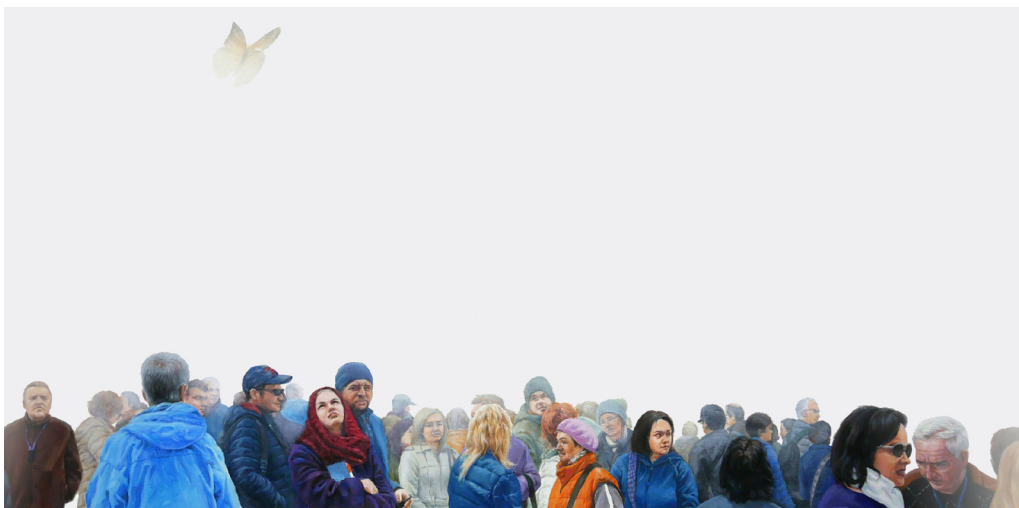


*Han-ok chest.* Walnut. Inspired by traditional Korean dwelling.

## Hobong Kim



*Dream, Desire, Oblivion 5.* Oil on canvas.



*Dream, Desire, Oblivion 10.* Oil on canvas.

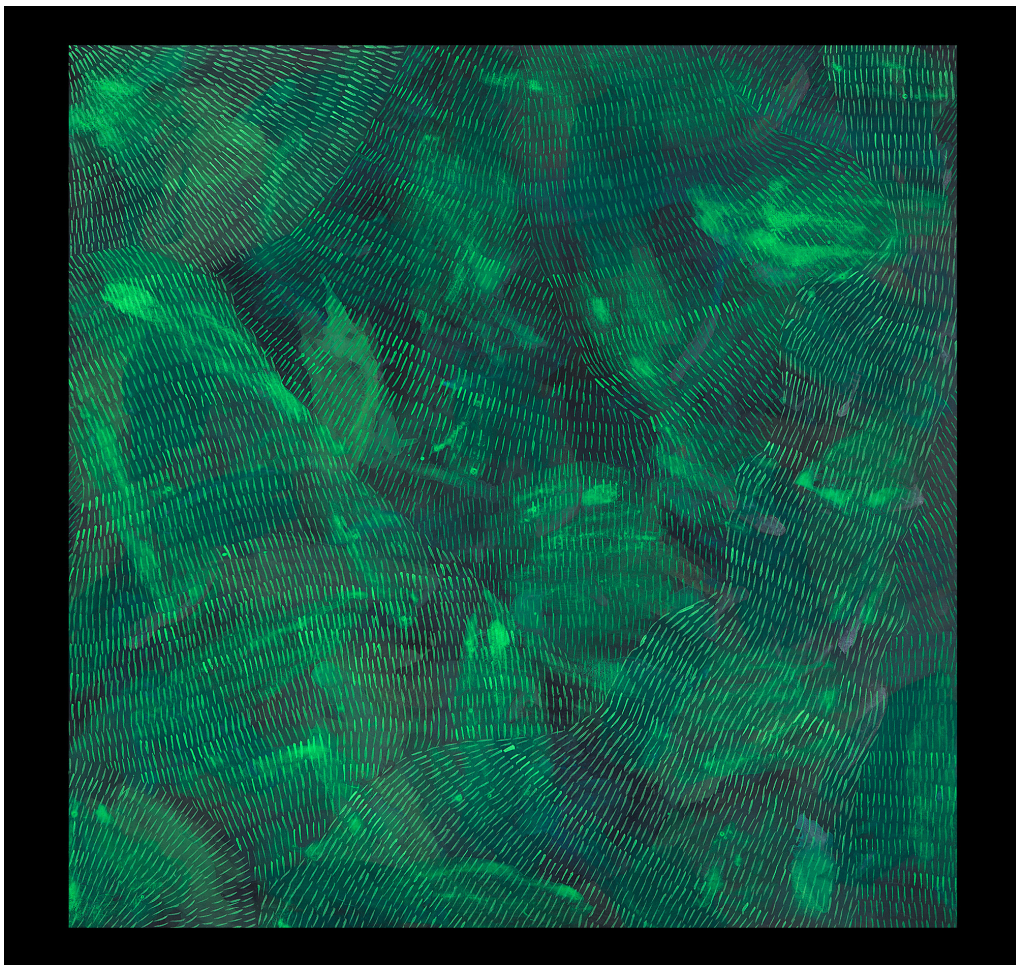
## Jasmine Park, The Hanbok



Contemporary men's hanbok. Silk. (Background painting, Stephanie Lee, *Tiger Awaiting Fortune Under a Pine Tree*. Natural pigment, earth pigment and ink on mulberry paper.)

It's a part of living and breathing culture, wearing the natural hues born out through the creation of universe. Merging art, culture and science, Hanbok has beautifully coalesced and transformed each of these elements into one form. Hanbok is truly an extension of living and breathing nature itself. This is the true identity and characteristic of the Korean traditional wear, Hanbok.

(Text courtesy of the artist.)



*Vigorous Life* 2006. Acrylic gouache on canvas

My *Vigorous Life* series explores the unity of nature and the human experience. This concept derives from East Asian philosophy and it is deeply ingrained into that culture. The abundance of Nature has always inspired me. I feel as though there is a profound connection between Nature and my work. It is the backbone of my art whatever the medium or materials. Often I like to depict the changes in color of the seasons harking back to my experience of life and moments. In creating my abstract paintings, I internalize my experiences and finds conceptual parallels in my imagery and process. I layer washes of color to create dark backgrounds that give the illusion of depth. Then paints bright energetic brush strokes on top, interrupting the surface. This creates a harmony of tension and resolution that serves as the basis for the composition. The dark colors evoke a sense of earthiness and decay, while the light colors call to mind the youthful energy of spring, summer greenery and blue. By balancing these two extremes in a single unified composition, they are understood in relation to one another, rather than as opposites. I see this process as an embodiment of accepting adversity in order to celebrate the resilience of life. My deeply optimistic artwork openly embrace joy and beauty without discounting struggle. Visually abstract, the viewer is invited to reflect upon these processes while enjoying the patterns and color of the painting.

(Text courtesy of the artist.)



No. 5. Inkjet print on aluminum.



No. 1. Inkjet print on aluminum

**Young Joon Kwak**



*Excreted Venus.* Laminated archival pigment print mounted on aluminum.

## Young Joon Kwak

Exemplary bodies like the pop diva are mechanisms for the workings of power through discourse; they invoke an identification in the viewer—a sign of objectification for the subjectification of the viewer. What if the exemplary body of feminine beauty, prosperity, love, and desire was one of fluidity and formlessness, a new icon for a radical form of consumption and identification with a monstrous entity? *Excreted Venus* was made by patching together several different photos taken from different angles that have been patched together to create her strange body.

*Aggregate Body* represents bodily fragments come together in a grid—revealing its seams. This body is one of fragmentation, coming together, falling apart, resisting identifications of race, gender, etc. This is not a human body as a discreet, whole, organic thing, but rather glimpses open-ended bodily transformation.

(Text courtesy of the artist.)



*Uh, As If!* HD video + sound 2:21 mins.

## Myoung Ja Lee

In 1937 the Japanese army attacked and virtually destroyed the Chinese city of Nanking. Over a 6-week period, it is estimated that between 20,000 to 80,000 women were raped in what became known as the "Rape of Nanking." In response to the international outrage, Emperor Hirohito ordered the creation of "comfort stations" to service the sexual needs of the Japanese troops. Women and girls were kidnapped, purchased as indentured servants, or tricked with offers of employment as nurses, and forced into sexual slavery. By the end of the war, between 20,000 and 410,000 women - mostly Korean and Chinese - were brought to 125 brothels by the Japanese army. The UN estimates that some 90% of these women did not survive the war. The use of these brothels continued under the American occupation until Gen. MacArthur ordered their closure in 1947. The survivors returned home physically and emotionally traumatized, only to be subjected to ostracism and humiliation. Many died of complications from their injuries; many more committed suicide.

In recent years, many of the survivors have chosen to go public and speak out against what had happened to them - our sisters and mothers - and to demand justice.

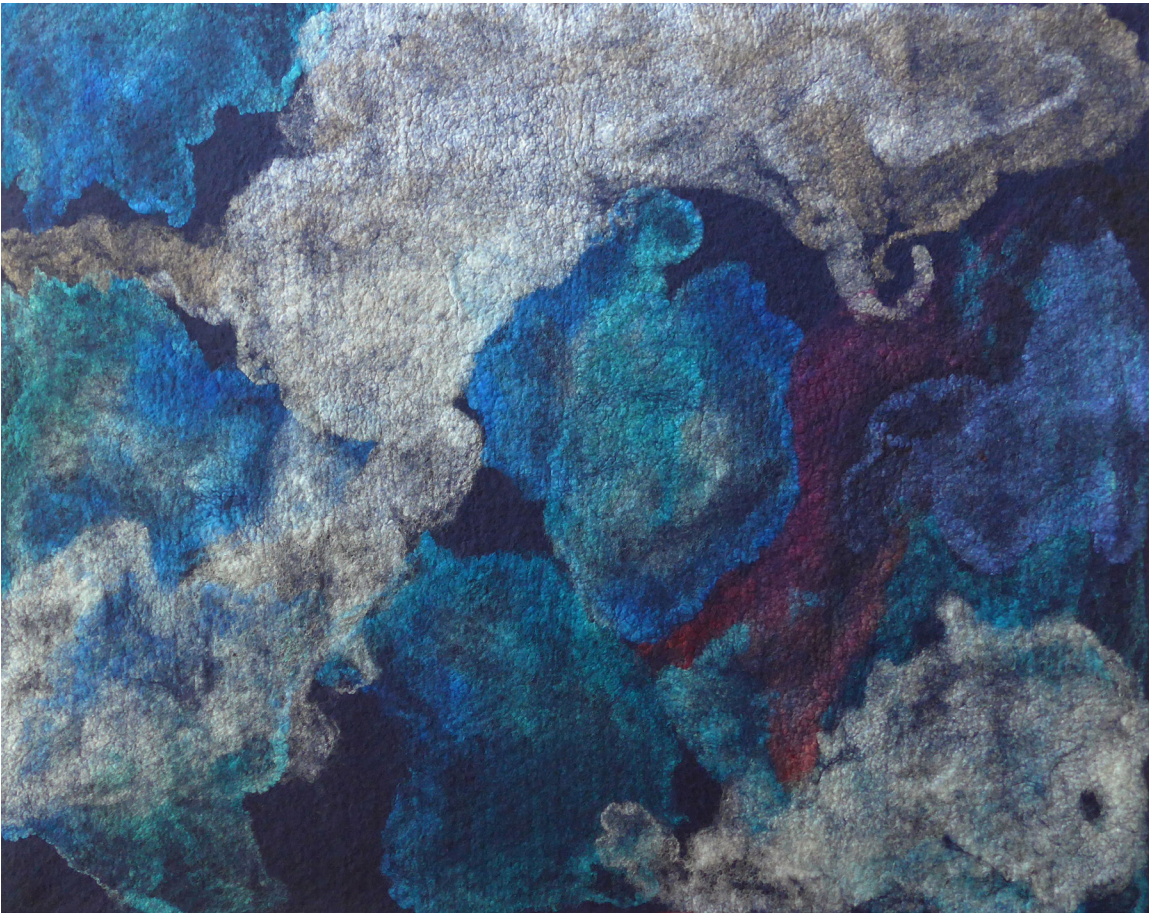
Women are a perpetual target of war.  
It could be any of us.

(Text courtesy of the artist.)



*In My Sister's Place*  
Florals, archival photographs, wood, chicken wire  
with bojagi by Kumjoo Ahn

## So Yoo Lym



*Tuareg Blue VI* Wool and silk.

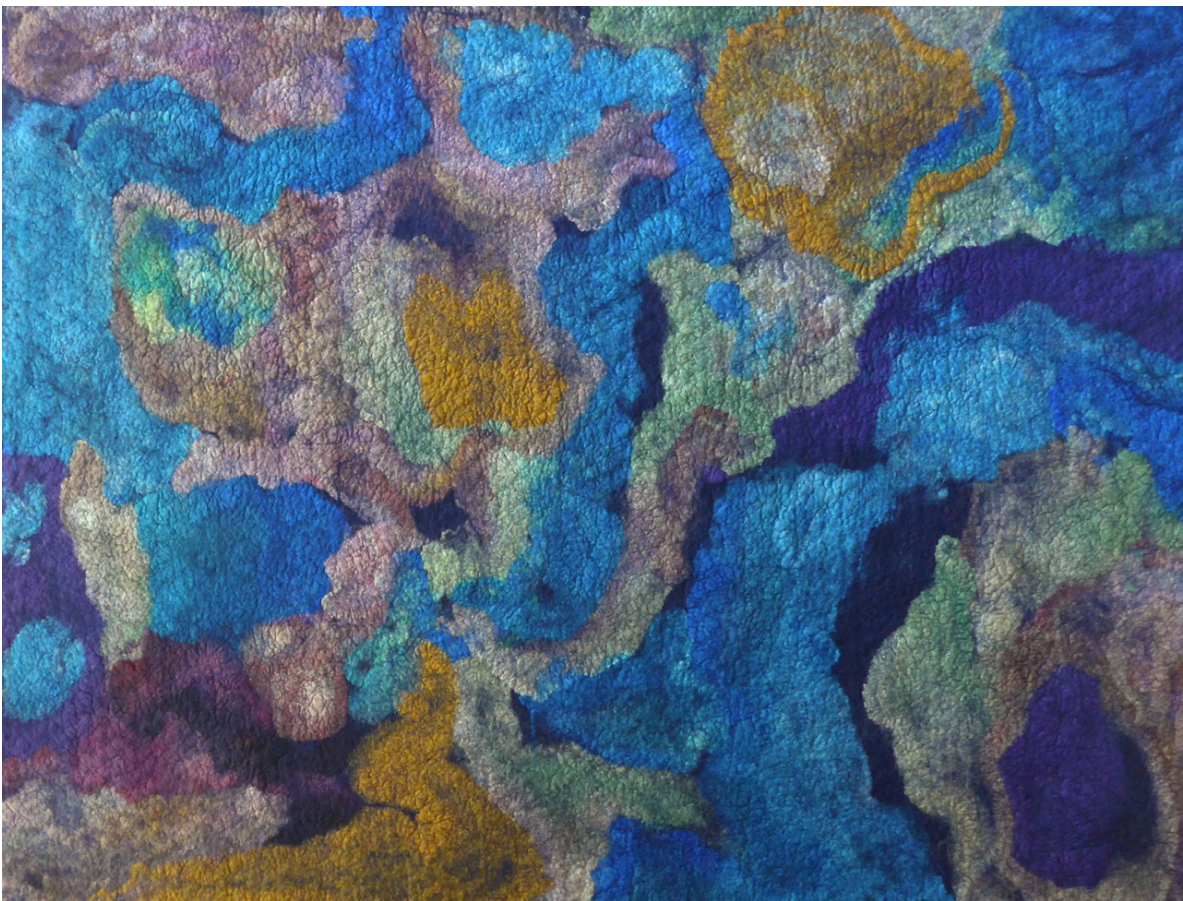
Although she was born in Seoul, Korea, So Yoo Lym has made the world her home. She's moved from Kenya, Uganda, to New Jersey, to France, and has pursued her art education at RISD and Columbia University. A current New Jersey resident, she has exhibited across the east coast. The mediums in which she works are as diverse as her background, spanning printmaking, ceramics, fiber arts, surface design and leather working.

So Yoon's work is pulled taut by the tension between individual experience and the all-encompassing forces that unite us as communities, and as a species. Despite her status as a well-traveled global citizen, the scenes that recur most often in her work, and which are rendered with the most tenderness, are those of suburban North Jersey. Streetlights and headlights fluoresce in the darkness. Oil painted street signs offer ambiguous directions. Reduced to flickering suggestions of light and mass, highways, deserted downtown areas, and slumbering residential streets become non-places that are nonetheless instantly recognisable. Composed from the drowsy, meditative perspective of someone driving home late at night, the viewer can almost hear the buzz of insects bumping against the streetlights, and the crunch of ill-maintained asphalt under tires. So Yoon offers us her own, solipsistic nighttime solitude. But as she strips North Jersey suburbia down to bare bones abstraction, she presents people across America with their own, oft-trodden local roads.

Using silk and human hair, So Yoon addresses universal constants in a manner that retains the intimacy of her depictions of New Jersey, often touching upon the pre-colonial customs of indigenous or nomadic

societies. Felted wool topographies bloom dreamlike across swathes of sapphire blue silk, referencing the indigo-dyed clothes of the Tuareg people, a traditionally nomadic Berber ethnic confederation. Intricate braids inspired by Aboriginal visions of creation and image making practices criss-cross the scalps of her students, inscribing them with “a topographical palimpsest of the world in pattern.” In a series of silk prints capturing the “psycho-geography” of Paterson, she captures the character of a New Jersey town that was once a mecca of silk production. So Yoon takes us from Africa to Australia, using historically loaded materials to express a community’s distinctive relationships to time and space, their creation myths, and their relationship to the land they inhabit. And with a poingency that Bruce Springsteen himself would envy, she delves into the layers of history that birthed the Garden State, bringing us back home.

**Audrey Kim**



*Tuareg Blue XII.* Wool and silk.

## Kumjoo Ahn



*Black Bojagi With Ribbon.* Embroidered silk



*Bojagi for Travel.* Embroidered silk.  
(Detail of i)nstallation by Myoung Ja Lee.

## Sun You

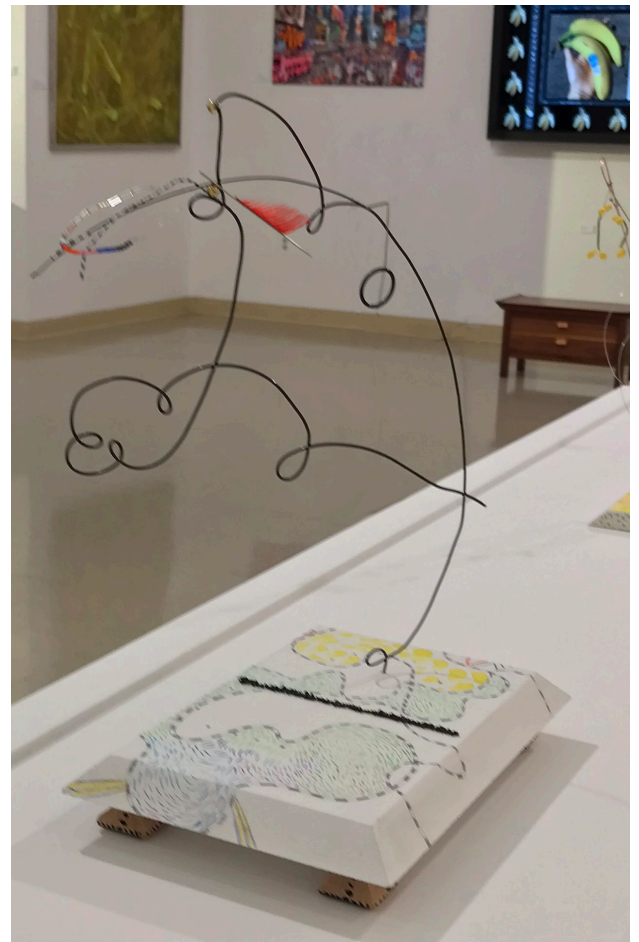
Seoul-born contemporary artist Sun You has emerged as one of the most interesting young sculptors on the New York art scene in recent times. She combines different decorative objects from fashion accessories to household items, creating exquisite artworks that are held together only by magnets. Her work is characterized by the high level of meticulousness, attentiveness to details and powerful combinations of colors and shapes. Though she often exhibits in Brooklyn, racing ahead of the gentrification riptide that threatens to drown out the neighborhood's creative voices, she's shown her work across the U.S, and has had shows in Berlin and Seoul.

"With my most recent wall sculptures, I combine objects like eyelash extensions, X-acto blades, earrings, pins, and needles. They are held together using only magnets—without any joinery or adhesive. They do not hang on the wall; the wall is penetrated by the sculpture. She is inspired by "fishing lures, fashion accessories, and everything in Home Depot."

**Audrey Kim**



*Untitled. Mixed media, variable sizes. 2019.*



*Untitled. Mixed media, variable sizes. 2019.*

## Hahn Byol Chang



*phoebe*. 35 mm. film. 7 mins. 19 secs. (2016)



*\_keepmonica*. Video. 9 mins. 51 secs. (2017)

## Jinhong Kim



### Jeju Chronicles

On view at the Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center

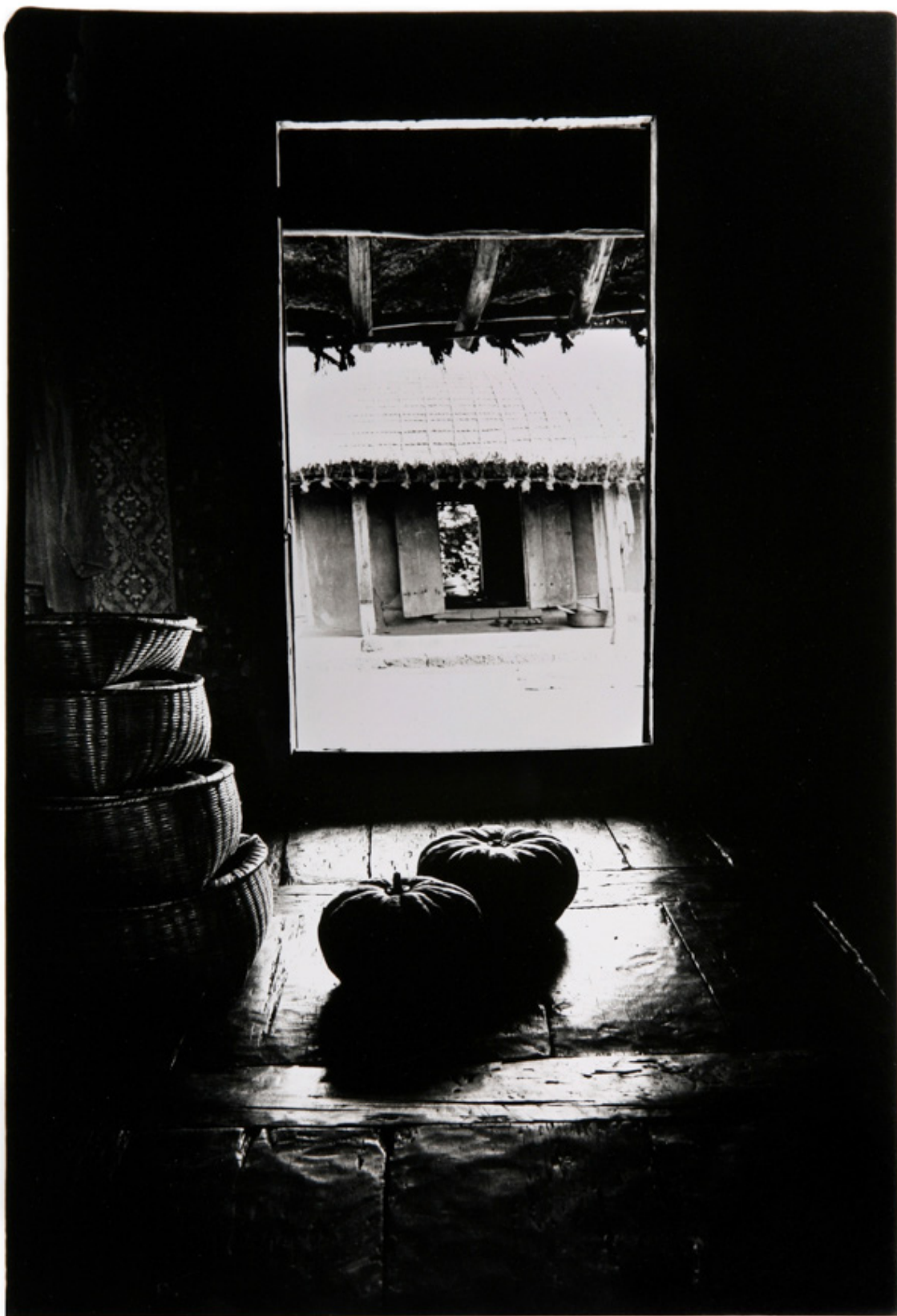
While growing up on Jeju Island, I enjoyed the nature and culture of this unique area. However, I also had a burning desire to explore outside of the island. Now, after living in the U.S.A. for almost 30 years, I have been rethinking the experiences which provided so much to me throughout my childhood.

I have memories of the island's unique volcanic rocks, of climbing the rock walls, and of watching horses from the top of the walls. The wind was a constant presence - sometimes I would be running against a gentle breeze with the scent of rapeseed blossoms in the spring, while at other times the wind was so strong that I felt typhoons would devour the entire island. Also, I enjoyed collecting sea shells and catching abalones along the seashore.

Sadly, many of these fond childhood memories and experiences disappeared as development increased on Jeju Island. Fortunately, however, the photographer Jinhong Kim's black and white photos, which he took 40 years ago, have captured the beauty of the island very well.

I am much honored to work with the talented artist and photographer Mr. Kim, and to share my childhood memories with you.

**Hyejeong Grenier**  
**NJSeoul co-curator**



Jinhong Kim. *Pumpkin Room*. Photographic print on silver paper.



Jinhong Kim. *Harobang*. Photographic print on silver paper.



Jinhong Kim. *Rest*. Photographic print on silver paper.

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Photo credit: Barbara Bliss

**Woorigarak Korean Cultural Arts Center**

# njseoul

**Kumjoo Ahn**

**Hahn Byol Chang**

**Taesook Jung**

**Chung Kim**

**Dong Kyu Kim**

**Hobong Kim**

**Jinhong Kim**

**Namjoo Kim**

**Young Joon Kwak**

**Myoung Ja Lee**

**Stephanie Lee**

**Hyoung K. (Paul) Lim**

**So Yoo Lym**

**Nicole Won Hee Maloof**

**Jasmine Park (The Hanbok)**

**Sun You**

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September 12 – October 31, 2019

