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New Media Artists



Bang & Lee (Jayoung Bang and Yunjun Lee) make work that spans new-media installation, performance and projects that combine art and technology to offer a critical perspective on societies' dependence on tech. Bang & Lee have shown work at the Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe; MAXXI – National Museum of 21st Century Arts, Rome; Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai; National Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art, Seoul; and National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei.



Seoul Express (Minki Hong and Youjin Jeon) create media-based installation works and performances that experiment with narrative, incorporating aesthetic elements, sound and movement into images and choreography that position technology not only as a tool but also, conceptually, as a social and political environment. Their performances include *Patchwork* (2017), *Song and Matter* (2019), *Industrial Performance* (2020), *When the Cold Blows* (2022) and *I Walk with the Zombie* (2022).



Yohan Hàn's installations and performances combine organic materials, such as animal skins, with technological forms to explore processes of communication between physical bodies in an environment increasingly saturated with digital images and continuous flows of information. His work has been exhibited at Soorim Cube, National Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art, Gallery Chosun, all in Seoul; and Parliament Gallery, Centre Pompidou and Espace Cardin, all in Paris.



Shinuk Suh uses sculpture to explore the ironies of contemporary life and test the line between comedy and tragedy. This involves contrasting the physical properties of materials such as silicon, fabric, steel and motors. Suh recently presented solo exhibitions at Daniel Benjamin Gallery and Unit 1 Gallery, and a two-person exhibition at the Korean Cultural Centre, all in London. Suh studied sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art and fine art at Central Saint Martins, both in London.



GRAYCODE, jiiiiin (Taebok Cho and Jinhee Jung) are electronic-music composers and artists. Their artistic language makes use of vibrations of air, sound pressure and musical tensions and relaxations, using sound to clearly show phenomena that are invisible yet real, going beyond the level of hearing to affect vision and physical experience. The duo received the 2018 Giga-Hertz Award, presented by the Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, and German broadcaster Südwestrundfunk.



Kimchi and Chips (Mimi Son and Elliot Woods) use different materials and technologies as well as material and nonmaterial aspects of natural phenomena to capture the 'inevitable randomness' that comes about when natural variables are added to the careful calculations of technology. Their work has won several awards and been presented at MMCA National Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art, Korea, Seoul; the Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe; and Somerset House, London.



Tacit Group was cofounded by Jaeho Chang and Lee Jinwon. Their work includes multi-media performances, installations and algorithmic art. Recently the group has experimented with human/computer and art/technology convergences through collaborative performances by computerised and human participants. They have presented work at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Lincoln Center, New York; NYU Abu Dhabi; and Nam June Paik Art Center, Yonjin.



Minha Park is a filmmaker who dissects the political frameworks that structure the sensory world via works that include lens-based footage, historical archives, 3D data and AI-generated images. Park's recent solo exhibitions were held at Cylinder 2, Seoul, and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Her work has been shown at Lux Moving Image, London; MMCA National Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art, Korea, Leeum Samsung Museum of Art and SEMA, all in Seoul; and MOCa Busan.

Introduction

Once you've read the profiles of the 17 Korean artists collected in this publication, you might struggle to think that 'Korean' has much to offer as an art-historical or art-critical term – such is the range of practices gathered here. In a series of profiles, the artists speak about their inspirations, as well as their engagements with issues ranging from local histories to the (un)translatability of language to climate actions and social initiatives. Which, in a way, is to begin this booklet with the contradiction that the artists here are connected by a shared geographic and cultural background, while their work demonstrates a variety that resists any such attempts to label or to pigeonhole (which, let's face it, is something that art critics, Tweeters and Instagrammers love to do). Which, in turn, is a user's warning: everything this publication asserts, it also denies!

The artists profiled here are part of two annual initiatives organised by the Korea Arts Management Service (KAMS), which operates under Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Korean Artists Today (artists belonging to this programme are labelled with an o in this publication) is an initiative designed to further the global exposure of Korean artists. These artists are nominated by a committee of international and domestic art professionals based on their potential to impact the global art scene. In 2024 nine Korean artists were selected, whose works use a range of mediums, from painting to sculpture to video, deeply rooted in Korean culture and history, while engaging with crucial issues of modernity and identity. Additionally, this year KAMS has separately spotlighted new media and multidisciplinary art – dynamic domains that thrive in Korea despite not occupying a central position in traditional genre-based art discourse. Alongside Korean Artists Today, eight Korean New Media Artists (artists belonging to this programme are labelled here with an x) were selected for their boundary-breaking experimental endeavours across different media and genres, and for the critical role they play in Korea's rich history in the evolution of media and multidisciplinary art.

In the meantime, at the midpoint of Korea's biennale season, with the Busan Biennale having just opened and the Gwangju Biennale about to follow suit, *ArtReview* spoke to Philippe Pirotte and Vera Mey, who are artistic directors of the former, and Nicolas Bourriaud, who helms the latter, about their plans for these influential platforms and about their takeaways from the Korean art scene. In addition, they discuss how Korea's musical traditions might cast new light on ideas of space, and how traditions of its ports and seas might inspire alternative or 'fugitive' enlightenment around individual empowerment. Finally, we spotlight a series of three exhibitions that feature Korean artists, which will be staged by Seoul-based galleries at No. 9 Cork Street in London this autumn. Another example of what is an ongoing embrace of Korean art on the international scene.

For those of you who also want to be part of that, you will find throughout this publication a series of 'useful' Korean terms – suggested by the featured artists – that might help a visitor navigate the Korean art scene. From phrases that capture the spirits of Korean art to words to use when ordering coffee, they present an insider's take on the role contemporary Korean art plays, and perhaps, *ArtReview* dreams, may serve as anchors enabling further discussions and dialogues.

ArtReview is grateful for the support of KAMS under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and proud to be a part of a project that fosters connections between the Korean and international art scenes.

Yuwen Jiang and Mark Rappolt, *ArtReview*

KAMS

Established in 2006, the Korea Arts Management Service (KAMS) is a nonprofit public arts and cultural foundation affiliated with Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. KAMS is dedicated to supporting research, offering consulting services, directing educational initiatives and facilitating international exchange programmes to introduce Korean contemporary art to a global audience.

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Sojung Jun



In her films and related sculpture Sojung Jun is interested in individuals who have found themselves pushed to the periphery by modernity and, more generally, the subjective nature of time itself. Such characters have, in recent years, ranged from a tightrope walker and a piano tuner to a sign painter and a shellfish diver. “I’m curious about the possibility of making the invisible visible, audible and even touchable. This can also be seen as a way of writing unwritten history,” she says of the scope and ambition of her work. In her 2023 film *Overtone*, first shown at Seoul’s Barakat Contemporary in 2023, Jun homed in on Soona Park, who was born in Japan to Korean parents and encountered the *gayageum* at her Korean-diaspora elementary school, before going on to travel back and forth between North and South Korea to master this traditional plucked string-instrument. Jun’s three-channel videowork uses musical performance as its core imagery and a search for a ‘lost’ identity as its core theme. “What I was focused on was the *nonghyun* in *gayageum*, which is a kind of vibration, and if the score is the rational world, then the *nonghyun* is the sound of possibilities that are not written down and are in some kind of gap,” Jun states, before asking, “Could it be that senses such as touch, hearing and smell, which have been diluted by modernisation, can reveal invisible realms as alternative means of communication and understanding?”

It is a question that builds on earlier work, including *Despair to be reborn* (2020), a 25-minute video that traces passageways and paths both literal and metaphorical through urban landscapes in Korea, Japan and France, and archival footage from each of these countries. Linking everything is a poem by the modernist poet and architect Yi Sang, a key figure in the Korean avant-garde of the 1930s, during which time the country was occupied by Japan. “My work explores the complex

layers of contemporary Asian modernity,” Jun explains. “It crosses geographical and national boundaries and intersects individual lives and reveals the aesthetics and politics inherent in them. Most importantly, they are intimately connected to my own life.”

facing page
Epiphyllum 1, III, 2023 (installation views).
Photo: Jeon Byung Cheol. Courtesy
Barakat Contemporary, Seoul

GRAYCODE, jiiiiin

What might the red pigmentation of an apple sound like? Does time have a sound? Are acoustic patterns inherent in nature? These are some of the questions that musician-artists GRAYCODE, jiiiiin (aka Taebok Cho and Jinhee Jung) might ask. While their work finds its foundations in electroacoustic music, the actual output, which is often presented as installations, is rather more difficult to define. But such are the qualities of sound – both intangible in the sense that it is ephemeral, nebulously seeping through space and time, and tangible, because sound and its frequencies produce vibrations, and those vibrations, for example, can affect the body’s blood flow.

“Our work involves transforming immaterial and abstract subjects into physical experiences,” say GRAYCODE, jiiiiin. They might be described as musical alchemists. Take, for instance, their work *+3x10⁸m/s, beyond the light velocity* (2017–18): a 465-second composition presented as part of a video. Inspired by German physicist Heinrich Hertz, who proved the existence of electromagnetic waves in 1886 (and after whom the measure of frequency, hertz, is named), the artists translated “the vast scale of the universe’s time into an audible range” that can be perceived by the human ear. The imagery that plays out across the screen is at first reminiscent of the Windows 3.1 *Mystify.scr* desktop screensaver series that during the 1990s saw many a user temporarily hypnotised by its animated polygons and ribbon-like patterns. These visuals, which shift between sinelike waves and scintillating particles of bluish light, enhance the audio experience: a minimal soundscape that oscillates between the discomfiting

noises of clicks, static and high frequencies, and the slightly more soothing sounds of what might be described as ‘droplets’ of electronic tones. The work feels something like a contemporary Arecibo message. But instead of communicating basic information about humanity on Earth to outer space, *+3x10⁸m/s...* beams an even more abstract interpretation of the universe.

GRAYCODE, jiiiiin’s practice is as much about revealing the invisible as it is about calling attention to the invisible elements of a material. Sometimes the artists oscillate between the two states to create works like *Δw* (2023). For this installation, they recorded the vibrations of the tides at Seogwipo (a city situated on a rocky volcanic coastline at the southern tip of Jeju Island), converting them into numerical data that was then translated into a soundwork. The unique time- and site-specific vibrations of the coastline were consequently immortalised. It’s a mode of working that applies to their most recent project, too. This year the artists released an album comprising compositions they had written themselves titled *musings forest*. Each of the 12 ethereal tracks (one recording was released every month between June 2021 and May 2022) combines melodies played on musical instruments with field recordings taken from an unnamed forest. The album was first published online and then later produced on magnetic-reel tape. Here, the sounds of nature’s seasons are magnetised into material form.

facing page
wave forecast, 2022, performance. Courtesy the artists



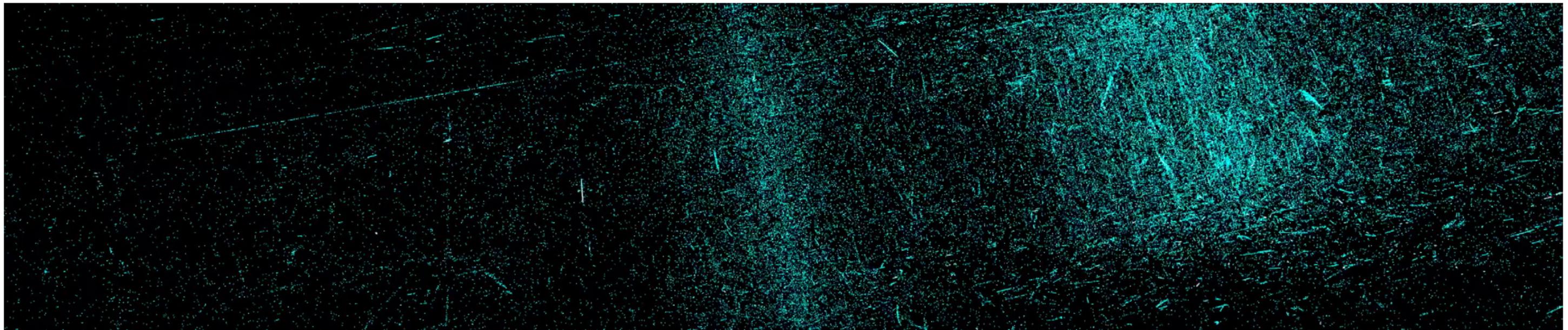


above
 Sojung Jun, *Syncope* (still), 2023, single-channel 4k video, colour, stereo sound. Courtesy the artist

facing page
 Sojung Jun, *Overtone*, 2023 (installation view, three-channel 4k video, colour, stereo, 1 hr 24 min). Courtesy Barakat Contemporary, Seoul



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above
 GRAYCODE, *jiiiiin*, +3x10⁸m/s, *beyond the light velocity* (still), 2017–18. © and courtesy the artists

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