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RYAN____ T 212-397-0669 F 212-397-0766
GALLERY www.MARYRYANGALLERY.COM

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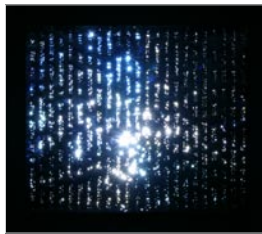
Multiplicity of Contemporary Art from South Korea

(≠ South Korean contemporary art)

June 18 to August 28, 2009

Reception: Thursday June 18, 6-8pm

Jungju An - Sangbin IM - Shin Il Kim - Jiha Moon - Heeseop Yoon



New York – Mary Ryan Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of works by **5** contemporary artists from South Korea to exemplify the dynamic, multi-faceted art practices that have been developing there for the past decade. Unlike some contemporary art from Asia popularized in the West, including art from China and Japan, contemporary art from South Korea has been overlooked. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of a cohesive and unifying aesthetic that can be easily categorized. Without an overriding “look,” viewers must only rely on the individuality of each of the artist’s work and their individual names to remember, difficult when the names are outside the mainstream Germanic/Romance languages of the West. The title of the exhibition, **5³** illustrates the multiplicity that makes contemporary art from South Korea a microcosm of the international art scene. It stems from the idea of showcasing **5** different artists x **5** different mediums x **5** different conceptual issues. Artists from South Korea create installation, draw, make video, perform, produce sound, paint, photograph, etc. They tackle issues ranging from consumerism, feminism, formalism, identity, language, politics, religion to issues of the everyday. The “Korean” aspect found in their works is evident to varying degrees but is not the end-all; for some it is a mere biographic note.

The recent proliferation of art fairs, international biennials, and galleries in South Korea have created a rich and vibrant contemporary art scene. The **5** emerging artists included in **5³**, (some exhibiting in New York

for the first time) – **Jungju An, Sangbin IM, Shin Il Kim, Jiha Moon, Heeseop Yoon**—are well versed in the current “international” trends in contemporary art. These **5** artists, all born in the 1970s, grew up at a time when South Korea experienced tremendous changes. Some were too young to remember the military dictatorship that came to an end by 1987, but all benefited from the rapid economic growth that occurred after Seoul hosted the 1988 Summer Olympic Games as well as the newfound freedoms under a more democratic government. Through a variety of available opportunities presented in this newly industrialized country, these **5** artists have been able to study, live, and/or travel to countries around the world, allowing themselves to become fluent in the global art practice.

Jungju An (b. 1979, Gwanju; resides in Seoul) is a video artist interested in language and the breaking down of language into onomatopoeic sounds that can be universally understood, which he then uses to narrate his videos of mundane activities. In *Harmony-Lip-Sync Project II* (2008), An went to six cities (Berlin, Brussels, Innsbruck, Madrid, Rome, Paris) and filmed scenes at historical gates (meeting points for tourists as well as places of encounter for many cultures) such as the Brandenburg Gates in Berlin. He had volunteers speak into a microphone using onomatopoeic and mimetic words or sounds which he then mixed to create the soundtrack for the moving images. This is the first time his work will be shown in the United States.

Sangbin IM (b. 1976, Seoul; resides in New York, NY) creates work that is a hybrid of photography, painting and printmaking and deals with consumerism and the reconfiguration of reality to create the sublime. He takes hundreds of digital photographs that he seamlessly joins and combines with scanned images of sky, water, or surface textures that he paints. The most recent body of works deals with New York City, a symbol of both consumerism and modern awe. IM’s photographs are large-scale, evoking billboards and creating imagery that is both hyper-real and subtly disparate.

Shin Il Kim (b. 1971, Seoul; resides in Brooklyn, NY) creates installations, press drawings, photographs, and hybrid of various mediums to create works exploring his philosophic interest in Zen Buddhism and shamanism. Investigating the multi-layered concept of reflection found in spirituality, Kim created *A Beat* (2009), a light and sound based installation playing with the idea of passive and active. This new work uses a reflective surface to project once dormant images that is activated through light and sound and how it engages the human perception. It is his attempt to visualize his notion of “practical spirituality.”

Jiha Moon (b. 1973, DaeGu; resides in Atlanta, GA) paints dream-like, layered paintings full of Eastern and Western imagery as well as visual icons from her past and present surroundings fueled by her sense of

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displacement. Moon uses acrylic and ink on native Hanji paper using a vibrant color palette that evokes those of “hanbok”, traditional Korean dress. She in her own words, is a “visual interpreter of the mixed cultural world of [her] generation.”

Heeseop Yoon (b. 1976, Seoul; resides in New York, NY) reinvents “drawing” to create monumental installations using everyday objects such as mylar and masking tape to depict images of cluttered spaces. Her works investigate memory and perception and how memory of her initial perception of space changes over time. Seeking to redefine the tradition notion of drawing, Yoon cuts and tapes these materials to “draw” her images that are both monumental and adaptable to specific environments.

In a way, it takes the bridging of the East and West to make for art that is truly global and international and in today’s world, artists are much more aware of the issues occurring around the world through accessible travel, the internet, and further globalization. (As a footnote, South Korea is the most wired nation in the world). The exhibition is about recognizing the myriad art practices that occur in contemporary art from South Korea through these few examples and celebrate the individuality of each of the artist presented and further more, is not an attempt to create a category labeled “South Korean Contemporary Art.”

This exhibition has been organized by Jeffrey Lee, Director of Mary Ryan Gallery.

For more information, please contact Jordan Karney at Mary Ryan Gallery at jordan@maryryangallery.com or 212.397.0669