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MIN JUNG-YEON – SHO I

MIN JUNG-YEON

In *Navires en silence* (*Ships in silence*, 2020), as more generally in Min Jung-Yeon's latest works on paper, colour is much more present: there are frail yet undeniable lights. The artist works with a 'letting go', where paths of fluid matter - both free and directed - blends with her extremely minute drawings. As always, the intimate being of the artist is expressing itself. Here, a landscape with a well-hidden crater that shoots out matter, but also a delicate topography, whose "nipple" summit looks exactly like a breast. A sensual, even languorous landscape, maybe? In the right corner, we can see the start of a different type of nature, an organ shape with a shagreen texture that spreads beyond the frame... At the bottom, a blue sea on which one can sail, daydream or simply wait...

Somewhere 2 (2020) is immediately captivating because of the large gesture of the brush stroke that recalls the momentum of the calligraphers and superimposes with the "planet", like a liberation, a new breath. Looking more closely, one notices that this huge movement juxtaposes with an evanescent world made of minuscule ink or pencil spots, in which pastel tones relay each other in the most delicate manner. Are we in front of the volcano of the "pink planet" during space twilight? Or maybe facing a body revealing its internal networks, inviting the eye to explore its depths? The question of the true nature of what is shown is also relevant with *Sommeil* (*Sleep*, 2020), where an orifice with multiple organic growths invites the viewer to leave the surrounding padded world.

If Min Jung-Yeon has often sought to make contraries meet in the subjects she depicts, she now expresses them through the differentiation of the gesture itself: Highly powerful gestures and very precise pencil or ink drawings. On a formal level, drawing inspiration from reality mixes with the tradition of ancient Korean painting and the abstract gesture. **Everything interlocks, planes superimposes, moves; Min Jung-Yeon skillfully plays going back and forth between colour fields, possible perspectives and dynamism, thus creating a visual tension. Multiple scenarios simultaneously play out to narrate with beauty, sensuality and potential drama Min Jung-Yeon's lasting fascination with the world's constant movement, of which we are at the same time actors, witnesses and tributaries.**

background

Born in 1979, Min Jung-Yeon grew up in the South-Korean countryside where, from a very young age, she started observing and immersing herself in the surrounding nature. In 1997, she moved to Seoul to study fine art at Hongik University. After her studies, she felt the need to confront herself with different ways of thinking and left her native country to attend the Fine Arts Academy in Paris (ENSBA), where she studied under Jean-Michel Alberola. She graduated in 2006. The artist has lived in France since and continues to create a body of work nourished by her country, as well as by her life experiences and emotions.

Min Jung-Yeon's work (drawing, painting and installation) has been the subject of many solo exhibitions in international institutions: **Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole** (2012), **State Museum of Oriental Art** (Moscow, 2017), **National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts** (Taichung, 2010), **Musée National des arts asiatiques – Guimet** (Paris, 2019-2020), etc. In 2021, the Centre Culturel Coréen (Paris) will present a solo show of the artist.

In France, her work has been acquired by important public collections, namely those of the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole and the Musée National des arts asiatiques – Guimet.

The artist's work has been the subject of several publications, such as her first monograph *Hibernation*, published in 2009, followed by a catalog of her personal exhibition at the MAMC+ Saint-Etienne, Métropole, *Demander le chemin à mes chaussures* (*Asking my shoes for the way*). An interview with Min-Jung-Yeon is featured in **Contemporary Voices from the Asian and Islamic art worlds** by Olivia Sand (Ed. SKIRA, 2018) and *Beaux-Arts* magazine dedicated a special edition to her work and her recent *Carte blanche* exhibition at the Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet.

Min Jung-Yeon's work was presented in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions of ASIA NOW.

SHOI

This spring, Shoi started a series of drawings inspired by the sanitary crisis and the world it created. Funny, moving sketches: expressing a rebellion, dreams, anxieties – real and imaginary tales. In her naive, expressive and poignant style, she created stories that touch on the personal and the universal. The palette varies. It is vast, Technicolor style, or more restraint, even melancholic. We meet the artist's alter ego again – *the armless and legless woman* – the iconographic character of Shoi's work for the past six years. A voluptuous female body with no head or arms who appeared when the artist was a young mother.

The armless and bodiless woman evolves in other spheres. She flies between planets under the watchful eye of her husband and two children left on the ground in front of the house (*Mom is working*, 2020). Or she is sailing alone on the sea to "find herself", with a picnic and a lamp and shade on board (*To find my own island*, 2020). In *Alone* and *My little boat* (2020), Shoi powerfully displays feelings of solitude and fragility. On the sea, we observe a boat so minuscule that its only passenger – a man – can barely fit and find his balance. *My island* shows a small rock towards which a boat is sailing and in *Some night* (2020), a moment of happiness is depicted: a woman with long black hair is sitting on the roof of a house, on top of a rock, contemplating the night sky and the seven moons with her dog. The moon has always represented the figure of a confidant for Shoi. Sometimes, the armless and legless woman lets loose dancing with her fellow humans while the town is sleeping (*Their party*, 2020), or she is meeting eternity in a circular dance, all in transparency, surrounded by daisies, mountains and two moons (*Dance of eternity*, 2020). *Stop thinking* (2020) expresses the desire to be able to disconnect, to not always be thinking, and *Blue wave* (2020) offers a break with its surface of blue lines undulating infinitely. The perspective changes when one arrives above the clouds (*Moon clouds*, 2020) to come back to reality and civilization with *Me and my pottery* (2020), where the armless and legless woman has literally stepped over a traditional Korean vase placed in front of another vase with a tiger motif and a large dish featuring a landscape. The desire to be freed from a cultural weight takes on a slightly provocative form.

The choice of ceramics to symbolize Korean culture is not a coincidence. Venerated for centuries, ceramics are an important cultural indicator. Shoi has been revisiting this tradition and twisting it in her sculptures for several years in order to turn it into existential stories. Her latest ceramic sculptures, a series of anatomical hearts decorated with different animal skins – zebras, sea slugs and puffer fish – is a work on racism, rejecting others and neglecting nature, where the heart embodies life.

Breathing also shows our vitality. Its essential role inspired Shoi to create the performance *Mes souffles – M'essouffle (My breaths... leave me out of breath)*, which she will present during ASIA NOW. Discussing this work, the artist explains that if she believed for a long time that the brain was in control of her life, experiencing asthma made her realize that reality was in fact contingent on the breath. She works here with her instinct, her "second brain", meaning her lower stomach. **Just like a shaman, Shoi creates a connection with something so fundamental to each being and makes it visible through a repetitive action:** in *hangul molib (absorption)*. The COVID crisis has made *Mes souffles – M'essouffle (My breaths... leave me out of breath)* more relevant than ever.

background

Shoi (born in 1983, South Korea) is a graduate from the ENSBA, Paris, where she studied under Giuseppe Penone and Jean-Luc Vilmouth (2007-2010). As early as 2007, she participated in collective projects such as *Collection printemps/été 2008* at the **Espace Foundation EDF** and *Projet Cafétéria* with Tadashi Kawamata. In 2012, the Galerie Maria Lund hosted her performance *Mes souffles (My breaths)* in the context of the *Nocturne de la FIAC* as well as an ensemble of drawings in the exhibition *12 x 12*. Her first ceramics were presented during the event *3 days in Paris* (2014). In 2016 she participated in the exhibition *Outlining a shelter* and this year in *Summer Thinking* at the Galerie Maria Lund. For **the 130 year-anniversary of the MNAAG-Musée Guimet** (Paris) in 2019, Shoi had the privilege of performing *Mes souffles (My breaths)* inside the museum's historical library.

Shoi's work was featured in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions of ASIA NOW, where it drew the media and the collectors' attention.

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