

4 artists shape future of Korean contemporary art

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The installation of "A Snowflake," a part of a group exhibition by Gim Ik-hyun, Choi Yun, Park Jung-hae and Lee Mi-re and curated by Hyun See-won, is being exhibited through July 2 at Kukje Gallery in downtown Seoul. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

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By Kwon Mee-yoo
meeyoo@ktimes.com

Four young artists — Gim Ik-hyun, Choi Yun, Park Jung-hae and Lee Mi-re — reveal their latest works at a group exhibition at Kukje Gallery in downtown Seoul.

Each year since 2013, the gallery has invited an outside curator to organize a group exhibition of aspiring artists. This year it was Hyun See-won, co-director of Seoul's Audio Visual Pavilion. Hyun majored in Korean language and literature and art history at Ewha Womans University, and earned her master's degree from the Korea National University of Arts.

The independent curator said that when she was asked to organize an exhibition for the white cube space, she focused on her curiosity.

"Instead of picking up just young artists, I tried to find the artworks that I want to observe closely," Hyun said. "I wondered about these four artists' perspectives on the world and wanted to ask them questions."

Hyun's question is restructured in the theme of the exhibit, "A

Snowflake," inspired by British mathematician Ian Stewart's book "What Shape is a Snowflake?" Each snowflake is unique, affected by various conditions, and Hyun juxtaposed the question of process of investigation and time and research to the artists.

The four artists use different mediums to express their ideas. Gim is a photographer, while Park clings to traditional painting. Lee works with sculptures and Choi collects images from the internet.

"These artists are interested in reality and their works reflect reality," Hyun said. "Their works also physically take time to make. I thought they were the right people to answer the questions of medium in art in 2017."

The artworks are displayed in a cinematic way. "At the entrance, Gim and Choi's works act as an outside of the exhibition, showcasing reality visible in their works," Hyun said. "The back room is more surreal, featuring Park's paintings and Lee's sculptures."

The artists also took part in designing the space. Painter Park said: "The

flow of human traffic can also tell stories. We decided which artwork will go where, as if editing a film and assigning scenes."

Choi Yun's works are related to nature and how images are fabricated and the crafted image tricks the cognitive system. "Liquid Crystal Bubble Future Display" consists of lenticular images collected from the web.

"These lenticular images amazed me when I was a child, but the novelty soon wore off and these became old-fashioned," Choi said. "I collected images to throw the question of how people objectify nature through systematically collected images."

Gim's "Raptured" series deals with the time and space of the 1990s, when society was in confusion with issues such as eschatology, the new millennium and accidents, including the collapse of the Sampoong Department Store.

Instead of taking photos, Gim created a collage of rendered images of an apartment complex as evidence of the time.

Park's paintings might look traditional, but her thoughts behind the

canvas are modern.

"I try to find clues for phenomena," Park said. "For me, landscape is a kind of virtual reality and my paintings are the result of my attempt to bring the landscape to the surface. It's a kind of desert of the real, and the particles of the acrylic paint are like grains of sand in the desert."

Lee's sculptures are intuitive as she renders concepts such as hysteria, elegance and catharsis into them.

"I am interested in making things with my hands," Lee said. "I am fascinated by the energy coming from 3D objects and the poetic metaphor of materials. Catharsis is expressed through heavy cement, while hysteria is sharp and pointed like aluminum."

Hyun said: "Artists are people who make their own principles based on definite, subjective and poetic imaginations. I want the art of today to foresee the future and these artists are paving their own ways."

The exhibit runs through July 2. Admission is free. For more information, visit kukjegallery.com or call (02) 735-8449.