

Haegue Yang embarks on a surreal multi-sensory space odyssey in Seoul

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Kukje Gallery is virtually unrecognisable after undergoing a bold transformation by the Korean artist



Installation view of Haegue Yang's solo exhibition 'When The Year 2000 Comes' at Kukje Gallery K3, Seoul. *Photography: Chunho An. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery*

They say art is abstract. But wait until they see the works of Haegue Yang. Even this broad term doesn't fully encapsulate the creations of the Korean artist, who is taking abstractionism to a whole new level. Drawing from historical references, personal experience and other sources of inspiration, she weaves them into multi-sensory art experience involving the visual, auditory and tactile.

Yang's recently opened solo exhibition 'When The Year 2000 Comes', her first at Kukje Gallery in Seoul and her fourth in Korea, brings abstractionism sans logic or consistency to its pinnacle. The Seoul and Berlin-based artist typically refers to a 'piece' as a 'body of work', but this exhibition is full of 'elements' that cannot be declared as 'pieces' which, she says, is what differentiates this from her other shows.

When visitors step into the K3 space of Kukje Gallery, they are greeted with the optimistic lyrics of AD 2000 by Hae-kyung Min, a Korean singer famous in the 1980s: 'When the year 2000 comes, we will head to outer space. We will climb on a rocket and fly among the stars. There will be no war.' The song wasn't a favourite of Yang's but one day, she became conscious of its words. 'I'm surprised why I'm struck by the lyrics of this song,' says Yang. 'Time was folded in the song, time as a concept – casual but significant in social, political factors.'



Artist Haegue Yang. *Portrait: Chunho An*. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

Paradoxical to the environment when the song was released in 1982 – Korea was still under military dictatorship then – the song wishfully dreams of a peaceful, utopian future in the year 2000. Similarly, the sound of birds chirping, recorded during the historic Inter-Korean Summit between the North and South Korean leaders in 2018, also contrast with the tense political environment at the time.

While the acoustic elements are reflective of time and space, the visual and tactile details juggle seemingly disparate narratives. Adjacent to the entrance hangs a collective artwork, *Treasure Ship* (c 1977), painted by Yang and her two younger brothers and one of the few pieces that survived from their childhood. The four walls of the interior of the gallery are covered with wallpaper created in collaboration with German graphic designer Manuel Raeder – an eclectic arrangement of motifs such as garlic and onions, rainbows and lightning, surgical robots and straws and bells.



Photography: Chunho An. Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

The floor is plastered with holographic tape in grid-form – alluding to the Korean chess game of *janggi* – sprawling across the length of the gallery and up the ceiling, while shiny gym balls are dotted throughout for visitors to touch and sit on. Earthly scents infiltrate the space while dried ice creates a mystic carpet of fog. There are also works that may be recognisable to those who are familiar with Yang. The Venetian blind is revisited with added dynamics requiring two people to move the piece around. In opposing corners of the gallery, the artist's *Sonic Gym* sculptures are suspended from the ceiling, this time equipped with new elements such as handles or artificial straw. The sound generated from rotating them manually references rituals across different cultures.

Yang's exhibition will be supplemented by additional programming including flying soccer ball-shaped drones, performances of Korean composer Isang Yun's *Images* (1968), and face painting sessions. 'When the Year 2000 Comes' is a synthesis of elements that folds time and space, the personal and the political. §



Sonic Gym Map, 2019, by Haegue Yang, powder-coated stainless steel frame, powder-coated mesh, powder-coated handles, steel wire rope, black brass and nickel plated bells, metal rings. Photography: Studio Haegue Yang. Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery



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INFORMATION

'When The Year 2000 Comes', 3 September – 17 November, Kukje Gallery.
kukjegallery.com

ADDRESS

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