

Kyungah Ham
Abstract Weave / Morris Louis Untitled A
 2014, North Korean machine embroidery, collected world internet news articles, middle man, anxiety, censorship, tassel, wooden frame
 245(h) x 292 cm
 The image used in this painting are derived from Morris Louis' postmodern paintings and the article and metaphorical words are adopted from mass media.



Written by Minjin Chae // Translated into Chinese by Bernard Yeung // Images courtesy of Kukje Gallery

Phantom Footsteps
 4. June – 5. July, 2015
 Kukje Gallery K2&K3

exhibition
 005

PHANTOM FOOTSTEPS KYUNGAH HAM'S SOLO SHOW

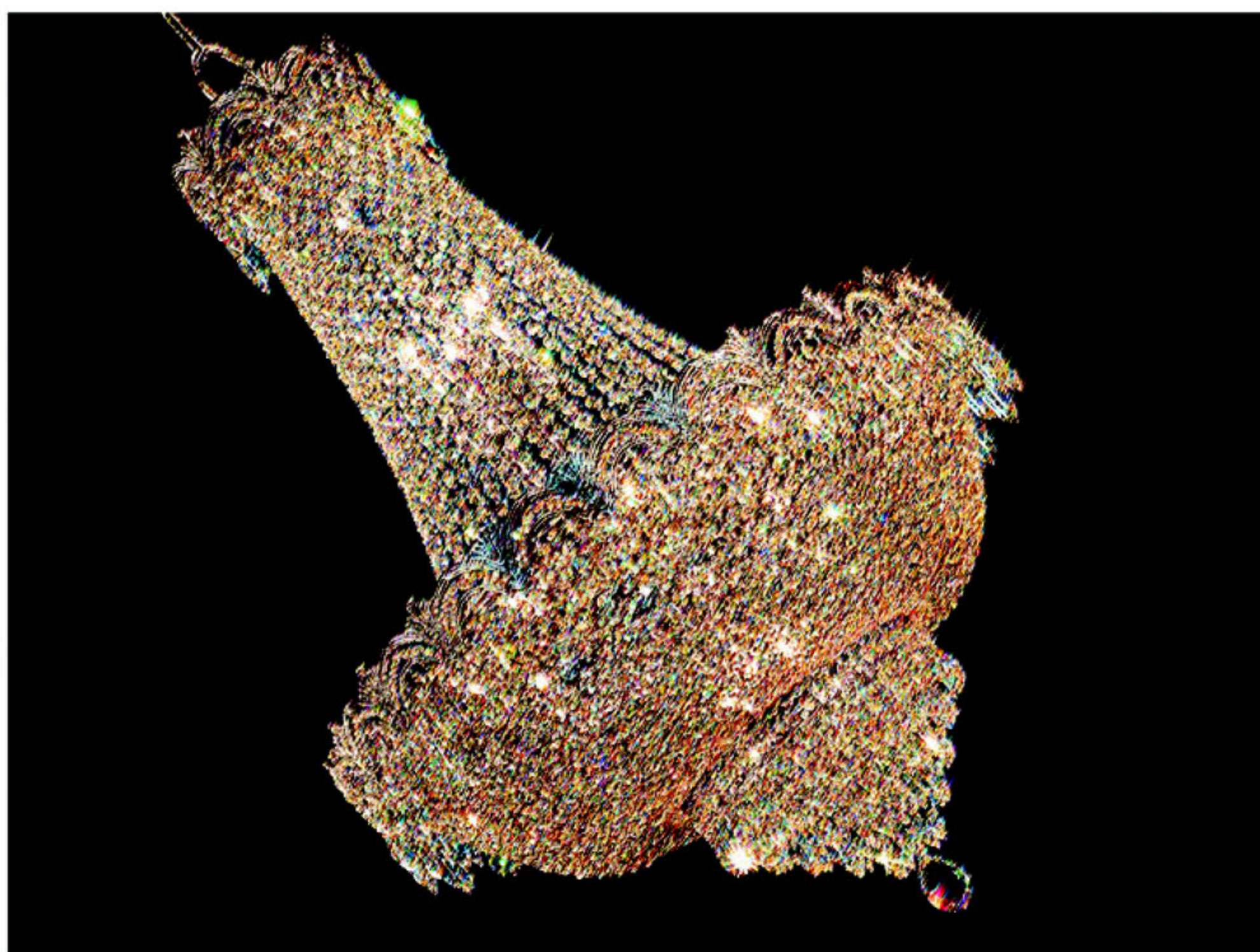
咸京我個展 《幻影足跡》

Known as dealing with a variety of political and social issues of Korea as a subject of the works, Kyungah Ham (b. 1966, Seoul, Korea)'s solo exhibition, 'Phantom Footsteps', will run from Kukje Gallery in Seoul, Korea. This is her first solo show at Kukje gallery and one of the largest solo exhibitions held by a commercial gallery. A wide range of her new large-scale embroidery works will be featured in this exhibition including In *Abstract Weave / Morris Louis* series recently presented in the 10th anniversary show at the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, and 'What You See is the Unseen / Chandeliers for Five Cities'.

Kyungah Ham has explored and blended various media, sometimes with her paintings incorporated into installation, and more recently with embroidery into her canvases. Ham deals with the politically sensitive subjects such as the division of the Korean peninsula, the dynamics of war and government propaganda. Combining social and political phenomenon with her personal memories, Ham conveys her message on political and social issues through her poetic works with fascinating and splendid images. Her works play a role as a mirror to reflect contemporary Korean society rather than criticising social problems of today. Since 2008, Ham has applied embroidery into her paintings and she presented a hand embroidered painting series, *Such Games*, illustrating the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the first time at the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in 2009. After making a successful debut of the new series, she devised a unique fabrication process by illegally collaborating with artisans in North Korea. The process made the North Korean artisans exposed to restricted information from the outside world. By letting them copy her drawing and unknowingly participate in the political matter, Ham was not only able to communicate with the people in the isolated country but also make Koreans face the reality of national division.

Ham's new embroidery painting series unveiled in this exhibition is understood in the same context. The images used in her paintings shown at K2 are derived from Morris Louis' postmodern paintings and the article and metaphorical words are adopted from mass media. Therefore, her visual language serves as an intersection between historical events and personal experiences and involves a critical opinion on Korean contemporary culture. Ham has explored the consequences when historic events have affected personal experience. Ham tries to reclaim long-ignored history, letting the viewers confront the historic facts.

Kyungah Ham
What you see is the unseen / Chandeliers for Five Cities 04
2013-2014, North Korean hand embroidery
on silk, middle man, anxiety, censorship,
wooden frame, 1800hrs/2people
267 x 356 cm
This series of paintings vividly portrays a
gigantic chandelier from the picture taken
at the Potsdam Declaration on July 26, 1945,
resulting in the division of the Korean penin-
sula following the Second World War.



Seoul

The highlight in this show is five new embroidery works from a new series titled *What You See is the Unseen / Chandeliers for Five Cities*, installed in K3 of the gallery. This series of paintings vividly portrays a gigantic chandelier from the picture taken at the Potsdam Declaration on July 26, 1945, resulting in the division of the Korean peninsula following the Second World War. The image of a chandelier as a witness to such a tragic event of forced division by superpowers was embroidered by North Korean women. This beautiful and splendid image implies the tensions and conflicts between the North and South divided by opposing ideologies. Ham's embroidery conceals and reveals information at the same time like a coded language. According to the artist's note, the image was inspired by a North Korean boy whose face was momentarily revealed during a propaganda performance. In the video documentation the performers were using hand held cards to illustrate a ginormous pistol in perfect synchronicity, and for a brief moment a young boy peaked his head out from behind the card. Ham encountered the moment by chance and interpreted it as a powerful symbol of the faceless bureaucracy. The boy was no more than one pixel of the big pistol image. For Ham, recreating this moment into her work is just like describing the tragedy that the Korean Peninsula has been through.

This solo show will give the viewers experience to explore Ham's poetic works dealing with the subjects of the national identity and ideology. Especially her new works will offer the opportunity to view the world from another angle and think about how a life has formed within the context of the society.

以運用韓國多種政治社會議題創作的咸京我（1966年生於韓國首爾）在首爾的國際畫廊舉辦個人展覽。這是她第一次在該畫廊舉辦個展，而且是以商業畫廊來說最大型的個展之一。她的多個大型刺繡作品將會展出，包括剛在Leeum三星美術館的10周年展和《你看到的是看不到的/五個城市的吊燈》展出的《In Abstract Weave / Morris Louis》。

咸京我探索並融合了不同的媒介，有時候將她的畫作融入裝置，較近期就將刺繡加進畫布裡。咸京我處理政治敏感的題材，如朝鮮半島、戰爭的動力和政府宣傳，將社會和政府現象結合她的個人回憶，透過迷人華麗的圖像在滿有詩意的作品傳遞她對政治和社會議題的看法。

2008年咸京我在她的畫作中運用刺繡，2009年在第六屆亞太當代藝術三年展初次展出刺繡的畫作系列《這般的遊戲》，當中描繪廣島和長崎的原子彈爆炸。成功展出這個新系列的作品之後，她非法地與北韓的工匠合作，發展了一套獨特的製造方法，從而令北韓的工匠接觸到受限制的外來資訊。讓工匠複製她的畫作和不知不覺地參與了政治活動，不但令咸京我與與世隔絕國家的人民溝通，還使韓國人面對國家分裂的現實。

咸京我在今次展覽首次展示的新刺繡畫系列擁有同樣的背景。在K2畫廊展出的畫作中的圖像由Morris Louis的後現代繪畫和取自大眾傳媒的文章與比喻演化而來。因此，她的視覺語言是歷史事件與個人經歷的交叉點，並帶有對韓國當代文化的批判意見。咸京我探索了歷史事件影響個人經驗的後果，嘗試重拾遺忘已久的歷史，讓觀眾面對歷史事實。

這個展覽的亮點是在K3畫廊《你看到的是看不到的/五個城市的吊燈》系列的五件新刺繡作品。這系列的畫作鮮明地描繪一盞取自一張導致朝鮮半島在二次世界大戰後分裂1945年7月26日《波茨坦公告》照片的吊燈，一盞見證超級大國強行分裂國家慘痛歷史的吊燈的圖像由北韓的女人繡成。這個漂亮華麗的圖像暗示著由對立意識形態分開的南、北之間的緊張和矛盾。咸京我的刺繡如同用密碼寫成的語言般同時隱藏和揭露資訊，根據藝術家的筆記，用這圖像是受一個在宣傳表演時面容曇花一現的北韓男孩啟發。在記錄片中，表演者用手中的紙牌和完美的同步性演繹一支巨大的手槍，一個男孩短暫地從紙牌後突出頭來，咸京我偶然看到這一刻而將它看成不通人情的官僚主義，那個男孩不過是那巨大手槍圖像中的一點。對咸京我來說，在作品中重現這一幕就好像描述朝鮮半島所經歷的慘劇一樣。

這個個展會讓觀眾窺探咸京我作品怎樣處理國家身份和意識形態的問題，特別是她的新作提供另一個觀看世界的角度和思考生命如何在社會中形成的機會。