

Return to Intimacy: Dream, Imagination and The Moment of Beauty

Jeong-ok Jeon (Curator)

'Return to Intimacy' is an exhibition that celebrates the tenth anniversary of JeOn Art Booth in Bangkok, Thailand. It also marks the fourth member showing of its workshop program, an artists' learning circle for East Asian brush painting. The exhibition features the work of its twelve member artists, the director of the program and seven invited artists whose diverse artistic disciplines range from painting and print, to photography and ceramics. For the member artists, it is a chance to reassess their work and evaluate a decade of artistic growth and maturity. The show allows the invited artists to encounter different artistic practices and concurrently encourages the workshop's members to further develop their artistry.

The works in this exhibition deal with themes around art and life, and include treatments of imaginary landscapes, childhood memory, cultural identity and nature. They focus on presenting the artist's inner voice (personal story) and his/her surroundings (everyday life or nature) through craftsmanship and artistic sentiment. As such, the exhibition accentuates the act of painting and crafting as a way to embody a part of the artist's life, instead of a conceptual or spiritual means of expression. The works capture a certain integrity and power of imagination and respond to a viewer's sensitivity in a serene manner.

It's a "Lotus" that conceals the miracle of beauty since it grows until withers away. It has a philosophy and symbolizes purity and merit.

Boonpan Wongpakdee

Throughout history, nature has given artists an everlasting impulse and reason for their creations. By exploring and interacting with objects in nature, artists search for its meaning and relation to human beings. For **Boonpan Wongpakdee** (p.20), well known for his lotus paintings, the lotus is not only a subject: the blossom represents his faith in nature. In his representation of the lotus, Wongpakdee does not merely depict a real lotus as it is, but rather, strives to reach out to its *nature* beyond its phenomenon. Likewise, in **Jittima Sa-ngeamsunthron** (p.16)'s photography, the artist's attitude toward a natural object invokes the object's potentiality and its sense of being. The images of wild plants and flowers, captured in her picturesque photographs, suggest a sense of "seeing oneself seeing," which in turn reveals a tension between the objects (plants and flowers) and observers (artist and viewer).

By fusing multiple differentiated image-streams into one, I attempt to deal with the uneasy liminal quality of being between two cultures.

Jarrett Min Davis

The human and nature theme is expanded into the pursuit of one's identity in different cultures, and is evident in the works of **Jarrett Min Davis** (p.6) and **Gi-ok Jeon** (p.8). Despite their divergent techniques, they both search for their footing in their blend of cultures. **Jarrett Min Davis'** painting reflects the artist's perplexed sense of self as a Korean adoptee in America in search of his true identity by juxtaposing his Korean ethnicity and cultural identity, to Western features. In a self-portrait littered with wooden pillars of traditional Korean architecture, demolished Western stone architecture, exotic birds and a Native American headdress, the

overall landscape seems to express his puzzled state of mind on the brink of explosion. In a more straightforward fashion, **Gi-ok Jeon**, a Korean immigrant to Thailand, juxtaposes two different cultures, Korean and Thai, by fusing traditional Thai fabrics, known as '*Patoong*,' with traditional Korean (East Asian) brush painting. The fusion between the two cultures is further culminated in the image of her mixed-race daughter wearing various patterned *patoong* in the paintings.

I've never pictured any of my work in my brain. Rather, it's my feeling that is transferred right from my brain to my work. My body is only the medium.

Jitti Jumnianwai

Jitti Jumnianwai (p.10) and **Pinnuch Pinchinda** (p.14), with their fairy-tale-like imaginations, help viewers escape the mundane. Enormously repetitive images of spaceships and robots, **Jitti Jumnianwai**'s favorite childhood toys, allude to a childhood dream and fantasy of a universe where no time and boundaries exist. For him, the spaceship and the robot are figurative inspiration that makes the impossible possible as a creator. While his objects represent a boy's memory of the concept of abstract space, **Pinnuch Pinchinda** expresses a girl's dream world in a more concrete approach. In her picture, Pinchinda portrays such objects as a girl, flowers, clouds and a house in exuberant, vivid colors. A house in her picture implies a sweet home which a young girl dreams of. Likewise, **Krisaya Luenganantakul** (p.12) reveals femininity in the form of a house intricately decorated with splendid flowers. For her, womanhood, the womb and the house are interrelated in the sense that they symbolize a care-giver, the origin of life and a place of nurturing respectively. **Kitikong Tilokwattanotai** (p.18) however, celebrates the moment of happiness in his life with geometric forms and vibrant colors, giving the picture a liveliness and dynamism.

It is these very attributes of tenderness, patience, forgiveness, tolerance, and love that make females the universal procurers and care providers for every family.

Krisaya Luenganantakul

Although not all twelve members are formally-trained professional artists, they share a passion for creation and exceptional interest in East Asian brush painting, specifically in the Korean art tradition. Through a collective effort, and years of practice, they have discovered their own sense and style of art-making. In this exhibition, each member artist pursues various themes that cover paintings of the Buddha, flowers and birds, created in distinctive styles that range from traditional landscape, abstract painting, appropriation of Western painting, and decorative painting.

My beautiful moment is whenever I am with art.

Sasivimol Sontitham

Concentrating on the artistic tradition of Eastern landscape painting, **Suchada Tunlayapornchoti** (p.41)'s work portrays an idyllic scene of a small village in Southern China. The realistic yet unadorned way of her expression is supported by the use of perspective, light,

shade and void space. While Tunlayapornchoti's painting is based on her memory of place, **Helena Lee** (p.36)'s landscape is a direct appropriation of Western masterpieces, depicting modern cityscapes and the image of Jesus, creating a unique fusion between Western attributes and Eastern media. On the other hand, the spontaneous quality of **Sasivimol Sontitham** (p.40)'s abstract painting series seems to lead the viewer to search for the essential form of Eastern landscape painting.

**Because a true beautiful moment happens in short period of a time,
it seems much more precious.**

Sunny Park

Some of the artists suggest the possibility of various interpretations in regards to 'Dao (道),' meaning a path or a truth. The images of natural paths in the paintings by **In-Suk Park** (p.38) and **Sunny Park** (p.39), despite their similar compositions, differ from each other quite tremendously. Wandering in the foggy paths in In-Suk Park's painting, where life's unknowns are as thick as the fogs that hover over the destination, one could continue walking and arrive in a Sunny Park's canvas, where surreal paths are decoratively stitched. The unknown destination through these paths seem to suggest not only a way of possibility but also a way to reach the deep awareness of Buddha, a theme that is elaborately represented in the painting of **Min-Hee Jeon** (p.31). Both **Young-Ai Kim** (p.34) and **Sabina Kim** (p.33) capture blossoming lotus flowers on their canvas, a symbol of the world of Buddha and the belief of Buddhists.

**I again find myself being absorbed into the arts that portray where I
come from.**

Kyung-Ae Koo

**Thai Benjarong Ceramic, is a detailed and sophisticated work of beauty.
Ae-Ja Chun**

The works of other artists are likewise rich with symbolism. Paying special attention to the tradition of '*Minhwa*' (Korean folk painting), **Kyung-Ae Koo** (p.35) presents a painting of flowers and birds. A pair of birds, resting on a rock, symbolizes love and harmony between spouses. **Tae-Soon Jeong** (p.32) introduces her own distinctive experimentation of *Minhwa* by placing diverse and colorful butterfly specimens and orchestrating them with beads on her canvas, creating an exuberance which dazzles the viewer. **Young-Hwa Lee** (p.37)'s painting of fishes and flowers further pushes traditional *Minhwa* in terms of its style, color, composition and needle work. In a similar vein, **Ae-Ja Chun** (p.30)'s painting blends *Minhwa* with traditional Thai ceramic '*Benjarong*' pieces that depict the elephant, a Thai symbol of glory and courage. Blending a Korean form of expression with Thai symbols and objects, Chun's painting seems to reflect her desire to bridge these two different cultures.

The artists in this exhibition search for inspiration from their lives complete with the contextual layers that surround it. They value their experience of images, sounds and impressions encountered in each living moment, and employ them in their art. Art and life are intimately associated and the artists sublimate dream and imagination in their art through everyday experiences. It is not to say that there is an art world which exists independently of the world of

our experience, but that our experience of seeing, hearing and feeling can form the origin of art and become a driving force of creation. The beautiful moment emerges when art and life become one.

Jeong-ok Jeon is the founder and director of Project Andini, an independent art collective dedicated to fostering better communication and interconnectedness between artists and the public through creative programs, curated contemporary art displays, online video screenings, and critical writings and forums. She holds MFA in Fibers from Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, GA (2001), BFA in Fiber Arts from Ewha Womans University in Seoul (1997), and is currently pursuing her MA in Philosophy at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA (2011). In all her projects, she pays special attention to a collaboration process and effort from across the various artistic disciplines and media; as such, she included the participants from a variety of cultural and art organizations, art galleries, artists, and individuals. She recently co-curated a site-specific exhibition called *Puzzling (a) Space* at the Hillyer Art Space in Washington, DC in 2010, which was selected as “gallery opening of the week” and one of the “best events this weekend in the DC area” by the Washington Post. She has also curated and organized other numerous exhibitions, open studios, artist talks, and cultural events presented by US ASEAN Film & Photography Festival (DC), i, Booth Art Gallery & Studio (Bangkok), SSamzie Space (Seoul), and Korean Pavilion Exhibition of the 50th Venice Biennale (Venice). www.projectandini.org / jeongok.jeon@projectandini.org