

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Park Chan-kyong Solo Exhibition 安寧 Farewell

Press Conference: May 25 (Thurs.), 2017, 11AM at Kukje Gallery K2

Exhibition Dates: May 25 – July 2, 2017

Venue: 1F & 2F of Kukje Gallery K2

Kukje Gallery is pleased to announce 安寧 Farewell, a solo exhibition of Park Chan-kyong, open from May 25 to July 2. The title 安寧 Farewell embodies the complex Korean term “*annyeong*” used for greeting, evoking both its meaning as goodwill on meeting, and its use when parting.

Park’s first solo exhibition in Korea in five years, 安寧 Farewell will showcase thirteen new works in Kukje Gallery’s K2 space. Major artworks in the exhibition include: *Citizen’s Forest* (2016), a three-channel video-audio work that poignantly frames the intense turbulence during Korea’s rapid modernization including contemporary historical events such as the recent Sewol Ferry Disaster in 2014. Park’s work powerfully laments the many nameless lives lost in pursuit of progress during this period. This concern can be seen in two other major works: *Small Art History* (2014/2017), where Park uses appropriated images from art history to collage his own subjective version, illustrating the limits of historical narrative within the institutional framework of Korea and *Way to the Seung-ga Temple* (2017), a multichannel slide projection of photographs that is a sequel to *Citizen’s Forest* and *Small Art History*. 安寧 Farewell will also include *Bright Stars* (2017) and *Seven Stars* (2017), new object series that reinterpret the cosmology of folk religion and tradition within contemporary Korean culture.

Before we try to determine the rights and wrongs or the faults in modernity, it is necessary to relativize modernity itself. We need to evaluate it from a distance. It would be difficult to envisage a new society or the arts if we don’t defamiliarize ourselves from modernity by extricating ourselves from it, instead of remaining immersed within.

– Excerpt from artist interview

Citizen’s Forest, one of the centerpieces of the exhibition, is inspired by the painter Oh Yoon’s (1946-1986) incomplete work *The Lemures* as well as Kim Soo-young’s (1921-1968) celebrated poem *Colossal Roots*. The three-channel video-audio work captures Park’s response to these two works and is an allegory of modern and contemporary Korea, capturing the artist’s lament over the countless nameless lives lost in the tragic chaos of Korea’s modernization. These include the Donghak Peasant Revolution (1894), the Korean War (1950-1953), the Gwangju Uprising (1980), and the recent Sewol Ferry Disaster (2014). Park has created a site to solemnly mourn the wandering spirits of those who perished in these many violent episodes, and who have yet to find consolation. The artist invites the audience to unwittingly participate in a ceremony to pray for peace of these spirits. According to Park, “we still live in a postcolonial culture—the Sewol Ferry Disaster is a consequence utterly wrought by the limits of modernity we have yet to overcome.”

In ***Small Art History***, Park has written an embittered yet farcical narrative detailing the postcolonial art institutions of Korea and across Asia. Instead of a chronology or delineating the distinction between the East and the West, the artist has collaged artworks from across all epochs and regions using a thoroughly subjective approach, exploring both temporal and regional axes, notions of aesthetics of the sublime, art museums, art and texts on art and East Asian culture and politics. Park's "small art history" is based on his assertion of the limits of postcolonial modernity in Korea, which renders an autonomous art historical narrative impossible. However, instead of critiquing the dominant art history, Park questions how, "We can each spin an art history of our own." Park asserts that, "Though it may be sloppy, problematic and weak, wouldn't art history become more interesting if it were personal, instead of an established absolute?" *Small Art History* does not merely suggest a different brand of art history, it is an illustration of the infinite ways art history can unfold as conveyed through an imaginative and potent rearrangement of artwork images and texts.

Way to the Seung-ga Temple, a new work that premieres in the exhibition, is a sequel to *Citizen's Forest* and *Small Art History*. Shown in a choreographed series of projected slides, it captures the road to the Seung-ga Temple on Bukhan Mountain, where *Citizen's Forest* was filmed. The images in the slide projection oscillate between "kitsch" and "*hwaeom* (majestic splendor)," framing a photographic essay describing a uniquely Korean sentimentality. Also featured in K2 will be *Bright Stars* and *Seven Stars*, two new objects created for the exhibition. These works show the artist's attempt to approach "tradition" at its heart, something often distorted by the commonly understood term "traditional culture." Park's definition of tradition argues that it must exist through "physical memory" or in living fragments rather than as a style or trope that suggests the termination of the said tradition. The artist has labeled this contemporary fragmented tradition "tradition-reality."

For over twenty years Park Chan-kyong's work has pushed the boundaries of artistic discourse in Korea. Today, his unique voice is acknowledged both domestically and internationally—due in large part because of his prescient ability to raise vital issues concerning contemporary Korean identity. *Citizen's Forest* in particular, though produced in 2016, is being shown in Korea for the first time this year at Kukje Gallery. It is a work that, like many in Park's career, uncannily engages Korea's unique history, mirroring poignant and essential themes that face the nation.

Park Chan-kyong (b. 1965) graduated from Seoul National University in 1988 with a BFA in Painting, later receiving an MFA in Photography and Media at the California Institute of the Arts in 1995. Park served as the Artistic Director of SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul in 2014, actively partaking in the curatorial aspect of the arts to complement his practice. Significant works include *Black Box: Memory of the Cold War Images* (1997), *SETS* (2000), *Power Passage* (2004), *Flying* (2005), *Sindoan* (2008), and the feature-length film *Manshin* (2013).

Park Chan-kyong first became known as an art critic in the 1990s. His first major exhibition as a visual artist was in 1997 *Black Box: Memory of the Cold War Images* at the Kumho Museum of Art. In it he launched his career as an artist. As one of the foremost contemporary artists in Korea, Park's work frames modern and contemporary Korean history, engaging complex socio-political subjects including the Cold War, the conflict between the two Koreas, folk religion, and the (re)construction of history. His multi-media works contemplate Korean society, grappling with Korea's rapid socioeconomic progress that bypassed necessary postwar reflection and psychological healing.

Park has exhibited at major domestic and international venues Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (2017), Taipei Biennial (2016), Anyang Public Art Project (2016), Iniva in London (2015), Art Sonje Center (2013) and Atelier Hermès in Seoul (2008, 2012), Gwangju Biennale (2006), SSamzie Space in Seoul (2005), Frankfurter Kunstverein (2005), and De Appel in Amsterdam (2003), among many others. He was awarded the Hermès Korea Art Award in 2004, and the Golden Bear for best short film at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2011 for *Night Fishing*, which he co-directed with the film Director Park Chan-wook. Park's works are in the permanent collections of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; KADIST Art Foundation, Paris and San Francisco; Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes, France; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; Seoul Museum of Art; Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan; and Art Sonje Center.

Park's video installation, *Citizen's Forest* (2016), was selected for exhibition at this year's Unlimited sector at Art Basel 2017 in June.

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Citizen's Forest

2016

Video (b&w), ambisonic 3D sound

26 min 38 sec

3 channel video

Courtesy of Art Sonje Center and Kukje Gallery

Acknowledgement to Taipei Biennial 2016

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Bright Stars 5 (back)

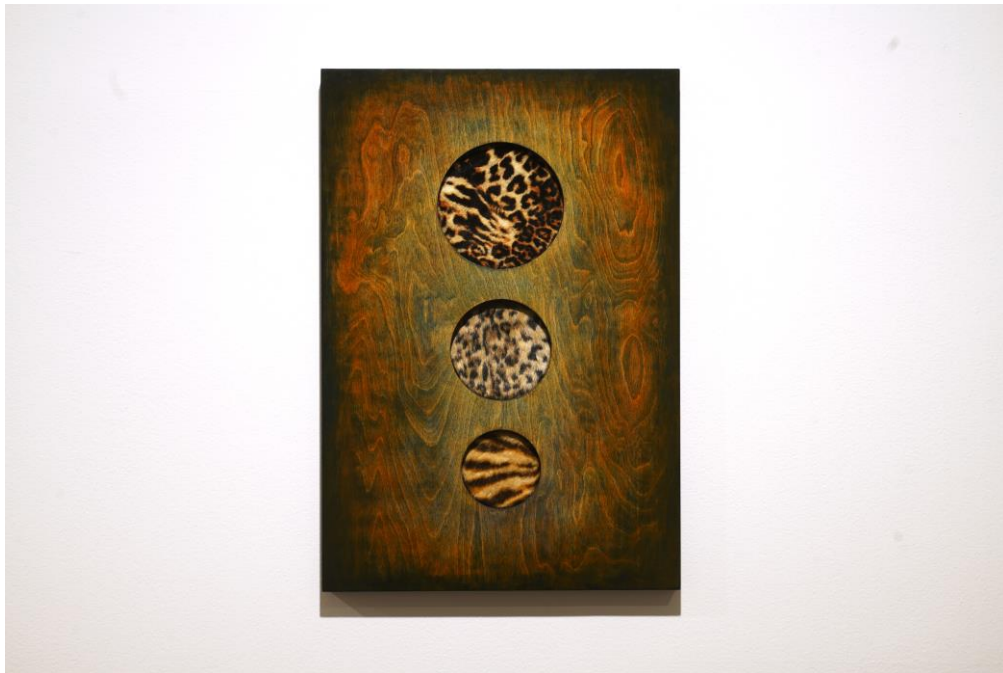
In collaboration with Sangdon Kim

2017

Myeongdu (shaman implement used as a spirit mirror), dancheong (traditional multicolored pigments) on a birch plate
44 x 66.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Bright Stars 6

In collaboration with Sangdon Kim

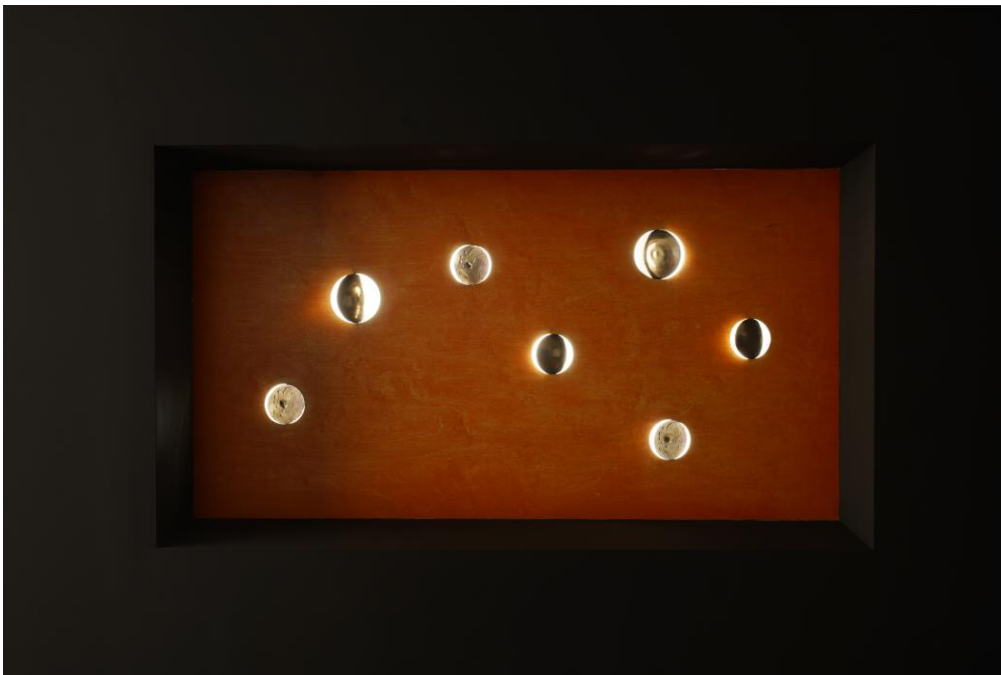
2017

Fake tiger skin, dancheong (traditional multicolored pigments) on a birch plate

78.5 x 54 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Seven Stars (above: front, below: back)
2017

Myeongdu (shaman implement used as a spirit mirror), dancheong (traditional multicolored pigments) on a birch plate
108 x 200 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery
Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Way to the Seung-ga Temple
2017

Multichannel slide projection in loop
Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery
Image provided by Kukje Gallery