

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Hong Seung-Hye Solo Exhibition *Over the Layers II* at Kukje Gallery

Press Conference: February 9 (Thurs.), 2023, 11am at Kukje Gallery K1

Exhibition Dates: February 9 – March 19, 2023

Venue: Kukje Gallery K1, K3

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *Over the Layers II*, a solo exhibition of Hong Seung-Hye from February 9 to March 19, 2023. Hong has produced multimedia works using computer design software since 1997, starting with Microsoft Paint—a simple graphic program included with every Microsoft Windows—and eventually adopting Adobe Photoshop as her main tool. Employing these programs allowed her to continuously expand her vocabulary of pixels as she appropriated visual forms and graphic rules that reflect the popular landscape. For Hong, the closed systems of digital programs have allowed her to both frame her design methodology and freely proliferate her minimal forms, while developing a practice wherein she retraces and reflects on past works reusing elements as part of her artistic practice. It is this technique of recollection that underlined her last exhibition, *Reminiscence*, offering a direct clue as to her approach to memory and how we relate to shared iconography. In this endless process of recollection, past works become the material upon which new layers are built, as the passage of time becomes Hong's most tangible fixation.

Since her solo exhibition *Organic Geometry* (1997) at Kukje Gallery, Hong has focused her attention on operating physical spaces based on networks of computer pixels. The upcoming exhibition is conceived as a sequel to *Over the Layers* (Kukje Gallery, 2004), an exhibition in which Hong aimed to break from the two-dimensional plane and capture the additional layers of space and time. Adopting the vector grammar of Illustrator for the first time, in addition to the raster-based graphics of Photoshop, Hong once again pushes her work into new dimensions. In this follow up to the first *Over the Layers*, using vectors allowed her to explore scale without any fear of pixilation and further to use color, freed from the limitations of the rectangular pixel. The work in *Over the Layers II* guides the viewers to the world beyond the rainbow formed by the artist's explosively multiplied layers.

Describing her work as "organic geometry," Hong readily acknowledges the contradiction inherent in the expression—placing "organic," an adjective referring to the changing conditions of movement, in front of "geometry," a fundamentally stable state of a stalled moment. The artist embraces this contradiction, using her familiarity of digital tools to explore new systems of order according to the exhibition environment. Accepting contradiction as the only way to overcome it, Hong embraces radical simplicity in her forms; seeing the power of art to influence human thought and its power to free the human mind, organic geometry becomes the fundamental stance on art and even an ethic for the artist. In light of this the title of the exhibition, inspired by the theme song of Victor Fleming's film *Wizard of Oz* (1939) "Over the Rainbow," not only evokes the multiple layers that make up the rainbow, but serves as prelude to the journey of chasing the "happy little bluebirds [that] fly beyond the rainbow."

Installed across K1 and K3, the exhibition demonstrates Hong's broad-reaching analysis of visual logic through a diverse range of language systems: from wall paintings, sculptures, sounds, to light works. Wall paintings have often functioned as a kind of "Hong Seung-Hye's Readymade," a technique that efficiently transforms space and at the same time grafts painting into actual architecture. For this exhibition, Hong dedicates the walls of K1 to Henri Matisse. In *The Lemon Cutout (Le Citron découpé/Hommage à Matisse)* and *The Sky Cutout (Le ciel découpé/Hommage à Matisse)*, works in which the corners of each wall are cut out, she honors Matisse's famous papier découpé made at the end of his life.

The front gallery of K1 presents an installation focused on two-dimensional works, showcasing Hong's training process of learning the various tools of Adobe Illustrator, which the artist started learning for this exhibition. Consisting of drawings of stars, flowers, and ovals, the viewer gets a sense of Hong's now

liberating use of color and playful use of shape. Meanwhile in the rear gallery of K1, the flat images gain three-dimensionality. From *A Carrot*, a sculptural self-portrait based on Hong's childhood nickname to *Modern Times*, a wall sculpture expressing the love of machines, and numerous star-inspired-objects that reveal the artist's fascination with the sky and the universe, the room presents an array of the artist's lexicon sculpted and scattered throughout the space.

Art critic Hwang In has written of the contradiction of organic geometry, that it rests on Hong's "own unique process of obtaining a vital space that is highly adaptable," and further that it "proliferates and cultivates by giving a slightly unstable order to a minimal form or space that is formed rather than focusing on the reduction of the space." Following this logic of Hong's "space cultivation," the rear gallery of K1 presents playfully placed objects that are not only so-called fine art sculptures, but also objects that push the boundaries of design and art, including tables and lighting fixtures.

Installed in K3, all the artist's formal and conceptual exercises join into one holistic narrative. A ball of pictogram dolls accompanied by sound and projections sits on a stage embellished with colorful flowers.

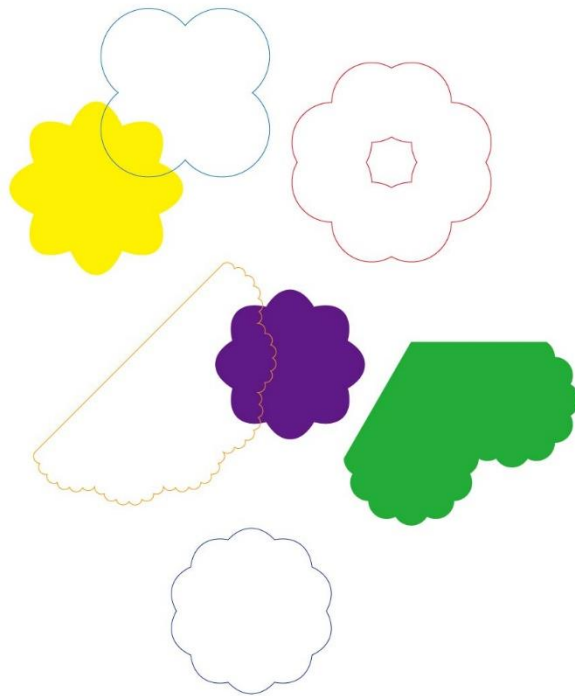
Having been focused on the grid since 1997, Hong professed in an interview back in 2009, that she is "researching for ways to break from the grid." Little by little, Hong pushed beyond the quadrangular frame, such as when she manipulated the axis of the grid to appear diagonal in real space through her sculptural works. In this exhibition made in recollection of her childhood memories, Hong, at last, seeks another freedom.

In a note written in 1997 as she first started producing images with computers, the artist wrote keywords such as "the habitat of the tales," "Hansel and Gretel, house of candy," and "poetry." When we look back at the artist's journey of investigating the logic of an "absolute image" and "absolute form" while at the same time playing "hide and seek" to break the fantasy of the concept of absoluteness, Hong's journal entries from 1997 may well have been a nascent manifesto. The term "poetry," in specific, echoes throughout Hong's work. At the touch of love, everyone becomes a poet. Adored by everyone—from fellow artists, students, and collaborators—Hong is celebrated as the "heavy smoker sorcerer girl," an honorific coined by her admirers. Her work enchants space and elicits wonder. Inside the love by Hong and of Hong, we welcome the new year of 2023 as we sing along her words of prismatic poetry.

About the Artist

Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959) combines, disassembles, and accumulates rectangular pixels, a basic unit of digital imagery, to create proliferating forms that are organic and dynamic. These images go through a number of formal transformations as they move out of the computer monitor into everyday spaces, expanding to flat and sculptural forms, animation, design, and architecture. As such, with a sustained interest in abstraction-as-spatial construction, Hong explores the relationship between the work's inner structure and the architectural space where it manifests a reality where geometric abstraction comes to life.

Born in Seoul in 1959, Hong Seung-Hye studied fine art at Seoul National University, receiving her B.F.A. in 1982. She went on to attend Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, graduating in 1986. Since then, Hong has held more than thirty solo exhibitions including *Organic Geometry* (Kukje Gallery, 1997), *Square Square* (Atelier Hermès, 2012), *Reminiscence* (Kukje Gallery, 2014), *Point-Line-Plane* (SeMA Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, 2016). She participated in numerous shows both in Korea and abroad, including Gwangju, Busan, and the Seoul Mediacity Biennale, as well as major group exhibitions at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea, Seoul Museum of Art, Ilmin Museum of Art, Korean Cultural Center in Paris, and The Museum of Modern Art of Bologna. The recipient of the Total Art Award (1997) and the Lee Jungseop Award (2007), Hong's works are part of the collection of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul Museum of Art, Leeum Museum of Art, Sungkok Art Museum, and Art Sonje Center.



Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959)

When Flowering

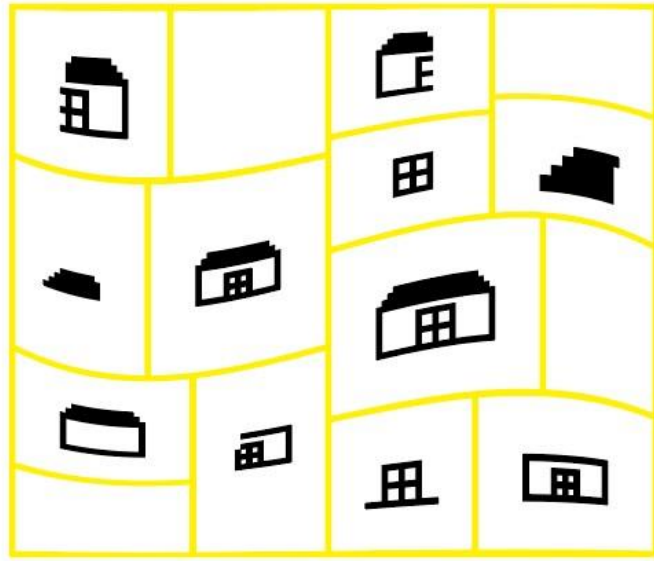
2023

Archival pigment print, uv print on glass, maple wood frame

50.7 × 40.7 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959)

Wave

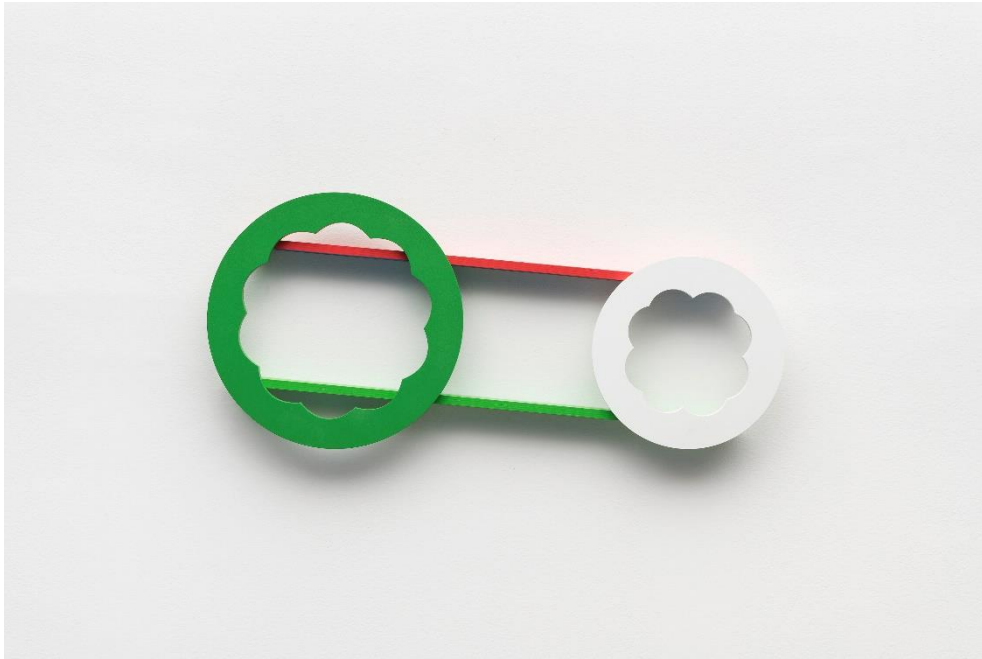
2023

Archival pigment print, maple wood frame

60.7 × 40.7 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959)

Modern Times

2023

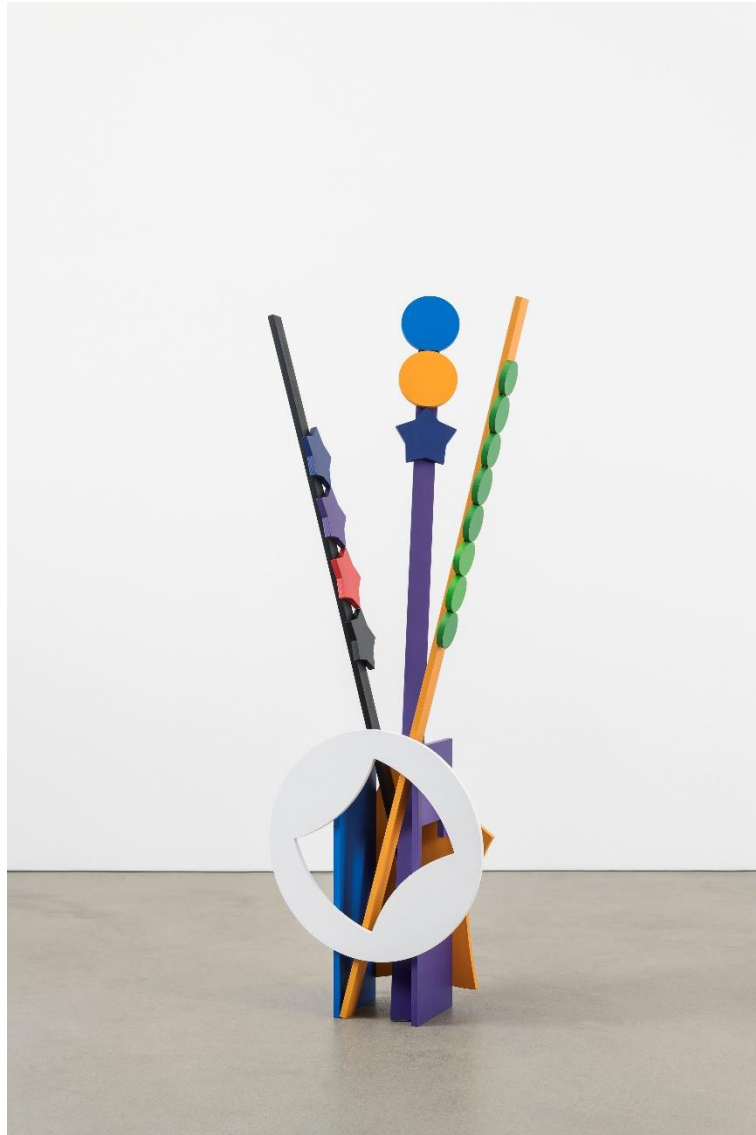
Birch plywood, acrylic latex paint

90.3 x 40 x 6.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959)

Flower Vase

2023

Birch plywood, acrylic latex paint

23 × 50 × 63.5 cm (vase), 160 × 5 × 1.5 cm (3 bars)

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959)

When Flowering

2023

Birch plywood, acrylic latex paint

60 × 80 × 81.5 cm, 160 × 5 × 1.5 cm (1 bar)

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959)

Console/Table

2023

Birch plywood, acrylic latex paint

60 × 80 × 81.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Hong Seung-Hye (b. 1959)

Spiral
2023

Birch plywood, acrylic latex paint
60 × 60 × 38 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

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