

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Young Painters' Group Exhibition *Next Painting: As We Are* at Kukje Gallery

Press Conference: June 5, 2025 (Thurs.), 11am

Exhibition Dates: June 5–July 20, 2025

Venues: Kukje Gallery K1, K3

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *Next Painting: As We Are*, a group exhibition of young painters at the gallery's K1 and K3 spaces from June 5 to July 20, 2025. *Next Painting: As We Are* aims to assess “painting after painting”—the “next painting” to come—through the work of six young artists from the millennial generation (born in the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s): Mackerel Safranski, Seeun Kim, Sinae Yoo, Eunsae Lee, Byungkoo Jeon, and Yiji Jeong. As digital natives who naturally embody the media environment and have been shaped by digital technologies throughout their lives, the millennials keenly perceive and capture images that promote the speed and immersive intensity of contemporary life, while also engaging in unique ways with the materiality and historicity of painting, one of the oldest artistic mediums.

Focusing on how the artists intersect the qualities of images with the materiality of painting, the exhibition highlights the critical potential of painting in an age of visual excess. By offering points where the visual experience of artists who have grown up in the post-internet era collide and converge with painting as object and material, it underscores the enduring role of the medium in evoking visual and sensory experience of images today. Ultimately, the exhibition proposes that the “next painting” to come will counter the acceleration of digital images, persistently championing the value of material reality and the sensory experience of slowness.

As per Hal Foster's remark that “[t]oday, many images neither document the world nor derealize it,”¹ today's images are more geared towards effects that solicit optical attraction than remaining faithful to the real. This flood of viral, often manipulated images reconstructs reality through algorithms and user feedback. In other words, reality is edited and transformed via a secondary protocol of aesthetic and consumer economies. In this perplexing situation, the speed at which images are produced, distributed, and consumed inevitably clashes with the innate temporality and materiality of painting. The exhibition illuminates how the tension that arises between these two is reflected in the works of contemporary young artists.

Additionally, the opposition between the virtuality and materiality of an image is key to understanding the painting of the millennial generation. The excess of images produced by technological development has fundamentally disrupted the methods of production, distribution, and consumption of art. Having grown up with the experience of traversing the real and the unreal, digital natives have a contested relationship with virtuality and materiality, where they are exposed constantly to an influx of online and offline images whose terms continuously shift. But at the same time, the virtual both references *and* imitates the real world, operating as a quasi-material media. The meaning of the virtuality of the image here is not limited to its liberation from material constraints; it can also refer to its disguise, as though it were material. The quality of virtuality, while opposing that of materiality, is a dependent property of materiality in that it always exists in relation to this other pole.² While the painting of the millennial generation is strongly influenced by digital image, the final result presented to us remains as a physical object and form. While contemporary images can take any source as a reference point—thereby flexibly moving from one image to another—painting is definitely a challenge premised on a huge material constraint.

¹ Hal Foster, *What Comes After Farce?: Art and Criticism at a Time of Debacle* (London: Verso, 2020), 148.

² Damin Yee, “Do Games Dream of Immateriality?,” in *Game Society*, eds. Jang Raejoo and Hong Leeji (Seoul: National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, 2023), 180-189.

About the Artists

Mackerel Safranski (b. 1984) reconstructs sensations and events from everyday observations into an ambiguous yet strange pictorial surface. Having consistently explored pencil drawing as a medium for expressing the artist's perception of the body through densely composed graphite lines, Safranski began to fully embrace painting four to five years ago, expanding her practice beyond drawing. In this painterly shift, she experiments with the possibility of a more descriptive, delineated portrayal of a scene through the materiality of the paint.

Safranski began her artistic career upon being selected in 2008 for the exhibition, *Young Korean Artists*, an annual exhibition organized by the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, to showcase promising young artists. She has held solo exhibitions at A-Lounge, Seoul (2021) and Soma Drawing Center, Seoul (2017) among others, and participated in group exhibitions at West Den Haag, The Hague (2023); Art Space Boan, Seoul (2022); the 11th Seoul Mediacity Biennale, Seoul (2021); and Incheon Art Platform, Incheon (2016).

Seeun Kim (b. 1989) has captured the ever-shifting environment, constantly transformed by new urban planning announcements, through a visual-perceptual and embodied experience on large-scale paintings. Kim's work reflects her inquiries into a painterly method for conveying the environment undergoing artificial changes over time. In particular, the works that focus on the physical experience of entering a tunnel show that contemporary landscapes are no longer mere visual objects but a sensorial fabric that encircles the whole body.

Kim earned a B.F.A. in painting at Ewha Womans University and an M.A. in painting at the Royal College of Art, London. Kim has held solo exhibitions at DOOSAN Gallery, Seoul (2022); Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul (2020); ONE AND J. Gallery, Seoul (2019); and Marlborough Gallery, London (2018), among others, and participated in group exhibitions at Museumhead, Seoul (2023); DOOSAN Gallery, Seoul (2021); Art Sonje Center, Seoul (2018); and HITE Collection, Seoul (2017).

Sinae Yoo (b. 1985) has worked across painting, sculpture, and video that interweave intricate narratives around the themes of the machine, technology, spirituality, and the body with issues of alienation and subjugation under capitalism. She regards painting as a medium that evokes the senses of the "real object" in the age of hypermedia. Painting conveys a sense of "real-ness" as it is created by hand at a slow pace and is rooted in embodied tactile materiality. Seeking to highlight this quality, Yoo pursues a classical style that reflects rigorous craftsmanship.

Yoo began her practice after earning an M.A. in Contemporary Arts at Bern University of Applied Sciences, Bern, Switzerland. She has held solo exhibitions at DOOSAN Gallery, Seoul (2024); the Center for Contemporary Art FUTURA, Prague (2019) and the Kunsthau Langenthal (2016) among others, and taken part in group exhibitions at various venues, including the Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul (2024); the Pingshan Art Museum, Shenzhen (2023); and the Kunsthalle Bern (2018). In 2016, she received the Aeschlimann-Corti Award, a major art prize in Switzerland, and was awarded the Frieze Seoul Stand Booth Prize and selected as the recipient of the 14th DOOSAN Yonkang Arts Award in 2023.

Eunsae Lee (b. 1987) has sought a painting that overcomes the monolithic narrative by looking critically at figures and events routinely objectified by the media. Living and working in the Netherlands for the past few years, the artist experienced an emotional shift in the process of acclimating to the new environment. When faced with an unfamiliar situation, she realized that she was drifting—perceiving only the surface of things rather than forming a deep understanding of or connection with them. Taking this as her cue, she began collecting all of the remnants—a stain, a misunderstanding, a bruise, a scar, traces or spilled crumbs, and leftover food—and translating them into paintings.

Lee earned a B.A. in painting from Hongik University and an M.F.A. from Korea National University of Arts, both in Seoul. She has held solo exhibitions at different institutions and galleries including Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul (2021); Gallery2, Seoul (2020); and Alternative Space LOOP, Seoul (2018), and has participated in group exhibitions at Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul (2024); Art Sonje Center, Seoul (2022); and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon (2019), among others.

Byungkoo Jeon (b. 1985) captures familiar yet subtly strange quotidian moments and scenes and transfers

them to his paintings. Recently, he has been focusing on oil paintings that involve building up multiple layers of paint. Through this accumulation, he transforms fleeting emotions into materialized time that appears permanently fixed. As the time spent stacking layers increases, the artist focuses more on the moment of looking at the subject and his own subjective senses rather than the object of the painting. Jeon earned an M.F.A. in Fine Arts at Seoul National University of Science and Technology. His works have been shown at solo exhibitions including Lee Eugene Gallery, Seoul (2023); OCI Museum of Art, Seoul (2018); and Space Willing N Dealing, Seoul (2017), and he has participated in numerous group exhibitions at Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul (2023); Incheon Art Platform, Seoul (2018); and HITE Collection, Seoul (2016), among other venues.

Yiji Jeong (b. 1994) seeks to understand life through painting. She captures the landscapes and objects she has seen, as well as thoughts and stories about the people around her. While her paintings start from snapshots, she strives to reach painterly authenticity by pursuing lively yet decisive brushstrokes and formal completion. Often using bold framing or maximal scale, Jeong's paintings reveal the artist's candid emotions through simple yet solid brushstrokes.

Jeong earned her B.F.A. and M.F.A. in Fine Arts at Korea National University of Arts. She has held solo exhibitions at Sahng-up Gallery, Seoul (2021) and Uhjudah gallery2, Seoul (2019), and has participated in group exhibitions at ThisWeekendRoom, Seoul (2022) and HITE Collection, Seoul (2021), among other venues.

Text by Sunghui Lee (Curator)



Mackerel Safranski (b. 1984)

Room tone_ The snake shed its skin.

2025

Oil on canvas

162.2 x 130.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Seeun Kim (b. 1989)

The face of flipping torso

2022

Water mixable oil on canvas

298 x 245 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Euirock Lee

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Sinae Yoo (b. 1985)

Innovation in Exploitation

2025

Oil on linen canvas

194 x 112.1 x 4 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Eunsae Lee (b. 1987)

Grapes

2025

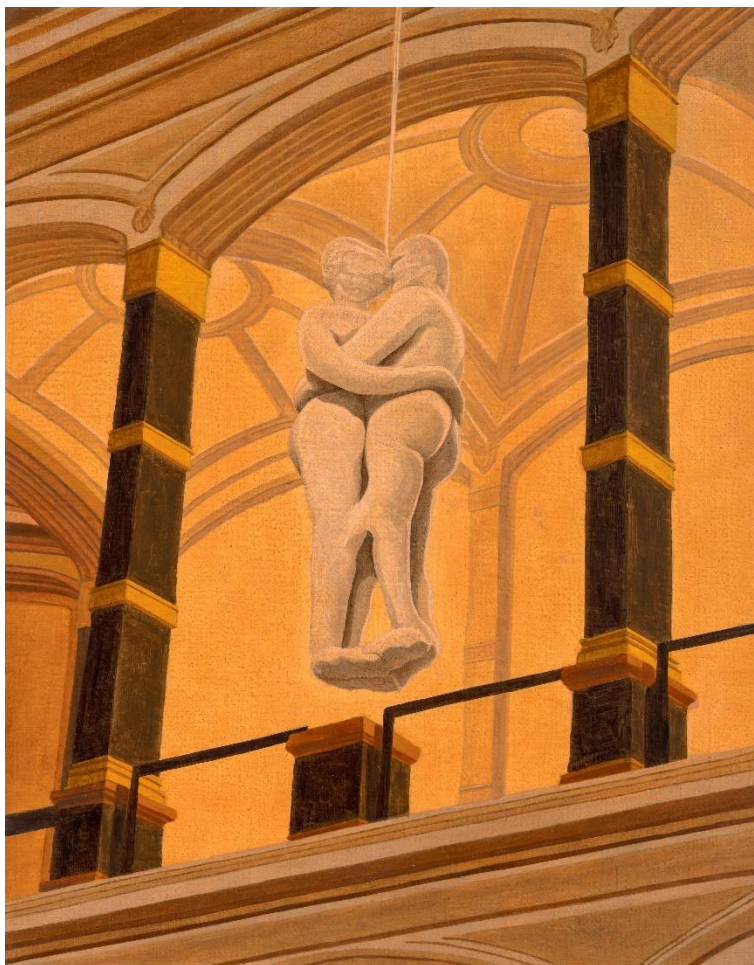
Oil on canvas

60 x 80 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Byungkoo Jeon (b. 1985)

Untitled (Louise Bourgeois The Woven Child at Gropius Bau Berlin)

2024

Oil on canvas

35 x 28 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Yiji Jeong (b. 1994)

Secco 3

2025

Oil on canvas

60.4 x 91 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Chunho An

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

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KUKJE GALLERY | COMMUNICATIONS

T +82 2 3210 9807 | press@kukjegallery.com

KUKJE GALLERY

54 SAMCHEONG-RO, JONGNO-GU SEOUL, 03053 KOREA
T + 82 2 735 8449 | F + 82 2 733 4879 | WWW.KUKJEGALLERY.COM