

## Photographic works by Park Chan-wook *Your Faces* at Kukje Gallery Busan

Press Conference: October 1 (Fri.), 2021, 12PM  
Exhibition Dates: October 1 – December 19, 2021  
Venue: Kukje Gallery Busan

*Whether it be landscape or still life, perhaps it is that I shoot all things as if shooting a portrait. I portray the status, character, life dynamics, current sentiment, and face of whoever has become the subject of my camera. This is how I communicate with all beings of the world.*

– Park Chan-wook

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *Your Faces*, an exhibition of photographic works by the film director Park Chan-wook at its Busan space from October 1 through December 19, 2021. In 2016, Park published *The Handmaiden Photo Book*, a compilation of photographs that the artist shot on site throughout his production of the film *The Handmaiden*. In 2017, the Park Chan-wook theater opened at CGV Yongsan, at the entrance of which he has since then, up until the present, curated a rotating exhibition of six photographs under the title *Pantheism*. Having as such consistently shared his photographic works with the public, *Your Faces* marks Park's first solo gallery exhibition devoted to still images. It will include thirty-one works selected from a new catalogue of his photographic works being published by Eulyoo Publishing to launch in time for the opening of the show. Installed in a gallery environment designed to best enhance the subjects and including both traditionally framed prints as well as lightboxes, the exhibition will provide a rich experience of physically meeting the photographs.

In her introductory essay for the exhibition, the editor of film magazine *Cine 21* Haery Kim introduces the reader to the photographer Park Chan-wook, writing, "Here is a storyteller freed from the confinements of storytelling." For a film director (in)famous for his meticulous preproduction planning, photography serves as a medium allowing him to communicate with the world through vastly different dynamics. Park places his photography the furthest away from the fate of filmmaking, for which even the most seemingly raw scenes involve intricately artificial designs. As an "antidote" to his experiences in filmmaking, as the artist describes his photography practice, coincidence and spontaneity play crucial roles in his photographs.

The gallery presents contemporary art of many forms, but the essence of what it seeks with each presentation is the same. We lean on the art(ist) to lend us a new set of eyes, a new perspective, through which to gauge the current world we navigate. Here, Park pushes us to persistently reassess the standards of beauty. Even the most mundane landscape of the everyday dons a different face each moment, and as we look into a photograph permanently documenting that fleeting instant, we discover an unfamiliar face of the most familiar object. Park, who as a commercial film director would have most astutely trained the ability to capture the sentiment of the times in his works, provides us the motive to proactively expand the realm of unexpected beauty within the most habitual scenes of our everyday.

As is noted in Kim's essay, "Whether the object is a landscape, or a still life, or mere fragments that cannot be identified a specific name, Park Chan-wook manages to find out the eye of his subject. He makes eye contact and reads its face. He finds beauty in what does not seek to be beautiful and thus questions the boundary of beauty. For photographer Park Chan-wook, photogenic beauty is a fragile yet tenacious order that is veiled by the shadows of dominant value systems and conventional aesthetics, but that can be discovered with the aid of the camera if we are willing to briefly pause and respect the phenomenon itself."

## **Park Chan-wook**

Born in 1963, Seoul, Korea

### **Exhibitions**

#### Solo Exhibitions

- 2021 *Your Faces*, Kukje Gallery Busan, Busan
- 2018 *PARKing CHANce 2010-2018*, Asia Culture Center, Gwangju  
*PARKing CHANce 2010-2018*, Centro Cultural Kirchner, Buenos Aires

#### Group Exhibitions

- 2019 *O! Leica: Off The Road*, Kukje Gallery, Seoul
- 2017 *O! Leica: Das Wunder Werkzeug*, BOONTHESHOP, Cheongdam North, Seoul  
*Highlights*, La Collection de la Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul
- 2014 *Project G*, PLATOON Kunsthalle, Seoul

### **Filmography**

#### Feature Films

- 2018 *THE LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL* (TV Series)
- 2016 *THE HANDMAIDEN*
- 2013 *STOKER*
- 2009 *THIRST*
- 2006 *I'M A CYBORG BUT THAT'S OKAY*
- 2005 *LADY VENGEANCE*
- 2003 *OLDBOY*
- 2002 *SYMPATHY FOR MR. VENGEANCE*
- 2000 *JSA: JOINT SECURITY AREA*
- 1997 *TRIO*
- 1992 *MOON IS THE SUN'S DREAM*

#### Short Films

- 2017 *DECADES APART*
- 2014 *A ROSE REBORN*
- 2014 *BITTER, SWEET, SEOUL*
- 2012 *DAY TRIP*
- 2011 *NIGHT FISHING*
- 2004 *THREE... EXTREMES* (segment "CUT")
- 2003 *IF YOU WERE ME* (segment "NEVER ENDING PEACE AND LOVE")
- 1999 *JUDGMENT*



**Park Chan-wook (b.1963)**

*Face 107*

2013

Digital C-print

80 x 80 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Park Chan-wook (b.1963)**

*Washington, D.C.*

2013

Archival pigment print

111 x 111 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Park Chan-wook (b.1963)**

*Face 16*

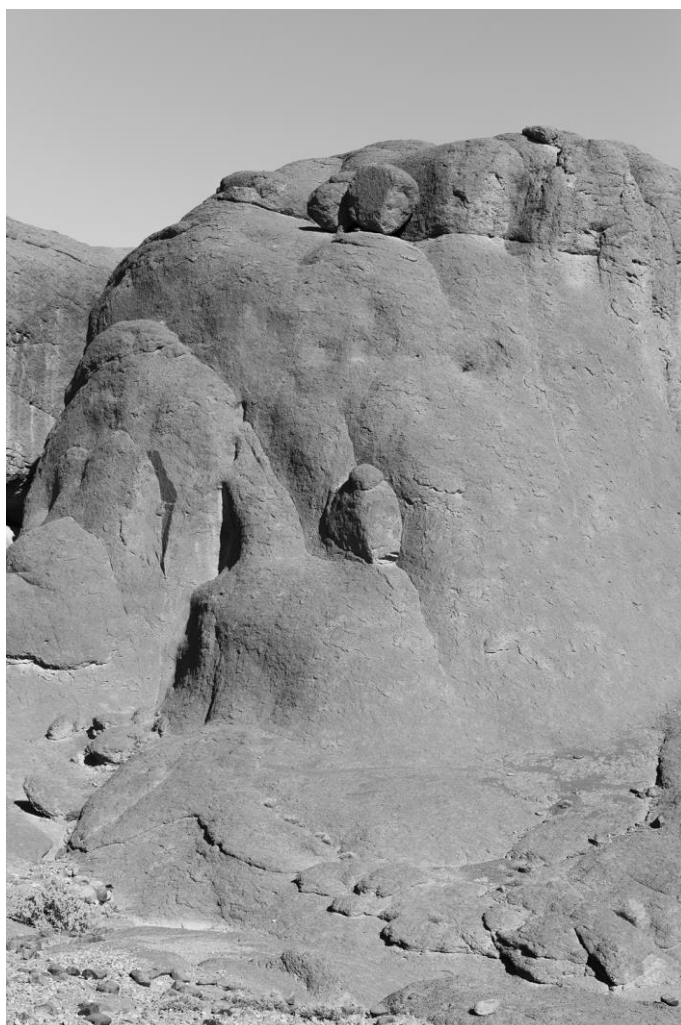
2013

Backlit film, LED Lightbox

110 x 75 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Park Chan-wook (b.1963)**

*Face 45*

2015

Archival pigment print

111 x 111 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Park Chan-wook (b.1963)**

*Face 6*

2016

Backlit film, LED Lightbox

110 x 75 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Park Chan-wook (b.1963)**

*Face 106*

2016

Archival pigment print

124 x 124 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery





Artist portrait of Park Chan-wook  
Photo: Ahn Joo Young  
Image provided by Kukje Gallery

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Photographic works by Park Chan-wook *Your Faces* at Kukje Gallery Busan

Here is a storyteller freed from the confinements of storytelling. For Park Chan-wook walking alone with a camera, there is no continuity to edit nor any actor whose condition needs to be monitored, nor any prop awaiting the director's confirmation. Instead, he slowly moves and waits for discovery. He longs for the moment the world, composed of the real and the fake, the natural and the artificial, the dead and the living, suddenly reveals itself, smiling or raising an eyebrow. Here, the designed "direction" takes place in the shortest time. He gauges the distance, angle, amount of light and sentiment that the subject requires, and with faith in the sync between intuition and hand, CLICK. Park's photography reveals his visual prospect as an antipode of film, in which even the wind blowing on a paper-pasted door must be planned for.

For photographer Park Chan-wook, the world is a sum of faces. The formal attributes of all natural and artificial beings, such as color, shape light, and composition, adopt a certain temperament in his photos. The faces of objects and nature are completed through our instinctual and unconscious ability to discern facial features and the four limbs out of anything we see, as well as through the gestalt shift of perceiving one object as different forms depending on where the focus of visual perception is placed. Cute, lonely, funny, grotesque are frequent examples of what Park describes as the faces of things. A white raincoat (*Face 107*) that looks as if it is walking somewhere widely swinging its arms, is endearing and pitiable as it obviously cannot go anywhere. Parasols that are captured in black and white in *Face 16* are commonly seen objects in warm regions. But the cluster of parasols folded and gathered in one space look like a group photo of levitated ghosts, or even a rally of cloaked KKK members. The bland old sofa in *Washington, D.C.* merely sits against a similarly colored background, but the photographer's eye approaches the subject as if shooting a human portrait, bestowing a distinct personality upon it.

While Park's photographs capture the intersection of the natural and the artificial, the real and the fake, art and kitsch, the living and the inanimate, he does not necessarily portray the two in hostile contrasts. Rather, he captures the image of an indifferent yet friendly coexistence, affirming that the world is sustained upon a network of heterogeneous combinations. In both *Face 135*, an image of two elephants, a mother and a daughter, loaded on a truck bed, and *Face 106*, showing the front window of a car with a mannequin in the passenger seat, the flat grayscale of the black-and-white seem to instigate an illusion between the real and the replica. A white dress, hovering in a shop window collecting and reflecting light in the middle of the night as if a headless bride, calls for meditation. How is the inspiration that these images stimulate as subjects of the camera different from that motivated by living elephants and real human beings? In the meantime, admiration toward nature and for art are reciprocal. *Face 183* freezes the moment a spiny tree with widespread branches catches the particular light of a specific time of day to look like a work of metal craft. In *Face 21*, an image of a sculpture at the cemetery, and *Face 127*, an image of tarpaulin folded in similar volume and shape, Park selects to shoot in black and white to restrict color variables and accentuate the formal similarity of two objects that exist in vastly different backgrounds.

For Park, who believes that content cannot be separated from form in art, photography provides a chance to be liberated from even the minimum prerequisites of narrative and to indulge in a perfect concordance between form and content. The agave and red car that each occupy half the frame in *Face 3* are neither metaphor nor symbol of anything. The taut tension among color, shape, and texture is all there is to it. The yellow net feebly collapsed in between a sturdy gray floor and wall in *Hakone* is on many aspects so unduly helpless that it moves us. The pink pedestrian stairs, green urethane floor, and the low curb between the two in *Face 166* are reconstituted as artistic objects only through the camera's framing. In the meantime, *Face 12*, in which a single colored object (deep red plastic bag) is highlighted against the monotone background from which dusk has erased all colors, is unexpectedly cinematic. That is because the longer the audience stays in front of this photograph, the clearer become the silhouettes of the second and third figures that had been buried in the darkness, thus allowing a different reading of the situation.

Park Chan-wook's photographs joyously reach out to the realms that are difficult to solemnly investigate within film. *Face 6*, *Face 53*, *Face 85*, and *Face 108* summon the corners, planes, and lines of architectural

structures—what in film can only stay as the backdrop and margin of all incidents—as protagonists. Study of black-and-white is also much freer within photography; to produce a feature-length film in black-and-white today is a significant artistic decision, but shifting between black-and-white and color photography is not extraordinary. Almost always carrying a Leica Monochrom, the only digital black-and-white camera available today, as his second camera, Park opts for the black-and-white when he feels that suppressing color and focusing on form, texture or light will make an image richer.

Whether the object is a landscape, or a still-life, or mere fragments that cannot be identified a specific name, Park Chan-wook manages to find out the eye of his subject. He makes eye contact and reads its face. He finds beauty in what does not seek to be beautiful and thus questions the boundary of beauty. For photographer Park Chan-wook, photogenic beauty is a fragile yet tenacious order that is veiled by the shadows of dominant value systems and conventional aesthetics, but that can be discovered with the aid of the camera if we are willing to briefly pause and respect the phenomenon itself.

Text by Haery Kim, Editor of *Cine 21*