

Press Release

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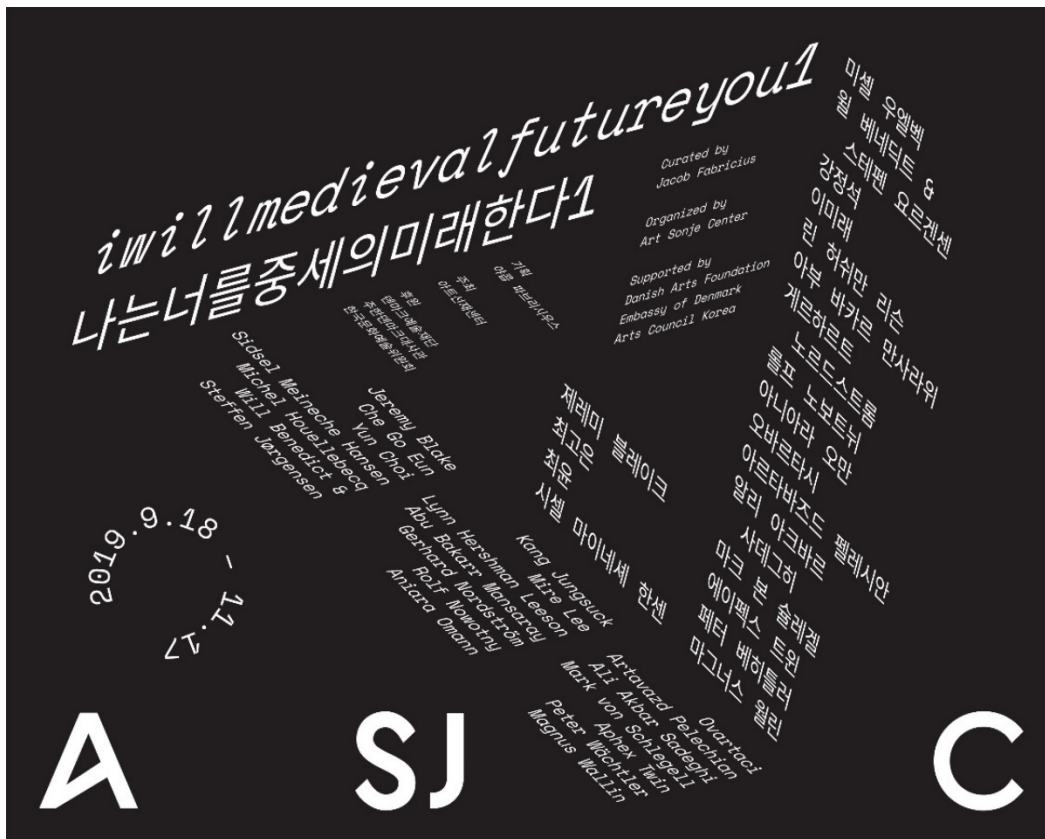
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iwillmedievalfutureyou1

September 18 – November 17, 2019



Artists: Jeremy Blake (US), Yun Choi (KR), Che Go Eun (KR), Sidsel Meineche Hansen (DK), Michel Houellebecq (FR), Kang Jungsuck (KR), Will Benedict & Steffen Jørgensen (US/DK), Mire Lee (KR), Lynn Hershman Leeson (US), Abu Bakarr Mansaray (SL), Gerhard Nordström (SE), Rolf Nowotny (DK), Anira Omann (DK), Ovartaci (DK), Artavazd Pelechian (AM), Ali Akbar Sadeghi (IR), Mark von Schlegell (US), Aphex Twin (IRL), Magnus Wallin (SE) and Peter Wächtler (DE)

Curated by Jacob Fabricius (Artistic Director, Kunsthal Aarhus)

Exhibition Management by Heehyun Cho (Assistant Curator, Art Sonje Center)

Organized by Art Sonje Center

Supported by Danish Arts foundation, Embassy of Denmark, Korea, Arts Council Korea

Art Sonje Center proudly presents *iwillmedievalfutureyou1*, the fourth exhibition in a series of ten non-chronological group shows that tells an epic tale about the future through fantastical, oddball and dystopian depictions of the times in which we live. Cannibalising on existing exhibition architecture, the layout and display change with each edition of *iwillmedievalfutureyou* as it mutates into a new configuration of works. *iwillmedievalfutureyou1* includes works by 20 artists, half of whom are specially invited for the exhibition at Art Sonje Center.

The exhibition attempts to mirror primitive and disruptive elements in our present existence and potential future; each artist presents a distinct depiction of the human condition, the destruction of human realities or 'nonhuman' conditions, coalescing into restored hopes and the development of a post-human state.

In the exhibition, mankind's interference with the natural world interlinks with technology's impact on the human body. Mounted on a wallpaper of genetically manipulated plants and animals, Lynn Hershmann Leeson's video, *Seduction of a Cyborg*, depicts a technology-induced breakdown of the human immune system. In Will Benedict and Steffen Jørgensen's dark sitcom *The Restaurant*, the grocery-delivering, half-man-half-snail protagonist Snailien demonstrates the versatility of the natural world, while Mire Lee's mechanical, human-cum-alien-like sculptures appear to be harbingers of a new post-human evolutionary state.

The primitive and the grotesque characterise another strand of works in which mediaeval-esque imagery and fantasies surface. Chased by an immense wall of fire, appropriated drawings of disabled people by Hieronymus Bosch populate a nightmarish contemporary gladiator's game in the animation, *EXIT*, by Magnus Wallin, and, in a work by Rolf Nowotny, enlarged, metal renditions of ancient woodlice have the hallmarks of crude, futuristic armour. Collaborating with members of a Medieval Renaissance Swordsmanship Association and a game designer, Yun Choi explores contemporary desires for the Middle Ages in Seoul. In the work of Overtaci, drawings of fantastical, retro-futuristic machines and alien bodies testify to a desire to overcome the boundaries between species, genders and the natural world. Eroding boundaries also influence the work of Kang Jungsuck, where reality and the immersive virtual reality of the gaming space coalesce.

Seemingly ushering in a new dark age, the menacing exhibition title performatively suspends our conception of linear time by fusing past and future. Time travelling would appear to be inevitable, and

jetlag to be expected, but are we about to encounter an old future or a new past? As futurologist Alvin Toffler has remarked, “The future always comes too fast and in the wrong order.”

Conceived and realised by Jacob Fabricius, *iwillmedievalfutureyou* is a series of exhibitions that will appear in ten different iterations throughout the course of 100 years. In 2016, *iwillmedievalfutureyou4* initiated the exhibition series at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde (DK). Later the same year, the second iteration, *iwillmedievalfutureyou5*, unfolded at Kunsthal Aarhus, which also hosted the third instalment, *iwillmedievalfutureyou6*, in 2018.

Since 2017, Art Sonje Center and Kunsthal Aarhus have collaborated on a number of projects and exhibitions. In addition to *iwillmedievalfutureyou1* at Art Sonje Center, the collaboration also includes a solo exhibition by Hwayeon Nam at Kunsthal Aarhus opening in October 2019. Earlier this year, Art Sonje Center also collaborated with Kunsthal Aarhus, when Kunsthal Aarhus hosted the exhibition *Water from Ganges River in the Cup Made with Newspaper from Congo* by Kim Beom.

■ **Outlines: *iwillmedievalfutureyou1***

Artist Jeremy Blake (US), Yun Choi (KR), Che Go Eun (KR), Sidsel Meineche Hansen (DK), Michel Houellebecq (FR), Kang Jungsuck (KR), Will Benedict & Steffen Jørgensen (US/DK), Mire Lee (KR), Lynn Hershman Leeson (US), Abu Bakarr Mansaray (SL), Gerhard Nordström (SE), Rolf Nowotny (DK), Aniara Omann (DK), Ovaraci (DK), Artavazd Pelechian (AM), Ali Akbar Sadeghi (IR), Mark von Schlegell (US), Aphex Twin (IRL), Magnus Wallin (SE) and Peter Wächtler (DE)

Date September 18 – November 17, 2019

Venues Art Sonje Center 1–3F

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Hours Tuesday–Sunday 12–7pm

Admissions General 5,000 KRW
Students 3,000 KRW

Contact +82-2-733-8944

■ Artists' biographies

Jeremy Blake (US, 1971-2007)

Jeremy Blake worked in a range of mediums, including semi-abstract digital photographs, digital video works, paintings and drawings. He is also known for creating cover artwork for musical artist Beck's album *Sea Change* as well as the dreamy hallucination scenes for P.T Anderson's film *Punch Drunk Love*. Blake created a number of scripts, or 'scripted drawings' as he called them, where drawing and image converge within broken typewritten narratives. Blake's series of drawings, *Sucking in the Seventies*, centers around a fictitious drug-addled artist/architect working in New York in the 1970s. Jeremy Blake's work takes the form of semi-abstract digital photographs, digital video works, paintings and drawings. His visually dense images often incorporate both abstract and representational expressions in the language of Modernism, combined with voices characteristic of Film Noir. *Bungalow 8: Facade* was one of Blake's first films, a hybrid of new media works and a new type of 'moving paintings' in the 1990s.

Che Go Eun (KR, 1988)

Che Go Eun explores the effects of today's online pornography through different media, and how they correlate to pop culture, education and beauty ideals. In her collages she assembles explicit internet sex content, presenting a sharp contrast to conservative sex education standards in Korea, into ostentatious, altar-like formations. For this exhibition, the artist was commissioned to create a new site-specific window piece at Art Sonje Center.

Yun Choi (KR, 1989)

Yun Choi captures, collects and transforms images sourced from popular culture into her videos, installations and performances. In this way, she reproduces, twists and expands banal yet complex layers and images from modern South Korean society. In her observations of public places and popular media, Yun Choi captures, collects and transforms images that perpetuate a certain social climate and repurposes them for her videos, installations and performances. As such, the artist expands banal images and collective beliefs, as well as complex layers from South Korean society. For this exhibition, Yun Choi was commissioned to produce a new work specifically for the entrance of the second floor at Art Sonje Center titled *I·MEDIEVAL SEOUL·U*. This piece depicts the ways in which medieval times are manifested in present-day Seoul.

Sidsel Meineche Hansen (DK, 1981)

Meineche Hansen's presentation consists of a sound work, *Dear Mother Earth...* (2018), inserted into the installation *CONTROL ROOM #1* (2018). The sound work is narrated by an avatar voice reciting excerpted and merged texts by the English futurist philosopher Max More (2009) and black metal-band Mayhem's lead singer Per 'Dead' Ohlin (1991), who committed suicide in 1991, both of which discuss returning to nature and eternal life. *CONTROL ROOM #1* is replica model—a reconstruction—of a sex doll factory's showroom. The artist often uses her works as a medium for critical explorations of the virtual world.

Michel Houellebecq (FR, 1958)

French author Michel Houellebecq has published novels such as *Atomised* (1998), *The Possibility of an Island* (2005) and *The Map and the Territory* (2010); it is only recently that he began to exhibit his visual artworks. He was included in Manifesta 11 in Zurich in 2016, and he has also mounted an extensive solo exhibition of photography, objects and film at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. His photographs include numerous references to cinema and literature, reflecting on contemporary society and its absurdities, its dark sides as well as its utopian dreams and possibilities. *Matière #016* is a self-portrait.

Kang Jungsuck (KR, 1984)

Kang Jungsuck observes the latencies between physically and technically mediated cognition, explaining the correlative sensations that arise by comparing them to video games. Kang postulates that today's real-life experience has come to resemble a video game, and he pursues a publishing practice that aims to deliver this reality. *GAME II* is a series that starts with the artist's imagined notion that the exhibition hall is actually externally mapped to somewhere or something else. Within such a framework, the artist creates several environmental objects to convey this reality to the audience. *GAME II: Eternity without becoming (Home decoration with Smart speaker)* consists of 5 sets of home decoration pieces and a voice adventure game, *Moving Paintings*, operated by the Smart speaker Echo dot. In the process of playing the game, which is performed based on the user's voice input, the audience appropriates the exhibition space for a while and then returns to the context of the exhibition.

Will Benedict & Steffen Jørgensen (US, 1978 / DK, 1981)

Will Benedict & Steffen Jørgensen have developed a collaborative practice, and their new work *The Restaurant* functions as a fable in six parts. *The Restaurant* is structured to resemble a sitcom that engages the grotesque global inequalities that we encounter in our daily lives and the transformation of our most basic metabolic processes. The world in which *The Restaurant* takes place could be considered

that of a dark comedy, but the series is not entirely without optimism. Its post-human protagonist Snailien—a half-man, half-snail who delivers groceries—indicates the flexibility of the natural world. Snailien serves as a reminder that this world is more than a zero-sum system: its pliancy suggests a both/and scenario existing alongside the apocalyptic coprophagia that otherwise dominates *The Restaurant*. Benedict & Jørgensen's absurd and surreal fable reveals the fact that we no longer eat to provide energy and mobility to our organism, but rather the reverse: the shit is what drives the body. Even if we try to assert ourselves, our excrement answers back: "Do you feel like you're in charge?" Benedict & Jørgensen also produced a new work specifically for this exhibition—a 3D printed full-size mannequin doll of the Snailien figure from *The Restaurant*.

Mire Lee (KR, 1988)

Mire Lee's sculptures are created from materials such as steel, silicone, oil, fabric and clay, and are activated with low-tech kinetics and animatronic technology. Lee creates moving mechanical sculptures that appear almost human- or alien-like, as if existing in a less evolved stage of life and developing towards a more advanced state. They seem to progress forward, but in the process of becoming they collapse before beginning their movements anew in an eternal absurd catharsis and procession towards nothing. Over and over again, these organisms or machines fail (or succeed) in their mission, yet somehow acquire the elegance of organs, always in place and continuing to carry out their mobile function. They are at once sensual and beautiful, as well as vulgar and appalling. Mire Lee has been commissioned to create a new installation for *iwillmedievalfutureyou1*.

Lynn Hershmann Leeson (USA, 1941)

Artist and film director Lynn Hershmann Leeson has shown a long-standing interest in cyborgs and the sci-fi genre. Her wallpaper *GMO Animals, Crops, Labs* depicts genetically manipulated or modified plants and animals, providing insight into man's interference in some of nature's invisible structures. Beneath these images appear texts describing experiments that used genetically modified organisms and where they were executed. The wallpaper serves as a backdrop for the video *Seduction of a Cyborg*, a poetic film about technology's invasion of the body and the ensuing breakdown of the human immune system.

Abu Bakarr Mansaray (SL, 1970)

Abu Bakarr Mansaray's futuristic drawings do not represent something we know, but rather something we fear: an evolution gone awry. The drawings appear as studies for machines, and are delicately hand-colored and annotated with handwritten notes, calculations and diagrams that give instructions for the construction of the machines. These images concurrently point back in time to something primitive as well

as forward towards an ambiguous future where anthropomorphic machine creatures have taken over the world. Mansaray's drawings also allude to contemporary concerns such as the spread of the Ebola virus.

Gerhard Nordström (SE, 1925-2019)

Gerhard Nordström is best known for his overt opposition to pollution and abuses of power, messages that he conveys in depictions of social injustice and the consequences of consumer culture. From the early 1960s onwards, Nordström has consistently used oils, etchings and sculpture to create his political artworks. Despite these so-called 'classic' methods, his works have a distinctively contemporary quality, offering razor-sharp political critique and dark social commentary. In an era of rapid cultural shifts, information maelstroms and mass-media oversaturation, these artworks—these frozen moments—nonetheless manage to imprint themselves on our retinas, constantly reminding us of the repercussions of greed, violence and power. The sheer absence in some of these works, their raw flesh and empty landscapes, reveal the outcomes of unchecked pollution, injustice and power obstruction, embodying a compelling testimony to the consequences of man's presence in the world.

Rolf Nowotny (DK, 1978)

An atmosphere reminiscent of a lost epoch as well as a non-human or post-human condition characterize Rolf Nowotny's sculptures, drawings, paintings and installations. His sculptures have certain anthropomorphic features, but their bodies resemble amoebic beings at an indeterminate stage of evolution before—or possibly after—Homo sapiens. Nowotny presents three new works produced specifically for the exhibition at Art Sonje Center: a series of psychedelic tin and felt paintings with images of the abandoned home of the artist's grandmother, an uncanny bed-head installation and, finally, a group of enlarged hand-fabricated metal woodlice. These small invertebrates found beneath rocks and fallen trees belong to the scientific order of isopods, which are presumed to have colonized land in the Carboniferous period of the Paleozoic era hundreds of millions of years ago. By magnifying this prehistoric creature, Nowotny depicts them as alternately primitive, futuristic or reminiscent of 15th century armor.

Aniara Omann (DK, 1987)

Aniara Omann's practice interconnects ecology and social fictions. Working across sculpture, literature, drawing and live performance, Omann seeks to expose and question the apparent boundaries of discrete objects and their projected identities. Many of her works, including *Final Incarnation*, are produced using methods and materials found in prop making. Her silicone casts depicting human heads appear as second skins that circulate around the exhibition space.

Ovartaci (DK, 1894-1985)

Ovartaci was the artist name of Louis Marcussen (1894-1985), known as the most important exponent of Art Brut, or outsider art, in Denmark. The name Ovartaci can be interpreted as a rewriting of the word 'Overtosse' (Danish word for 'head of the fools'). Marcussen was hospitalized in 1929 after severe psychiatric problems and spent the last 56 years of his life as a patient in the psychiatric hospital in Risskov, Denmark. During this period, he called himself Ovartaci and developed a unique body of work that includes hundreds of drawings and sculptures. These works suggest a fantastical universe of double personas; post-human characters exhibiting transformations and transitions between male and female, animal and human beings; madness; psychiatry; spirituality; and the alien body. Ovartaci had a strong interest in futuristic machines, Eastern mysticism, reincarnation and art history, and these subjects are often visible in his works. *iwillmedievalfutureyou1* presents Ovartaci's drawings of imaginary inventions and machines, as well as post-human and alien forms.

Artavazd Pelechian (AM, 1938)

Compiling archival footage of large-scale migrations and stampedes, *Inhabitants* depicts animals in predominantly panicked states. The film merely alludes to the presence of human beings who, notwithstanding, seem to be the cause of these vast anxious movements of animal fear. In many ways, the film is an ode to the animal world through its tendency towards formal abstraction, with clouds of silver birds pulverizing the light. The animals are the inhabitants of the earth. "It's hard to give a verbal synopsis of these films, Pelechian says. "Such films exist only on the screen, you have to see them."

Ali Akbar Sadeghi (IR, 1937)

Ali Akbar Sadeghi's artistic practice encompasses animation, film, painting and sculpture. Sadeghi's work combines surrealism and the history of Persian miniatures, epic poetry, mysticism and culture in reappropriations of classical themes. In *Flower Storm*, the conventional war epic is converted into a peaceful, almost romantic tale in which cannonballs, instead of reaching their targets, explode into thousands of flowers and birds.

Mark von Schlegell (US, 1967)

Mark von Schlegell is an American science fiction writer and cultural critic. His novels include *Venusia* (2005), *Mercury Station* (2009) and *Sundogz* (2015). For the exhibition catalogue, von Schlegell has written a short story and selected several geometric patterns and flies that appear scattered throughout the exhibition. Moreover, he presents a series of new watercolors that occupy the narrow ends of the freestanding partition walls. These watercolors relate to his essay 'Lichen,' eponymously named after the slow-growing plant, which is also one of the world's oldest organisms.

Aphex Twin (IRL, 1971) / film by Chris Cunningham

Aphex Twin is one of the aliases of the idiosyncratic and inventive English electronic musician and producer Richard D. James (1971), known for his advanced ambient, techno, acid and drum and bass productions. Chris Cunningham, the creator of several innovative musical, animatronic and video works, notably directed the music video for Aphex Twin's "Come to Daddy," which depicts a desolate society where children—wearing masks of Richard D. James's grinning, bearded face—act as violators who trash abandoned buildings. The video was shot around Tavy Bridge Shopping centre in Thamesmead, which was demolished in 2007. This location is same council estate where Stanley Kubrick filmed scenes for his dystopian crime film *A Clockwork Orange* (1971); Cunningham's video symbolically transfers the iconic Kubrick past into a post-human future.

Magnus Wallin (SE, 1965)

Magnus Wallin's early animation *EXIT* takes place in Hieronymus Bosch's drawings of the disabled. These drawings are used as documentary images that background a nightmare-like situation where several limping, disabled people are chased by a fire engulfing a one kilometer-long corridor. They seem to be victims of a demonic, grim, contemporary version of a gladiator game; every time the fire consumes someone, there is a corresponding crescendo in the sound of applause coming from loudspeakers covering the walls. In the end, some of these figures manage to save themselves with the help of a waiting helicopter.

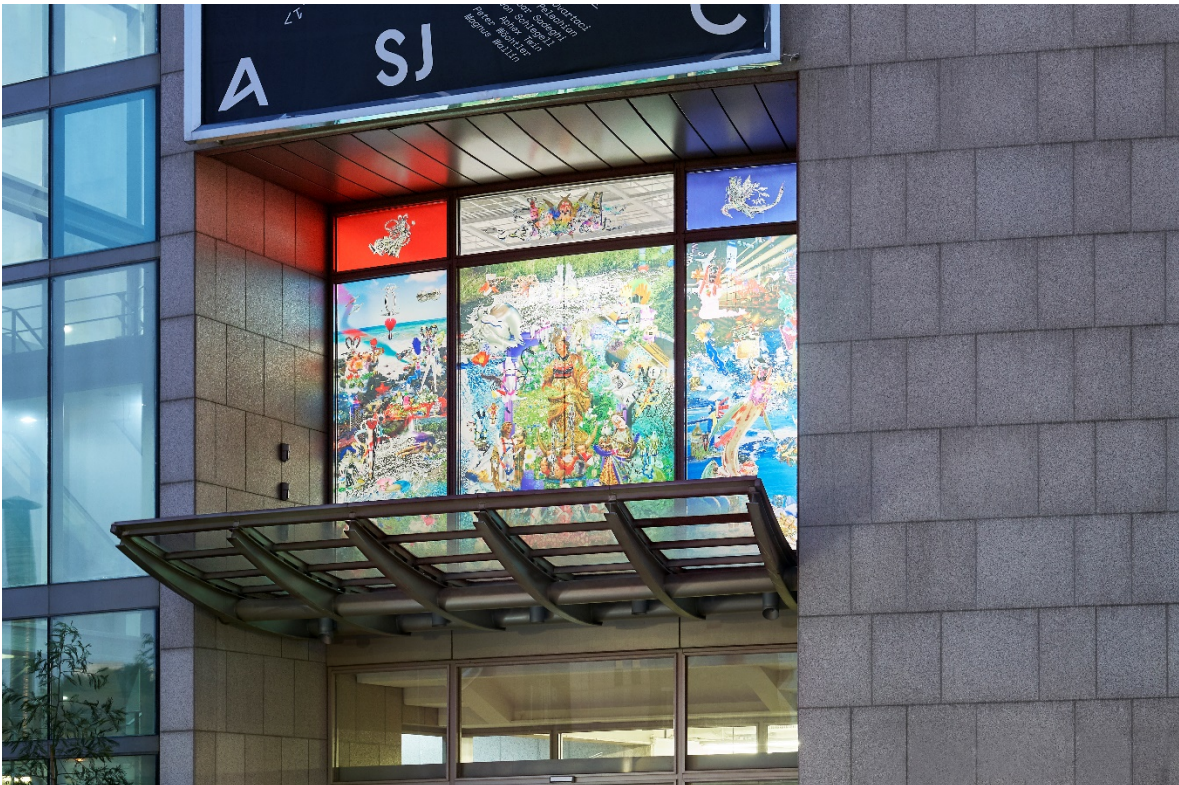
Peter Wächtler (DE, 1978)

Peter Wächtler's artistic practice spans a range of mostly handcrafted mediums such as sculpture, drawing, animation, video and literature, and is concerned with questions of genre and common methodologies of narration. His works are often composed of familiar materials—one exhibited work is made of leather, for example—and executed in earnest. The artist, however, also acknowledges his works' limited ability to communicate and the comedic, nonsensical effect they in turn produce. *Untitled* (2013) is a stop-motion animation film in which the artist has created a helpless body out of black electrical cables. The animation is silent but the combination of written narrative and the body's broken movement creates a dark and epic story.

■ Images



(above) Miree Lee, *The Complicits*, 2019, Wireropes, silicone hoses, flex foam, glycerine, pumps, motor and other mixed media, 300 x 180 x 380 cm / (below) Aniara Omann, *Me, a thousand years ago. You, a thousand years from now*, 2019, Eco-resin, steel mount, 15.6 x 15 x 14.6 cm, Cast silicone, crab shell, steel mount, 15.5 x 18.3 x 14.5 cm



(above) Will Benedict & Steffen Jørgensen, *All bleeding stops eventually*, 2019, 3D print, mannequin, audio and video loop, mixed materials / (below) Che Go Eun, *The Garden of Lust in Spring*, 2019, Window installation, PVC film, 478 x 368 cm



Iwillmedievalfutureyou1, Installation views, Art Sonje Center.