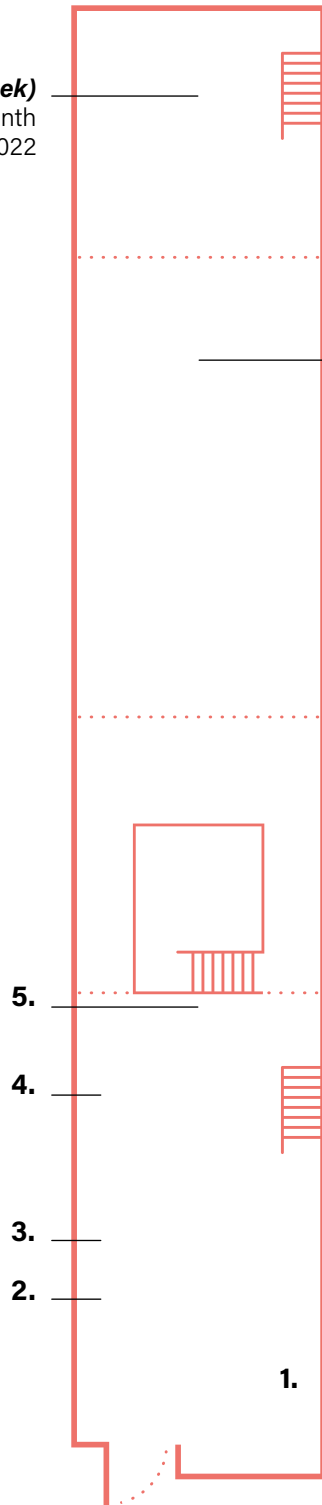


Leading up to an exhibition the artist engages in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

The conversation aims to get an insight on how the initial ideas for the project develop, to paint a picture of the otherwise untraceable choices in the artist's process, practice and the making of this exhibition.

**Karlos Gil**  
in conversation  
with  
**Wonseok Koh**  
As part of the  
exhibition  
**TIMEFALL**

**Phantom Limbs (NeoCymek)**  
Thermo-optic bronze, plinth  
2022



**Origin**  
UHD colour video.  
5.1 surround sound.  
2022

Generative adversarial  
network interpretation from  
drawing. Silk, metallic and  
acrylic yarn. Unique.  
2022

**1. Stay Gold (Nullentropy)**

60 x 60

**2. Stay Gold (Thermoptical)**

60 x 60

**3. Stay Gold (Chiralium)**

61 x 61

**4. Stay Gold (Namek)**

61 x 61

**5. Stay Gold (SobekCroix)**

61 x 61

# Karlos Gil

## in conversation

# with

# Wonseok Koh

## As part of the

# exhibition

# TIMEFALL

For more information about this and other projects,  
check our website or scan the QR-code.

# 1646.nl



## Karlos Gil

Through painting, sculpture, and installation, Karlos Gil (b. 1984, Talavera ES), addresses the fundamental questions about what it means to be human in today's world. His latest projects reflect on the relationship between technological development and the principles of the natural world, blurring the borderline between the organic and the artificial, the natural and the industrial. Karlos Gil studied at the School of Visuals Arts in New York and at the faculties of Fine Arts in Lisbon and Madrid where he earned his PhD in 2016. He has had numerous international exhibitions at such venues as Centre Pompidou, Paris; HKW, Berlin; Witte de With, Rotterdam; NTU CCA, Singapore, Gasworks, London; Fondazione Baruchello, Rome; CRAC-Montbeliard; Galeria Luisa Strina, Sao Paulo; MARCO, Vigo; CA2M, Madrid. He has participated in III Moscow International Biennale (2012) and Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria) in 2020.

## Wonseok Koh

Wonseok Koh is Chief Curator and Head of Exhibition Division at Seoul Museum of Art, South Korea. Previously he worked as a curator of alternative space Pool, Gallery Space, Arko Art Center of Arts Council Korea, Busan Museum of Art, etc. He also worked in Beijing as an Art director of Artmia Foundation and in Gwangju as a team manager of Library Park of Asia Culture Center(ACC). He curated many exhibitions in Seoul, Beijing, New York, Basel, Krakow, etc. and was a research fellow at SOAS, University of London. He was also invited to Australia, Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, etc. for international exchange programs or curatorial residencies. He was awarded 'Young and Independent Curatorial Award' from Arts Council Korea, Dong-A Art Prize, Minister's Award of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Korea.

Mon, Oct 3, 6:22 AM

From 고원석 Wonseok Koh

Dear Karlos,

Many greetings from Seoul.

I am more than happy to get in touch with you in this interesting way. I thank 1646 for this kind invitation, where I recently visited first as a part of the visiting program by Mondriaan Fonds.

My name is Wonseok Koh and I currently work as a chief curator of Seoul Museum of Art.

First of all, congratulations on your solo show in 1646. I guess it is always a happy experience to have an exhibition in that kind of respectful space with a spirit as an artist.

Starting our email conversations which we are unable to guess where they will end, I have to confess my humble English first. Please excuse the limitations of my expressions. I hope, however, that this limitation increases your flexibility of expression.

I have taken a look at your website briefly. It was quite minimal and geometrical just like the general outlooks of your works. But of course I could guess easily that a lot of interdisciplinary and interesting stories were embedded in them. So at a glance, I thought the forms are rather simple, but the stories must be complicated.

This interesting contrast between the form and the narrative caught my eyes first because that is my general impression on the future from when I was a kid, and some parts which were already represented in our daily lives meanwhile.

All the bests,

Wonseok

Mon, Oct 3, 9:35 PM

From Karlos Gil

Dear Wonseok,

First of all, I would like to thank you for accepting this invitation. I am more than delighted to share thoughts and ideas with you.

Also congratulations for the amazing work you are doing at the Seoul Museum of Art. After a couple of trips to Singapore and Tokyo, Asia has become one of my preferences for visiting.

I always define my practice as a blend between the past and the futuristic in order to explore 'other worldliness' in the actual world around us. Places are severed from the conventions of time (past, present or future), where the line between real and imagined becomes uncertain. Thus the relationship between form and narratives in reference to how we imagine the future – dystopias in particular – is something that has always concerned me since the beginning of my career.

In my practice an object is more related to a relic or fossil from the past – also from the future – that allows me to deal with the nature of time and memory in addition to the possible reconstruction of the future. I also like the idea of being an archeologist that comes from the future to create fragmentary scenarios by layering the artwork with encrypted backstories from science fiction, the occult, underground culture, nihilism,

mythology and industrial/biological evolution.

The final shape of my objects relies on several decisions I usually take as an artist. The use of certain technologies and their relationship with those backstories transform the object into a time machine. The object is not a self-evident entity. It is something that is constantly being redefined and re-valued, and shares intimate qualities with other forms of biological and technological life.

In 1646 we will show a new sculpture from my ongoing project *Phantom Limbs* which uses packaging moulds normally used for the storage of electronic devices and household appliances. The foams of this packaging adapt ergonomically to the surfaces of the devices to protect them from possible impacts and damage during transport. I transform these foams – normally thrown in the recycling bin – by casting them with noble metals like silver, gold or copper, normally used in the past for making durable stuff. Through the analysis of a mimesis between the natural world and that of man-made industrial objects, I try to focus on the fragility of both electronic components and human bodies.

All my best,

k

Sun, Oct 9, 9:53 AM

From 고원석 Wonseok Koh

Dear Karlos,

Thanks for your good words about SeMA.

It is very nice to hear that Asia became your preferred place to visit.

As one of the insiders, I have always been interested in Asia. But that interest was rather shallow and stereotyped based on limited knowledge or even an exoticism. It hasn't been long since I acquired a more balanced and mutual perspective on Asia because its images were packaged and guided by others for a long time. For example, as a person who was a kid in the Cold War era, I always tend to understand Asia on the basis of Cold War structures.

As I now know more about Asia, I find that understanding Asia is getting more difficult.

Probably the cities you have experienced are the most developed and urbanised ones in Asia. I hope you can find and enjoy Asia more in the future. Wang Hui said: "Asia is the World."

Thank you for your explanation, especially on your forms.

It was very helpful to understand the essential backbone of your various works.

The title *Phantom Limbs* sounds very attractive.

The forms of the works look like minimal sculptures at a glance.

(Actually recently, sculpture is considered as one of the new trends amongst young

Korean artists. SeMA recently hosted an exhibition about that: <https://sema.seoul.go.kr/en/whatson/exhibition/detail> )

It is very interesting that the 'packaging moulds' are the evidence of existence and at the same time the state of absence in your works. As they become free standing objects in your context, they seem to obtain a certain spirit, which serves as a supplement to their original state, but something still keeps the memories of their existence. In a way it is poetic and even emotional.

At this point, I can easily guess how they can be connected to the past, but am wondering about how they can be connected to the Futuristic. Can they also be connected to the aspect of sci-fi?

I hope to listen to your ideas on this!

Best regards,

Wonseok

Sun, Oct 9, 12:00 PM

From Karlos Gil

Dear Wonseok,

Many thanks for your kind reply.

*Phantom Limbs* is more related to a certain idea of brutalism than to minimalism. Of course, both styles share structural and conceptual similarities in their DNA, but from the context of sculpture they have important differences. Preserving the function while respecting the form, from the structure to the skin of the object is a remarkable aspect in these pieces. All this information is visible in certain decisions such as preserving the joints of the moulds, the ducts through which the metal flows in the process of 'printing' the pieces, and even the use of certain materials. The conceptual connection between different technologies is something that interests me, since the original moulds are intended to protect technological instruments that are linked to a certain idea of progress despite the fact that many of them are programmed to be technologically obsolete. Here, again, there is a conflict between different intensities or speeds, a moment where time collapses itself and I always like to incorporate that in my works.

At this point your question about science fiction is very interesting. For instance the World War II bunkers on the Atlantic coast of Europe are military structures that will remind us over the next century of the battles, destructions and oppression of war from a distant past. But at the same time, these architectures are recontextualized from the present looking towards the future since their forms evoke references to science fiction from a formal and conceptual

perspective. Science fiction produces overlapping temporalities, and according to F. Jameson, science fiction would be a collage of elements from the past and the present rather than the actual fabrication of an unfathomable future. Science fiction and its archaeologies of the future are constantly reproposing landscapes and bodies, as well as social equations of various political natures: ruins of times past and future; obsolescence and modern technologies, biohacking and body-editing, etc.

Countries like South Korea, Japan, China or Taiwan are good examples to see this overlap between old tradition and future imaginary. Let me connect my interest in Asia with the video work *Origin* that will be world premiered at 1646. For some time now, I have been very interested in concepts such as 'techno-animism' or the 'transmutation of matter' through the so-called agency of objects present in some non-western logics, especially in Asia. *Origin* conjures up futuristic beings from an eerie smoke filled landscape and the depths of the earth. The netherworld of chambers, carved out over deep time, once held remnants of lost civilisations, now foretell a future subterranean world, occupied by a species evolved from our environmentally challenged world. *Origin* was recorded in the subsoil of Madrid, where abandoned metro stations and forgotten subways allowed me to open up a sort of in-between zone where the whole space was light animated using different technologies and creating a sort of conceptual sci-fi film.

Can't wait to read your thoughts on this!

Many many thanks for your questions :)

Kind regards,

k

Sun, Oct 16, 3:22 PM

From 고원석 Wonseok Koh

Dear Karlos,

I am so sorry for the belated reply even though I enjoy this conversation a lot.

Recently SeMA is preparing the annual audit and I was fully tied up with the related works. SeMA belongs to Seoul's metropolitan government and we have to answer all the requests and questions from city council members. I even had to cancel my trip to Paris, invited by Institut Français, which was planned to happen this week originally. Honestly it is always challenging to explain the efficiency and efficacy of all the activities of curating. Actually it is a kind of the ultimate hurdle that all the public museums are facing for a long time.

It is very exciting to hear about your ideas on science fiction. I didn't know that Fredric Jameson said so, but I totally agree with that opinion.

Whenever there were hard landings of violent Modernisms such as (civil) war, colonisation or massacres during the forced modernization in Asia, there were always reactions of pre-modern ceremonies for condolence or recovery in Korea and/or in Asia. For example, the need for Sharman's ceremony of healing increased after those happenings. It is not because people became uncivilised but I think it is because their gut guided them to find a way to overcome the hurdle of Modernism through their old cultural resources when they face the miserable realities. In my perspective, the dominance of the Christianity in Korea can be partly understood in that context.

It is very interesting to see the increase of traditional mysterious storytelling in Korea with the same pace of technological progress. Especially after technology became the essential element of creating cultural contents, the spread of that phenomenon became bigger. For instance, you can find so many Korean zombie dramas on Netflix. Some of them, such as *Kingdom*, are based on the Joseon Dynasty (15th to 18th century) but reflected the near future exactly. Think about how people dealt with the pandemic issue before Covid-19. You can also find a lot of contemporary Korean zombie dramas/films but most of them are the contemporary version of traditional ghosts. I think people in this era still tend to find the answers to the puzzle of life in pre-modern resources, as these also look very unique and special to the younger generations who couldn't experience the pre-modern lifestyle.

I don't know if you're already interested in Korean dramas. But if you're not, I guess some of them might give you a bit of inspiration at least. You can find all of them on Netflix:

*Kingdom*  
*Train to Busan*  
*The Priest*  
*Hellhound*  
*Alive*  
*All of us are dead*

I can't wait to see your *Origin*. Your idea sounds incredibly interesting.

Bests,

Wonseok

Sun, Oct 16, 11:55 PM

From Karlos Gil

Dear Wonseok,

Many thanks for answering and for sharing your references.

*Origin* is super related to traditional horror storytelling – especially Victorian literature and 19th Century ghost stories. The film conjures ghosts of iron age settlers whilst foretelling human environmental disasters and futuristic alien behaviours. Things from ever deeper antiquity seem to wake up and begin their comeback lurking in a smooth subterranean labyrinth. As an artist, you can exploit a world of creaking floorboards, creepy servants ... and gas lamps that cause hallucinations.

As a big H.P. Lovecraft fan, I have always been very keen on horror films. Indeed they are usually grounded on traditional ghost tales... that's the reason why they are so special!

A couple months before the Covid-19 crisis, I was in Japan shooting my previous film *Uncanny Valley* which is a sort of horror film. That piece reflects on the relationship between machines and humans through the encounter between an android and its doppelgänger. It also explores complex existential problems due to the 'Uncanny Valley Hypothesis' in the field of robotics, where an android that is created too much in the image and likeness of a human, faces rejection. Through this relationship, *Uncanny Valley* explores the communication between different forms of intelligences, specially between humans and machines, and produces an immersive, constantly changing environment, in which the edit infects matter with memory, using some

classic technical resources from the horror film industry.

For this film, I worked with the Miraikan Museum in Tokyo, one of the most advanced research centres in the development of robotics and the study of the relationship between humans and androids. This collaboration with leading robotics specialists enabled a face to face meeting between a human actress and a real android actress. Beyond the appearance of robots, the development of artificial intelligence is crucial. It's an evolution towards machines with analytical, synthetic and decision-making capacities that adapt to new situations thanks to learning, memory and critical focus.

Maybe AI, androids and machines are our ghosts and zombies...

Best regards,

k

Tue, Oct 18, 2:57 PM

From 고원석 Wonseok Koh

Dear Karlos,

It is such an ambitious idea to connect the futuristic technological elements to the historic tacit knowledge.

I think you definitely need to collaborate with many experts in each field. Among your descriptions of your works and interests, I found so many interesting points in literature, history, and anthology – as well as futurology, technology and not to mention art history.

Have you collaborated with other experts than Miraikan? I think the art of collaboration for your work is quite essential.

All the bests,

Wonseok

Wed, Oct 19, 11:28 AM

From Karlos Gil

Thanks Dear Wonseok,

Many thanks for your kind reply.

My studio is not a place of production but a place of research.

There I usually meet with a lot of experts from different fields like the ones you have mentioned.

Maybe the most ambitious project I have done until now was thanks to an amazing research grant called LEONARDO, back in 2021. Its title is *Deep Image* and it consists of an immersive video installation that, through collaboration with a programmer and a neuroscientist, decoded the activity of the human brain in sequences of images. Through an artificial intelligence software developed in collaboration with the Laboratory of Cognitive and Computational Neuroscience of the Polytechnic University of Madrid, we reproduced an immense and complete conceptual

map of brain images obtained from the memories, dreams or sounds from a group of people.

It is known that memories and memory create powerful associations in any of us; when we listen to a song from our childhood, the music transports us to another time and another place, awakening a host of emotions and visual memories that flow through the mind. Delving into these ideas, *Deep Image* asks three fundamental questions: what effect does memory have on our visual experiences? How could images change and modulate our memory? What if we could download our thoughts and memories through images?

Those kinds of questions are triggers for my projects.

Please find below a few images from one of the videos we did. In that particular case we recreate several childhood memories regarding landscapes from different people. It was an amazing experience working with neuroscientists, physicists, mathematicians etc.



The show in 1646 is the first of three chapters and is a bit smaller than the second exhibition at CA2M in Madrid. In The Hague, I am presenting a new project titled *Timefall* for which I am collaborating with a group of material engineers.

The main idea of *Timefall* is to compose sensorial encounters with the nature of time through a study of how natural and artificial bodies operate, how media affects memory and the relationship between life and death. Despite these commonalities, this work also shows an almost terrifying randomness and a desire to operate at several different points on the very edge of art, since the object's ultimate purpose is its own destruction through the transmutation of matter.

*Timefall* is an installation of three glass tanks that uses accelerated ageing technology to generate different temporalities in the exhibition. Each tank is programmed with unique atmospheric conditions to create a different time rhythm. Within these elements, there are objects that degrade throughout the exhibition, with greater or lesser speed, according to their programming. By bringing together diverse forms and technologies, this work forms an immersive and constantly changing environment, a re-imagined landscape that materialises the liveliness of the piece. Although the project is inscribed within the sculptural language, these pieces are closer to a time-based media as they are configured as an environment in constant change. Since the viewer will be able to observe a sequence of events inside the fish tanks that will transform the objects inside, material engineering, bioengineering and science fiction enter into tacit relationships of complicity, blurring the once clearly delineated

boundary between the natural and the artificial.

The title *Timefall* – also the exhibition's title for 1646 – refers to an otherworldly rain which accelerates the progress of time for nearly everything it comes into contact with. I got that reference from Hideo Kojima's masterpiece *Death Stranding*, where the extremely accelerated ageing only happens the first time the timefall hits an object, or even, a person's body. This time aberration means that life on the surface is destined almost exclusively for monsters and eerie organisms that have managed to adapt themselves to these radical climatic conditions.

Can't wait to share with you some of these works!

Thank you so much Wonseok!

Best regards,

k

Mon, Oct 24, 4:39 PM

From 고원석 Wonseok Koh

Dear Karlos,

It surprises me over and over whenever I receive your prompt emails full of amazing ideas.

I like looking at archival photos especially of the time when I was a kid or teenager without checking the reason. I just thought it was an old-fashioned habit of middle-aged men, but later on I found that I like to link the fragments of each archival image with the images from my vague memories in the similar period.

So I once wished to download my memories and see them. I didn't process my preference of old images, but I feel some natural instinct anyway and so I think it is one of my brain's behaviours.

I guess this habit might be related to the effort of self-healing. Even though not everyone experiences seriously traumatic things, I think everyone has traumatic memories or emotions at least from when they were a kid because they were surrounded by adults.

Your show is coming closer, I wonder how you're going to display your works in that unique space.

Best,

Wonseok

Fri, Oct 28, 12:13 PM

From Karlos Gil

Dear Wonseok,

Thank you for your kind words. The relationship between memories and images that you mention is rather interesting. When our brain cannot completely reconstruct an image from the past, it imagines it in order to have a complete memory sequence. Our melancholy is mixed with a bit of fantasy, this is something that has always seemed very inspiring to me.

Regarding your question about the installation, we are going to build an inverted space between the first and the second room where the entire 1646 space will be articulated as an immersive experience and/or a fragmentary scenario.

The main piece is the film *Origin* that will be projected in the second room so we have installed a completely reflective floor to generate a reflection effect on the projection, like a kind of puddle that reflects fragments from the sky. Thus the space reflects the pieces contained in it.

In the first room we will have a piece from the *Phantom Limbs* cast in aluminium that will reflect the whole space in its surface. All the walls will be painted in dark grey, along with some tapestries I have produced ad hoc for this show.

The entire space of 1646 will be articulated as an immersive experience and/or a fragmentary mise-en-scene.

best,  
k

Oct 30, 2022, 1:03 PM

From **고원석** Wonseok Koh

Dear Karlos,

Reminding the space of 1646, I think your idea to make the space as a whole immersive device/space sounds really interesting.

I can't wait to see the photos of the space. But first of all, I hope you're managing the installation well. I guess you are very busy now for installation and related works just before the opening.

Take care and talk to you soon.

All the bests,

Wonseok

Tue, Nov 1, 6:07 PM

From Karlos Gil

Dear Wonseok,

**After receiving the terrible news about the accident in Seoul, I hope that you and all your loved ones are safe. It has been a truly horrible event and we have received it with great sadness.**

**Thank you very much for your response and for all the feedback throughout our conversation. I really liked exchanging ideas and reflections on our practices in the art industry.**

**I will send you all the material related to the exhibition very soon!**

**Please take care and I hope to meet you soon!**

**All my best,**

**k**