

**SI ON**

***I Am An Outcast From The World***

**February 16–March 19, 2023**

**55 Delancey St, New York**

The power and presence of Si On's artwork materializes through a method best described as sgraffito. Unplanned, heavy layers of paint are applied to canvas then scraped or scrubbed away. Through repetition of this destructive and creative action the details of a latent, unconscious expression come into view. Image and form ergo directly emerge as lower levels of color penetrate those superficial layers that cover it. This process is also emblematic of the ways in which Si On takes on painting as a place for surfacing deep-seated, unseen emotion that is as universal as it is intimately personal. In a world constructed of unspoken forces, this is no less than a life-sustaining practice of expulsion and transformation.

The influence of Korean shamanism often comes up in discussions of Si On's work. At this juncture art becomes what she describes as a healing ritual and a purification process. Here she channels those emotions that might culturally be seen as "ugly," to be denied or suppressed—disappointment, fear, anger, emptiness, violence, grief—so that these may no longer be rendered alienating experiences in the hostile world from which they are borne. This is a freeing of energy through the spirit of art that permits the cohabitation of the brutal and humorous, darkness with light, triumph and tragedy, from birth to death. In a recent conversation Si On expressed of this process, "Assuming that the primal power of shamanism corresponds to the hidden power of art, I work with the hope that my art also has this kind of strength. The same can be said about shamanism itself—it still exists today because many people still need it."

Key to its power is an inherent optimism to Si On's work. Even in feeling like *An Outcast From The World*, in her imagery—scratched, smashed, and sprayed into place—we come face to face with a fresh and formidable expression of *aliveness*. This isn't to say Si On paints friendly feelings; in fact, when things start to feel "too good" painting ceases its purpose. Rather, steeped in isolation having moved from New York City to live in a small town in Poland, unable to communicate or connect, she channels this solitary intensity through vivid color and a pop cultural sensibility. The frustration of this confinement occupies cheerful hues as often as it bursts through in flames. Smashed ceramics themselves contain a changing archive within the work. Si On's is in other words a nomadic aesthetic; a self split open in response to the world, continually transmuted through a deep belief in the absolutely necessary power of art.

Si On (b. 1979, South Korea) received a PhD and MA in Painting from the Kyoto City University of Arts, Japan; and a BA from Mokwon University, Korea. She has presented solo exhibitions at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London; Pioneer Works, New York; and T293 Gallery, Rome; and has presented work in group exhibitions at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland; and The Museum of Kyoto, Japan. Her work is represented in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, New York; The High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Takahashi Collection, Tokyo; Kyoto National Museum, Kyoto, Japan; and Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles; among others. Si On lives and works in Kraków, Poland.