



What Happens When We Die?, 2024, earthenware, underglaze, glaze, 15.75 x 16.5 x 5 inches

JIHA MOON

Fool's Moon

October 25 – December 21, 2024

Opening Reception: Friday, October 25, 6–8 pm

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new sculptures and paintings by Jiha Moon. Borrowing imagery, forms, and materials from Asian folklore and traditions, contemporary popular culture, and Western art history, Moon creates a mashed-up globalized dialect that speaks to identity, cultural displacement, and miscommunication.

The ever-expanding vocabulary within Moon's visual language takes some new and notable turns in this exhibition. She explains:

"The title *Fool's Moon* comes from my childhood memories of making wishes while gazing at the full moon on Lunar New Year's Day in Korea. During those moments, we hoped for good health and happiness in the days ahead. This ritual has become a habit for me, and every time I see the full moon, I engage in wishful thinking. It's not religion, totemism, or witchcraft—but in some ways, it might be a little of all three.

I'm presenting acrylic paintings on Hanji paper, hybrid ceramic paintings, ceramic sculptures, and Korean Bojagi which are quilt painting collaborations I made with my 97-year-old grandmother. I incorporate iconic images, shapes, and colors to convey my wishful thinking during these chaotic times. The powerful Korean Haetae—a mythical hybrid creature—is reimagined as my silly, helpless poodles in a large painting on paper titled *Blue Haetae*. In my ceramic piece *Banana Wreath*, rotten banana peels symbolize the aging process, especially that of a woman's skin, and I seek to glorify this transformation by using crystal glaze.

In *Nocturne (American Beautyberry)*, I use banana peels as symbols of second-generation Asian Americans—pejoratively compared to bananas, yellow on the outside and white on the inside—who are taught by their elders to survive through assimilation. These figures are camouflaged within night scenes, accented with the hues of American beautyberry. Additionally, I reference the Korean drag queen Kimchi and Keanu Reeves, whose life quotes resonate deeply with me, borrowing their voices to tell my story.

In today's vulnerable climate, I feel that we are all fools, clinging to hope and making wishes—sentiments I capture and reflect upon through the works in this exhibition.”

Jiha Moon (b. 1973) lives and works in Tallahassee, Florida. She received a BFA from Korea University, Seoul, an MFA from Ewha Woman's University, Seoul, and an MFA from the University of Iowa. She is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Art at Florida State University, Tallahassee. Moon is a 2023 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow in Fine Arts. Her work will be featured in the upcoming exhibition *The Shape of Power: Stories of Race in American Sculpture* at Smithsonian American Art Museum (November 2024). Moon has exhibited in museums and galleries internationally including the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA; Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC; FSU Museum of Fine Arts, Tallahassee, FL; Crystal Bridges Museum, Bentonville, AR; and The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA. Her work is in the collections of the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA; Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC; High Museum, Atlanta, GA; Asia Society and Museum, New York, NY; Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC; and Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA, among many others. This will be her third solo exhibition at the gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 38 Walker Street between Broadway and Church Street. Hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 11am to 6pm, and by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.