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STONE CHECK

THE SKINS OF CONTEMPORARY KOREAN PAINTING

Tone Check: The Skins of Contemporary Korean Painting

Ho Won Kim

In Korea, pale, flawless skin has historically been associated with beauty, wealth, and social status. This ideal originally served to distinguish the noble class from agrarian society, where laborers' prolonged exposure to the sunlight led to darker skin. This aesthetic preference has endured over time, profoundly shaping contemporary beauty standards and societal perceptions. However, the fixation on perfect skin has also faced criticism for marginalizing individuals who do not conform, particularly those with darker skin, tattoos, or piercings. Such deviations from the norm are often perceived as acts of non-conformity, leading to social exclusion. This concern has sparked critical discussions on inclusivity and representation, exposing the societal pressures embedded within these ideals. In this context, skin transcends its biological function, becoming a symbol of Korea's evolving identity, where conservative traditions intersect with modern diversity.

Tone Check: The Skins of Contemporary Korean Painting examines the material and metaphorical relationship between skin and the painted surface. Both act as permeable boundaries, where internal meanings and external realities converge: skin carries personal histories that emerge through exposure to the world, while the painted canvas transforms into a layered space where materiality and narrative entwine. The nine Korean artists featured in this exhibition use painting to explore tensions between the body and the societal pressures surrounding it. Their works reveal the friction between individual expression and societal norms, illustrating how the canvas, like skin, becomes a complex surface where histories and identities unfold. These pieces investigate the boundary between internal and external experiences, personal and collective struggles, uncovering the nuanced complexities inscribed on both skin and painting.

The analogy of skin as a map of memory and identity is central to many works in the exhibition. Skin bears marks that chronicle the passage of time, shaping both personal and cultural identity. **Jazoo Yang's** Skin of Everything series, for instance, incorporates materials such as soil and debris from demolished sites in Korea to create textured surfaces—skins of the city. By integrating fragments from a rapidly changing urban landscape into her paintings, Yang poignantly captures the collective memory within the cityscape, tracing the impact of these transformations on individual lives.

Similarly, **Ahyun Jeon's** work portrays the skin as a site of memory. Her realistic depictions of hands and legs, marked by bruises and scars, become maps of internal conflict and emotional turmoil. The defensive gestures and postures of these body parts—subtle and almost abstract in their forms—intensify these emotions while simultaneously concealing them. In this tension, where defense mechanisms blur into quasi-abstracted body parts and wounds, Jeon reveals a fragile boundary where self-protection intertwines with self-inflicted distress.

Yissho Oh's painting reimagines skin as a memory-laden surface, marked by both deliberate and instinctual gestures. Using silicone to mimic the texture of human skin, Oh engraves its surface with a tattoo machine, responding to his body's spontaneous movements. The resulting marks—etched impressions left by both artist and instrument—become fragmented traces, each one a moment of embodied memory. As he interprets these marks into raw forms, Oh draws attention to skin as an archive of the unconscious, where memory and impulse intersect.

Claire Chey's *Guijeop* series expands on this theme, merging human bodies with ghostly figures to explore the intersections of trauma and desire. Through her investigation of spectrophilia—intimate encounters with spirits—Chey blurs the boundaries between yearning and fear, rendering the body as a charged landscape haunted by unresolved histories. In this fusion of the erotic and the supernatural, skin emerges as a liminal space, holding the tension between what is past and what remains palpably present.

Beyond identity, another recurring theme in the exhibition is the metaphor of skin as a collaged surface—fragmented and reassembled—to capture how identity and experience accumulate over time, forming a fractured yet cohesive reality. **Jenny Jisun Kim's** work explores the instability of language and identity through layered paintings in which text and symbols fragment into narratives in constant flux. Her technique of sanding and layering suggests cycles of creation and erasure, reflecting how identity is shaped by what is alternately revealed and concealed. The dynamic interplay between clarity and obscurity illuminates societal expectations etched onto personal histories, mirroring the complexities of identity in a perpetually shifting reality.

Kai Oh also approaches the idea of collage through her fusion of digital imagery and material structures, blending digital prints on silk with bold acrylic overlays. Her compositions, with their juxtaposition of smooth and textured surfaces, evoke the experience of a world filtered through digital devices, where even our perception of the body is mediated by screens. Drawing from natural phenomena such as weather patterns and plant life, Oh's work reflects a quest for self-exploration within this cyclical, hybrid environment, as identity navigates both physical and digital realms.

Judy Chung's work extends the theme of fragmentation and reassembly by examining the fragility of reality and narrative. Her collaged compositions—woven from elements of subcultures, mythology, and personal experience—explore the shifting boundaries of storytelling through the interplay of digital manipulation and traditional brushwork. Each piece holds layered meanings that destabilize as they are revealed, blurring the line between truth and fiction. Chung's work transforms storytelling into a fluid process of meaning-making, where fragmented realities are both concealed and revealed.

Similarly, **Youngmin Park's** work examines the delicate boundary between reality and belief. Drawing inspiration from Thomas the Apostle—whose struggle to believe without seeing echoes through history—Park explores how skin serves as a threshold between inner conviction and outer reality. Through repeated imagery, her work subtly shifts meanings, inviting viewers to look beyond surface appearances and question the layered depths beneath visual mirroring.

Finally, **Jean Oh's** sewn paintings depict identity as a mosaic of fragmented memories and experiences. Through meticulous stitching and layering, she merges fabrics and canvases from past works, creating textured surfaces that evoke the layered quality of skin as it heals over time. By stitching together moments of tension and imperfection, Oh unveils both the fragility and resilience of identity, echoing life's constant interplay between expectations and the unpredictability of change.

Together, the exhibition demonstrates how skin, as both a physical and metaphorical boundary, reflects Korea's evolving societal identity. The nine artists use the painted surface to mirror the complexities of identity and experience. Through varied approaches, they challenge traditional ideals of the body and cultural expectations surrounding identity, offering layered perspectives on the personal and collective narratives inscribed upon the skin. In contemporary Korea, where cultural heritage intersects with rapid change, skin becomes a potent site for renewed understandings of self and society, expressing both personal history and collective transformation.



Claire

Cheney



Guijeop #1, 2024

Oil on canvas

48 1/8 x 66 1/8 inches (122 x 168 cm)



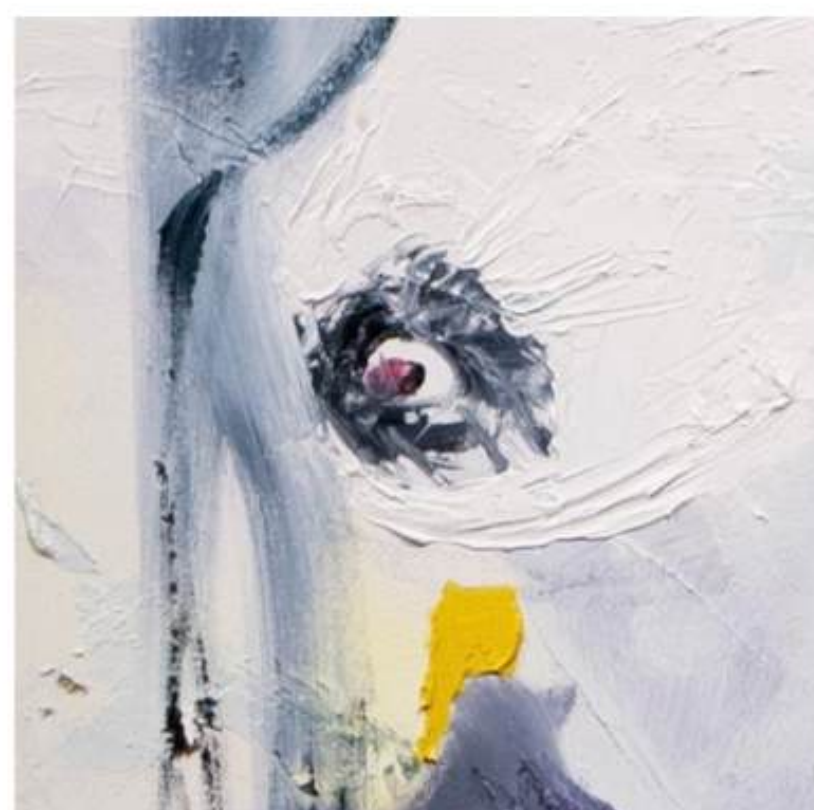
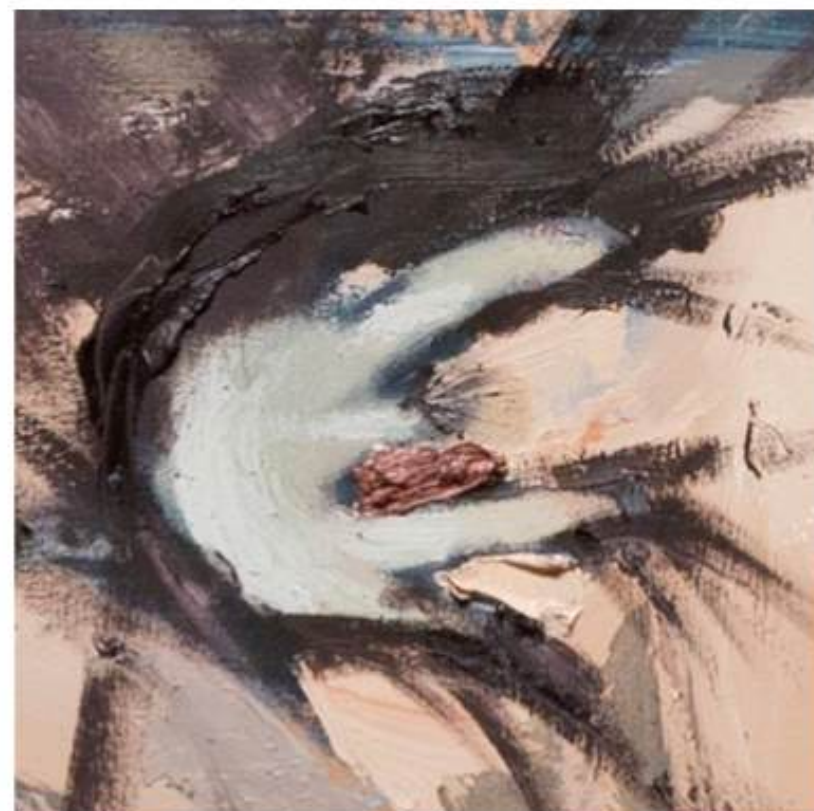
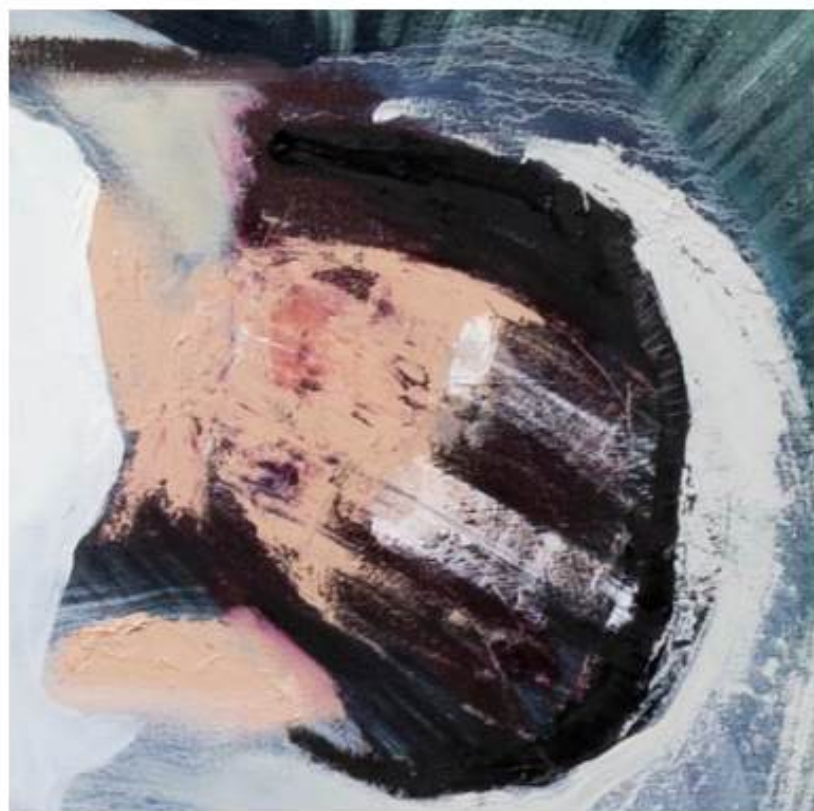
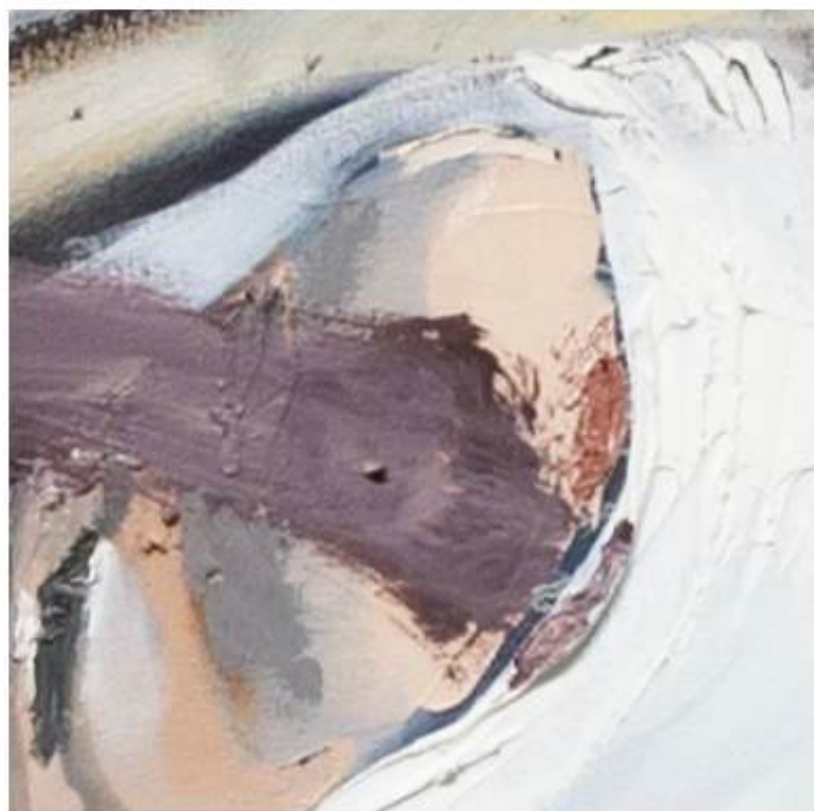
Guijeop #2, 2024

Oil on canvas

66 1/8 x 48 1/8 inches (168 x 122 cm)

*“My work is about the business of eating bodies and bodies being eaten.
I deal with what bodies (figuratively and literally) consume,
what bodies are consumed (this has been more central to my work),
what is produced by/excreted from the body,
and what is left inside to become the body.
And what all of that means.”*

– Claire Chey



The Korean title of both paintings, 귀접 (鬼接 /Guijeop), translates to “spectrophilia” in English, but more accurately, it means a (sexual) contact with ghosts. Initially, I believed this phenomenon to be uniquely Korean, but I soon discovered that similar concepts have existed across various cultures. In the West, there are stories of incubus and succubus, and during the witch trials, suspects were often questioned about having sexual encounters with demons.

In Korea, 귀접 is seen as a relatively common experience, though shamanic traditions warn against it as an intense form of spirit possession—one that can be dangerous and even addictive. Those who have experienced 귀접 often describe the encounter as both ecstatic and erotic, despite its non-consensual nature. It is, in essence, a form of ghost-rape rather than a mutual ghostly encounter. I wonder if its “taboo” status is lessened because of its non-consensual nature and lack of form. By losing control of one's body to a powerful spirit, perhaps the shame associated with the sexual experience is lifted.

Though I don't believe in ghosts and have never experienced 귀접, it convinces and fascinates me. Whether these ghosts are real or imagined, the experience of becoming one with a ghost, or of being invaded by one, is compelling in its ambiguity. In these encounters, the boundaries between self and other dissolve.



Incubus, 1879



Wonhyo-daesa and Uisang-daesa resting in a tomb while a Hungry Ghost looks down on them.

Visually, too, these ghosts take on the most desired forms of the experiencer. Straight men, for example, may report being “bottomed” by a male ghost, while others may describe encounters with multiple entities. The way these encounters unfold seems to reflect not only sexual desires but also fluid ideas of power, control, and identity.

When I worked with ghost imagery in my work years ago, I wrote, “... Korean ghosts are often those who were excluded and oppressed during their lives, and through death, they become entities to be feared. I am fascinated by this reversal of traditional power dynamics within ghost imagery.”

In traditional Korean culture, ghosts embody **한** (Han)—a deep sorrow, grief, anger, resentment, and pain. Han is an emotion tied to historical oppression and personal loss, and ghosts are a concentrated form of Han, manifesting from the unresolved grief, resentment, and pain of those who suffered in life. What does it mean, then, for someone to have an ecstatic, intimate, and even sexual encounter with one? Isn't our own trauma, in its nature, a kind of ghost, haunting us relentlessly in our everyday lives?

I created these two paintings by ruminating on and imagining encounters with some of my own ghosts. I prefer the idea of fucking with trauma, rather than to attempt to exorcise it.



*“I eat myself too, sometimes.
That is what happens
when you know that you’re delicious,
and that you’re going to be eaten again anyway
when your flesh grows back on your bones.
I am nourished by eating my flesh.
When I am left with less,
I am reassured that I exist for a good reason.”*

– Claire Chey



An abstract painting with a vibrant, multi-colored palette. The background features broad, expressive brushstrokes in shades of blue, purple, green, yellow, and red. A prominent diagonal stroke of red runs from the upper right towards the center. The overall style is gestural and textured, with visible brushwork and a sense of movement. The text 'Judy Chung' is overlaid on the painting in a white serif font, with 'Judy' on the top line and 'Chung' on the bottom line. The 'J' in 'Judy' is a large, bold blue letter, while the rest of the letters are white. The 'C' in 'Chung' is also a large, bold blue letter, with the remaining letters in white.

Judy
Chung

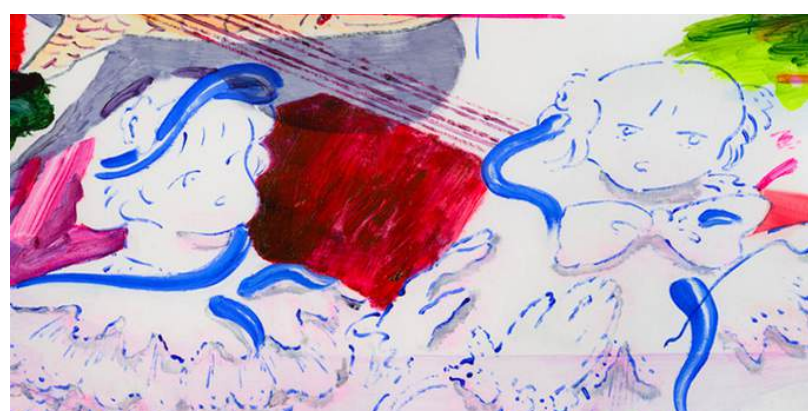


Symbiosis (A More Imperfect Union), 2024

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 70 inches (127 x 177.8 cm)

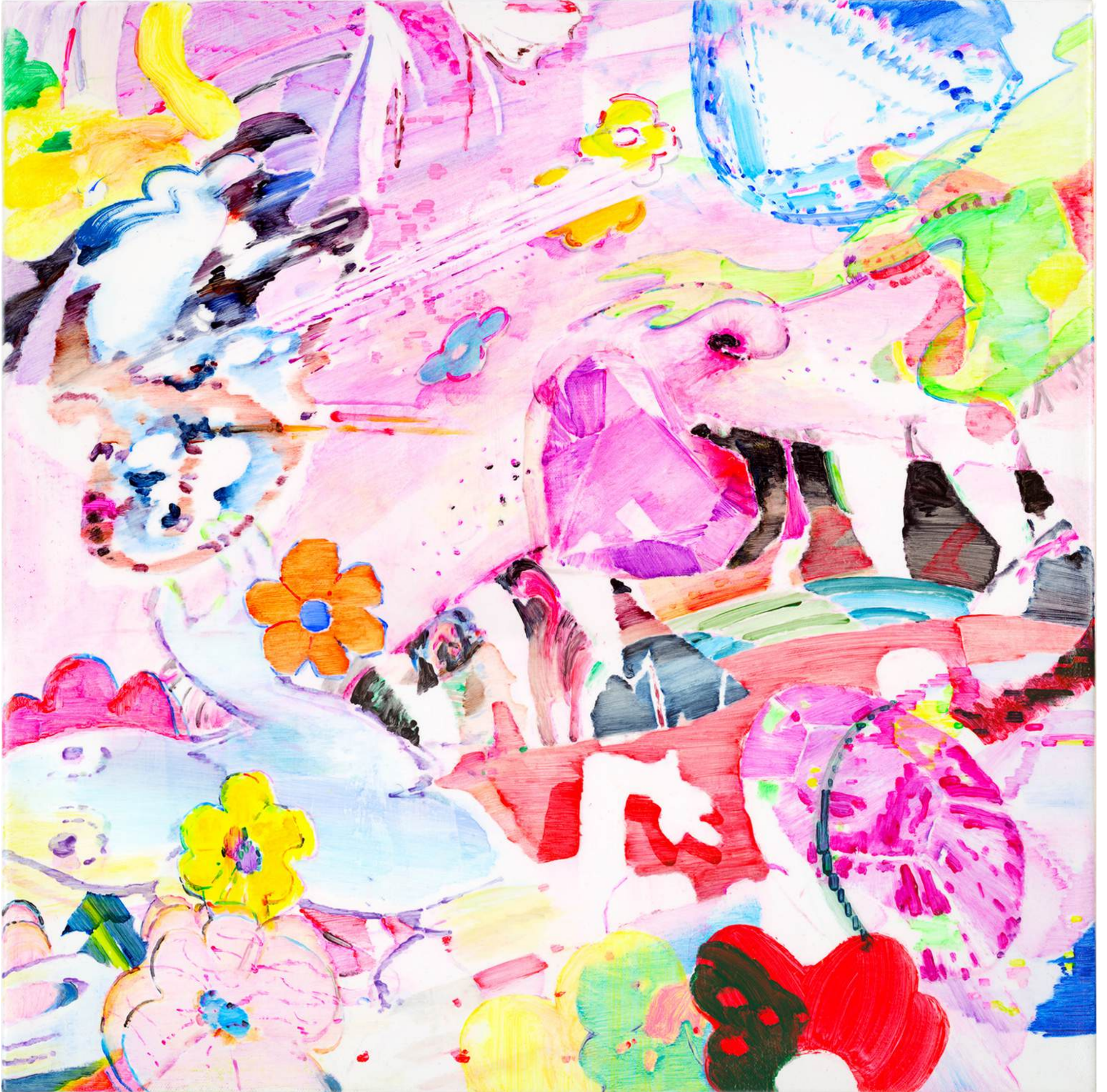
In *Symbiosis (A More Imperfect Union)*, I continue to explore the dynamics of my relationship with the world around me, this time focusing on the concept of true and false. I often find that in reality, truth and falsehood are often indistinct like Siamese twins with the same mannerisms, and intertwined, such as the tender gestures of the young couple in the painting *The Dead Lovers* (artist unknown) from the 15th century, despite their decaying bodies. This delicate balance within disorder- those fleeting moments of clarity amidst chaos- is what interests me most.



In *Symbiosis (Prophet)*, I delve deeper into the agency of words and language, drawing inspiration from the French fairy tale *Diamonds and Toads*. In the story, a fairy rewards a virtuous daughter with the ability to speak gems and flowers, while cursing her deceitful sister to spit out snakes and frogs.

Though the tale has its flaws- for example, I can't imagine wanting to involuntarily spit anything while talking - it feels strongly relevant to me in a world dominated by social media.





Symbiosis (Prophet), 2024
Acrylic on canvas
20 x 20 inches (50.8 x 50.8 cm)



Chung's work starts as a line of inquiry into her personal experiences. Recent inquiries include the interactions that unfold within specific social contexts, such as the divided environment of school cafeterias, the patience-testing queues of checkout lines, and the obscure corners of Reddit pages. She then seeks to draw connections between these microcosms and the broader dynamics of society at large.

The narratives that result from these investigations span a wide spectrum, encompassing everything from fantastical epic battles and mythological narratives to the mundane routines of everyday life. Central to her world-building are the numerous characters and archetypes that inhabit her work. These entities exist both as distinct individuals and as facets of a collective persona.



Informed by a multitude of sources including subcultures, literature, and design, Chung's paintings incorporate the weighty drama reminiscent of Western Neoclassical Painting with the vibrant, almost whimsical exaggerations borrowed from figures in shoujo manga and kawaii culture. This jarring contrast hints at an underlying self-awareness, akin to an inside joke for those attuned to her work.

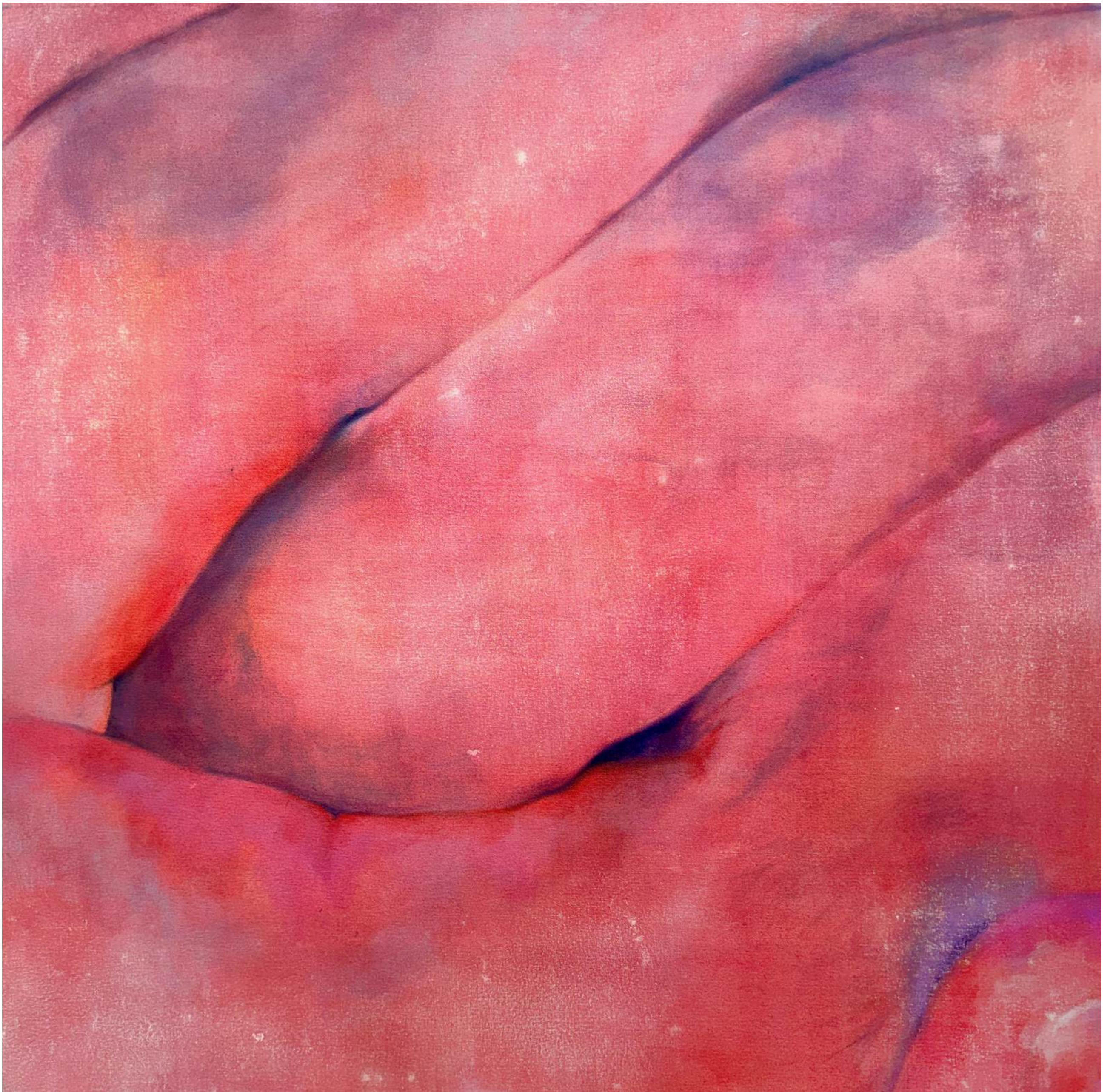


Ahyun

Jeon



Symbiosis, 2023
Watercolor, acrylic, oil on canvas
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



Oh My 02, 2024

Watercolor, acrylic, and oil on canvas

36 x 36 inches (91.4 x 91.4 cm)



My paintings, which combine acrylic, watercolor, and oil, show close-ups of the human body in ways that make it look abstract. I have exaggerated specific body parts to the extreme so that it is impossible to tell which part of the body it is. I'd like viewers to be free to imagine the bodies as un-specifically as possible.



I observe that defense mechanisms often appear in our interactions with others, especially in relationships. To illustrate symbiosis, I overlapped bodies in my painting. Human relationships can depend on each other while also being fragile. I expressed this complexity with an emerald green background, a color that usually represents abundance, growth, and nature's beauty, but can also evoke jealousy and envy. This work marks my first use of lines. These lines add depth to the flat surface, introducing layers to the visual narrative.



My color choices represent the complicated and contradictory nature of these emotions. Many paintings have flat masses of bright pink or shades of red. Red represents passion, love, and warmth but symbolizes warning, danger, and death. Pink shows human fragility and creates a sense of security and hope. Additionally, pink, reminiscent of the human fetus, symbolizes human vulnerability and evokes stability and safety amidst uncertainty.



I've employed dark red tones, with a hint of purple infused. Particularly in this piece, I highlight diverse textures on the canvas. Utilizing watercolors, I allowed thin layers to permeate the canvas and applied acrylic paint in successive layers of six or more. Afterward, I partially sanded the surface. As a result of the uneven pressure applied during sanding, some areas expanded with more significant portions chipped off, while others experienced only slight erosion.

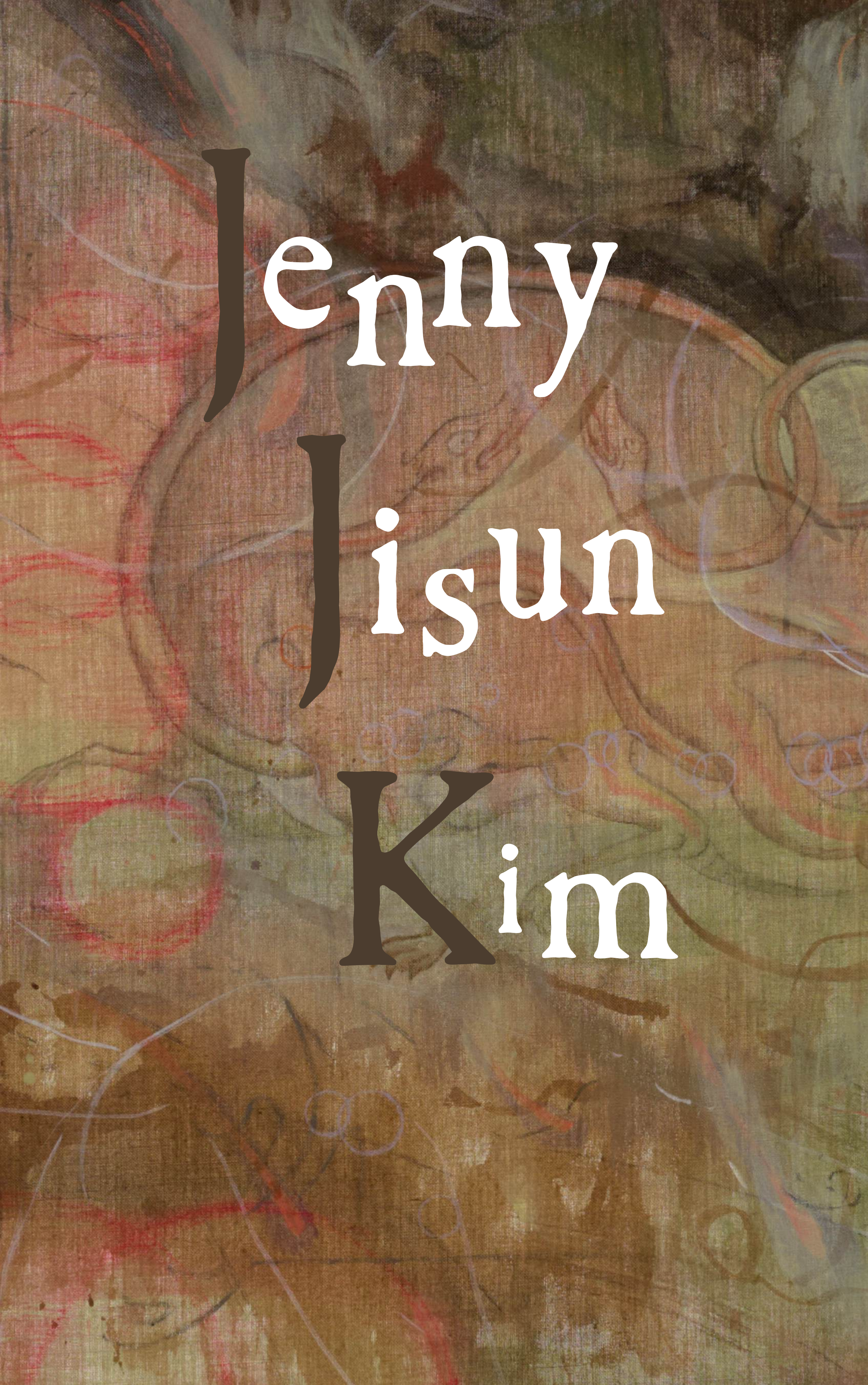
These irregularities naturally assumed abstract qualities. Additionally, when observed as a whole, it evokes the image of stars in the night sky. I didn't just layer paints; I also selectively removed paint, to create various textures and depths within the canvas.



I work in many different mediums - watercolor, acrylic, oil, and oil pastel - which feel appropriate to my subject, given that defensive emotions are often a tangle of many feelings and can change over time. For example, watercolor dries the fastest and becomes cloudier when it dries, while oil keeps its color but dries very slowly.



I aim to achieve balanced visual beauty and psychological response from color by combining figurative and abstract elements in my paintings. I also hope to convey the complexity of emotions, anxiety, and stability within human defense mechanisms through the sensory details of my paintings.



Jenny

Jisun

Kim



Ersatz, 2024

Acrylic, conte, earth pigments, gouache, graphite, oil,
sumi ink, watercolor, watercolor pencil, wood stain on linen

58 x 47 inches (147.3 x 119.4 cm)



The central image of this painting is a representation of the "Hyunmu" motif found in Gangseo Daemyo, a mural tomb from the late Goguryeo period (37 BCE - 668 CE) of Korea. The concept of the Four Divine Beasts stems from ancient Chinese cosmology, linking celestial movements to agricultural cycles and contributing to a precise calendar system. The ancient Chinese observed 28 constellations, arranging them into a framework that informed their understanding of the cosmos. The imagery of the Four Beasts reflects this celestial perspective.

Hyunmu, the northern guardian, portrays an entwined tortoise and snake, their heads facing each other. In this painting, the recurrent "circle" becomes symbols of many things: cycles of the contradicting and observational, movement, order, text, and celestial. I use colors and materials that are suggestive of the ancient tomb mural (greens and reds, earth pigments, and stains). However, by title this piece "ersatz," I suggest that what is visible is a representation of a different time and space.



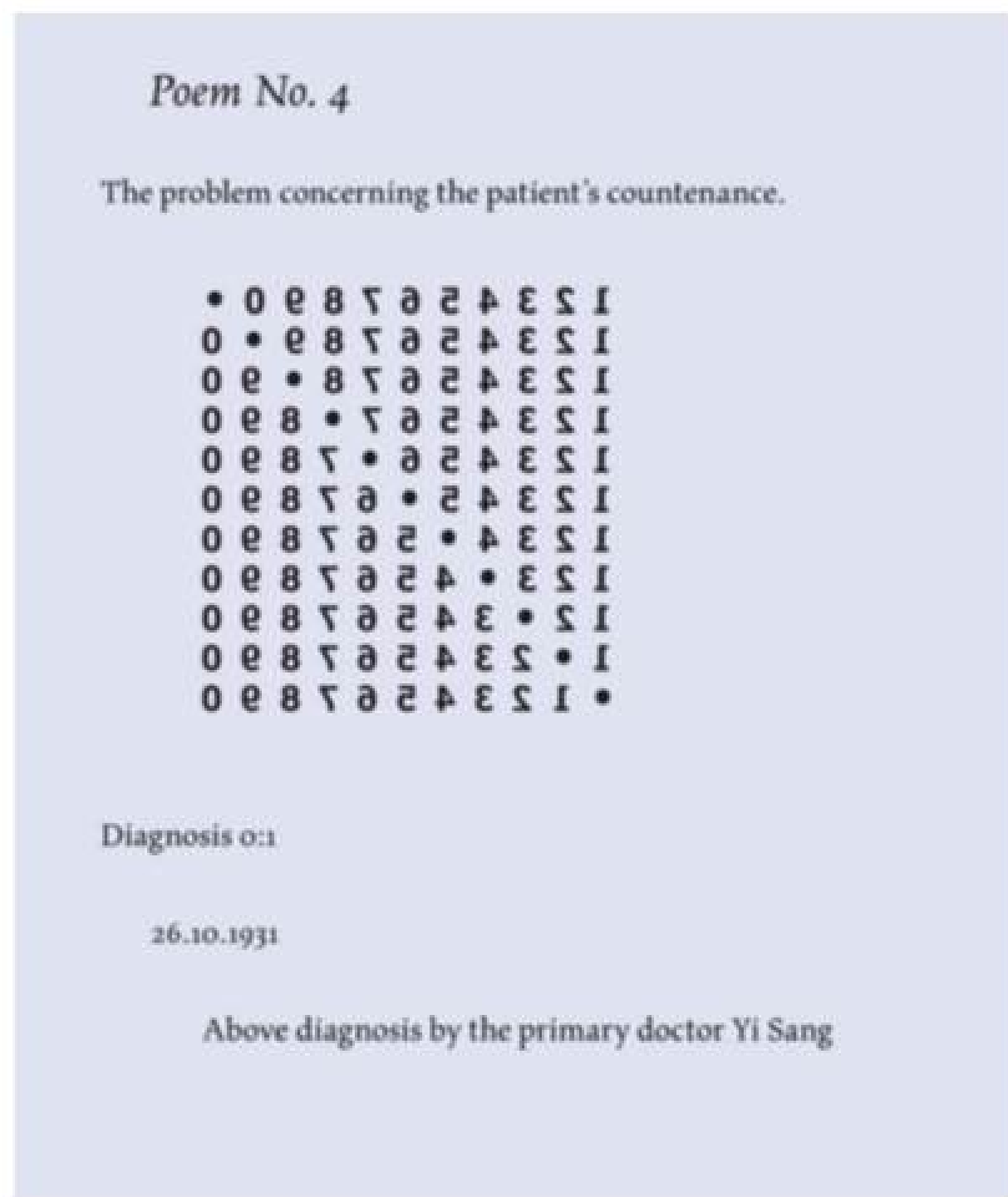


The One Who Fights Is Thus The One Who Hasn't Fought, 2024
Acrylic, earth pigments, gouache, graphite, sumi ink, and watercolor on linen
60 x 47 inches (152.4 x 119.4 cm)

In this painting, I project, expand, collage, and layer text from Yi Sang's "Poem No. 3" from his pivotal collection of poetry. "Poem No. 3" is a cryptic and cyclical poem, where the subject and object, action and inaction become convoluted and inextricable. The "one who fights (or not)" as the central figure (who is constantly the subject and object of action and inaction) the poem becomes self-referential and frame-like in my mind. Inspired by the playful entanglement that is both made possible by and referential to written language, I reintroduce the idea of the grid as a window and writing tool. On this device, the represented text becomes both stained glass and brush strokes. I further complicate the muddied dichotomies by pushing and pulling layers behind and on top of one another – layering sumi ink (which is a material that dries flat and reworkable once wetted), sanding the surface with an orbit sander, and rubbing into layers using a rag.

Poem No. 3

The one who fights is thus the one who hasn't fought and the one who fights has also been the one who doesn't fight therefore if the one who fights wants to see a fight then the one who hasn't fought seeing a fight or the one who doesn't fight seeing a fight or the one who hasn't fought seeing no fight or the one who doesn't fight seeing no fight matters not



Jean

Oh



Pink Face, 2023
Acrylic on canvas
44 x 40 inches (111.8 x 101.6 cm)



Sniff, 2023
Acrylic on sewn canvas
46 x 38 inches (116.8 x 96.5 cm)



A blend of memories, experiences, relationships, and emotions shapes our identities, thoughts, and ideas, evolving continually through personal growth and knowledge. These imperfect, unstable fragments collectively form the mosaic of our lives. By stitching together fabrics and paintings from different times and memories, I aim to capture the dynamic, ever-changing nature of memories, observations, and emotions. As a Korean American raised primarily in South Korea, I often grapple with feelings of endless searching, belonging, in-betweenness, and the inevitability of life's inconveniences—too small to ignore, yet too significant to overlook. Instability is an inherent element of each moment that viewers cannot escape.

These fragments are never perfect or complete; they create subtle imperfections and absurd, unexpected moments that define our experiences. I aim to highlight these irregularities because they shape who we are. The phrase "Right around the corner" fascinates me, encapsulating the proximity of expectation and the fleeting certainty of unexpected developments.



At first glance, viewers may struggle to identify what they are looking at. However, with deeper examination, they may discover familiar shapes and forms that they can openly interpret, creating a slight trigger of absurdity after pondering.



I explore these ideas through sewn paintings and hanging textiles. Layering is not just a technique but a concept central to my process, creating interactions between materials—whether it's layers of paint, fabric, or the various colors, shapes, and volumes in my textile work. This layering invites viewers to engage with the work, peeling back the layers to discover the stories within.

I use Nobang, a traditional Korean fabric known for its thin, translucent qualities for my Hanging Curtain series. The fabric's nature allows shapes, colors, and textures to shift depending on time, light, and angle. With a sewing machine, I depict repetitive forms of people standing absurdly close together in line, all facing forward—waiting endlessly for something out of reach. This creates an illusion of anticipation and indifference. By layering different colors of Nobang, I distort textures, deepening colors and forms, capturing the paradoxical and irrational aspects of human behavior.



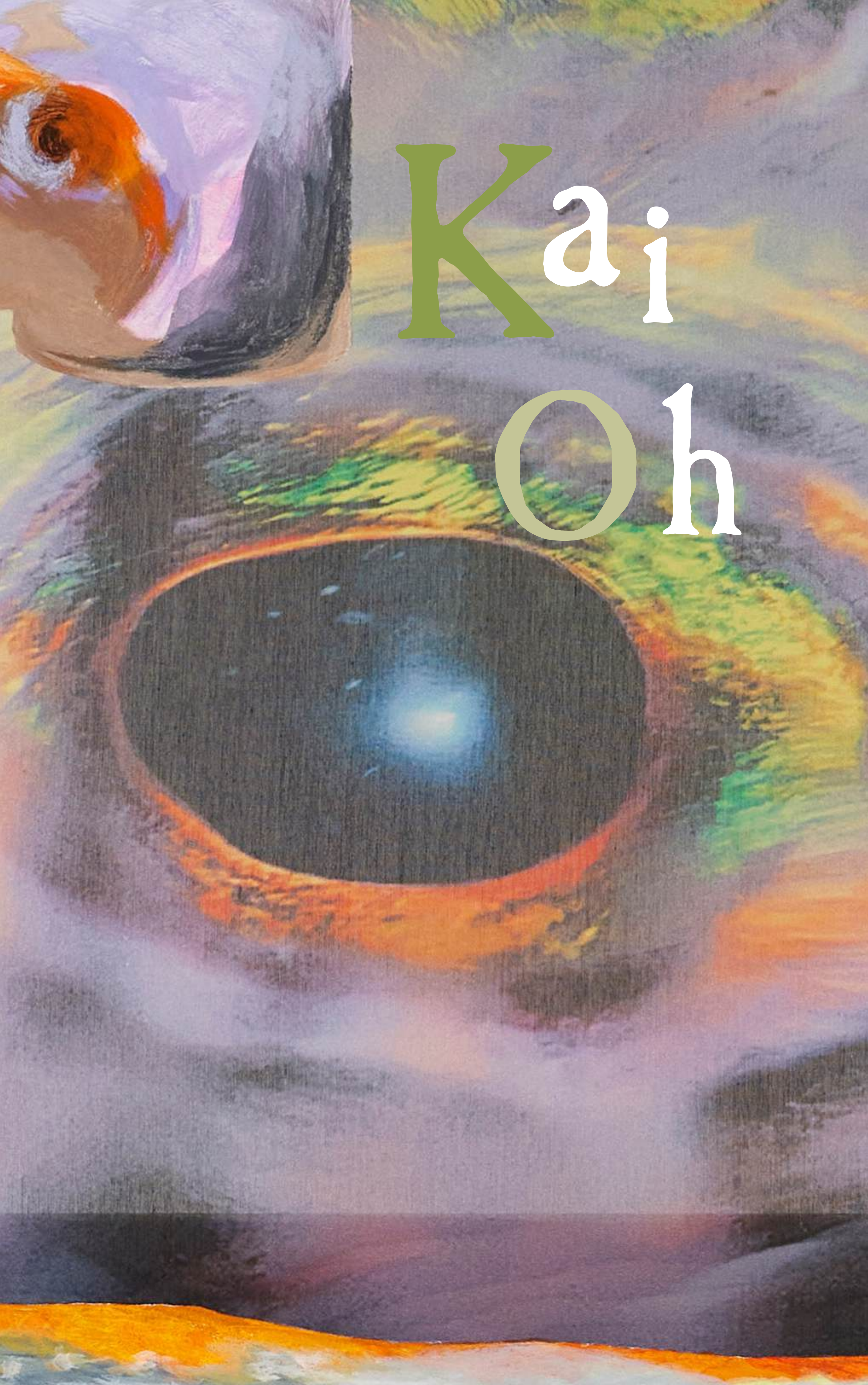


In my sewn paintings, I stitch together fragments of canvas and past works, merging memories with present experiences. Unexpected crumples and wrinkles form uneven surfaces that reflect the irregularities of life. I use acrylic paint, house paint, pencil, and charcoal, applying layers through wiping, washing, sanding, and pouring to create dynamic interactions between colors and textures. The thickness of these layers changes how elements emerge, giving the work a mysterious, dreamlike quality.



Both my sewn paintings and hanging textiles explore themes of instability and imperfection. The overlapping layers mirror how life's experiences merge, creating unexpected discoveries—much like finding forms in clouds. These imperfections highlight the unpredictable yet essential elements that shape our identities.





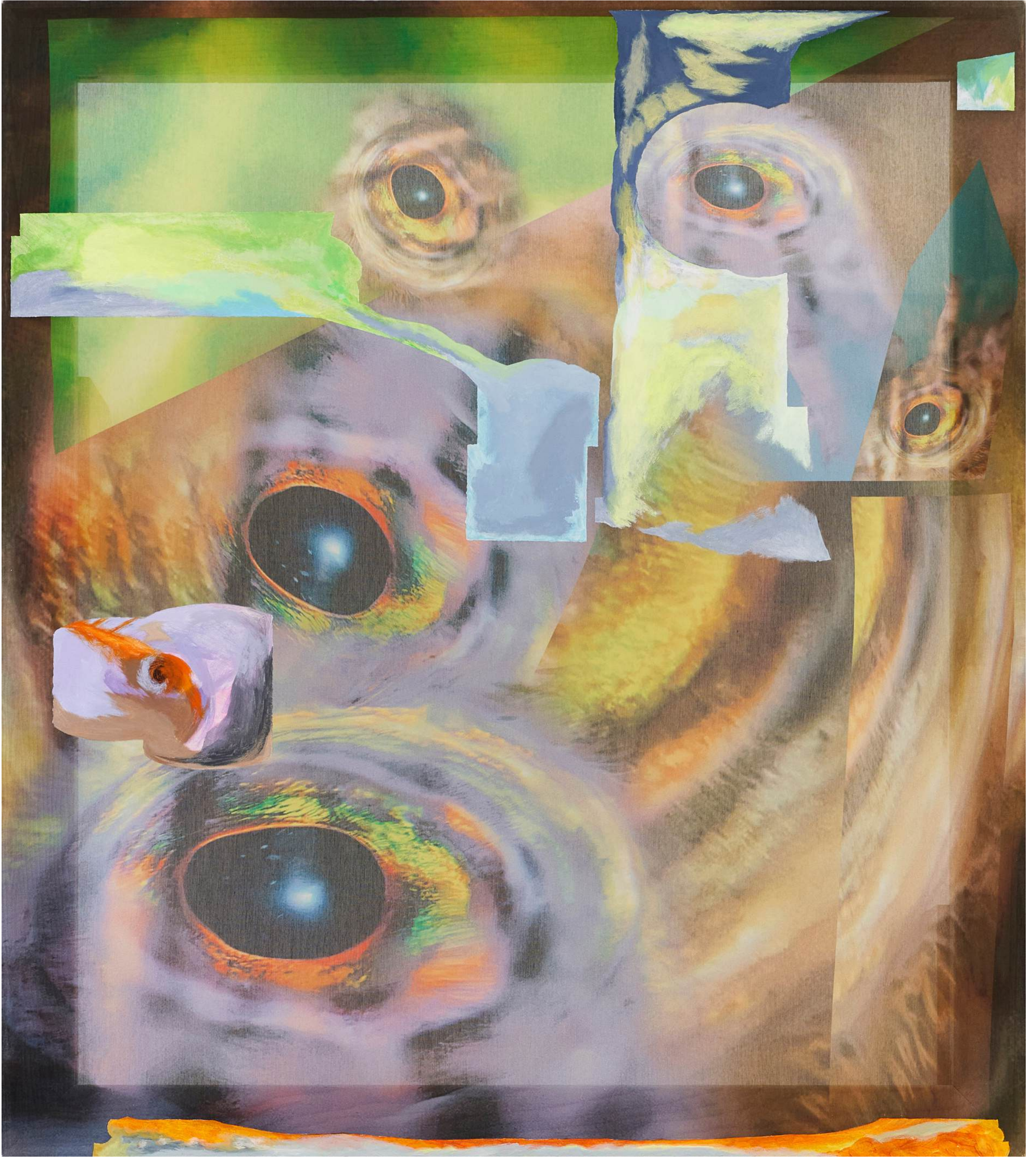
Kai

Oh



W 129th St, 2024

Acrylic on digital printed cotton silk
52 x 48 inches (132.1 x 121.9 cm)



Octopus, 2024

Acrylic on digital printed cotton silk, poplar, yellow bond
36 x 32 x 6 1/2 inches (91.4 x 81.3 x 16.5 cm)



I feel great joy in touching, processing, and making connections between physical materials such as wood, stone, and found objects. However, I realized that physical materials cannot be as flexible as digital photographs. A photo, which is a moment fixed in time, starts to have infinite possibilities upon being transferred into digital space. A photo expands beyond its original form and becomes a complex narrative device through edits. I love how the picture turns into the pure potential for elasticity when projected on the computer screen.

My work involves observing things that are in a state of flux, especially those that undergo their changes or movements. I observe seasonal changes, weather patterns, parks, plants, animals, and insects. Observing is the very first step and the most important process of my work. I don't use photographs that other people took in my works.



For me, "eyes" symbolize and embody vitality. When colors from digital screens are transferred to physical surfaces, I use fluorescent shades to slightly exaggerate and distort the original reality.



I am interested in exploring alternatives for photographic surfaces, utilizing materials such as silk, velvet, glass, wheels, and hinges to investigate the materiality of the photographic plane and its support structure.

I don't mind using the same photo multiple times in different planes. When the same photo works differently, that's more interesting. A touch of humor is also important to convey, making fun of the work and "laughing things out" at the same time.



"It has to be fun, otherwise, it's so sad."

-Kai Oh



Yissoh
Oh



Sparrow and Woman, 2023

Acrylic, charcoal, tattoo ink on silicone on burlap mounted on wood panel

48 x 36 inches (121.9 x 91.4 cm)



The Island Lives in the Whale, 2024
Acrylic, tattoo ink, silicone, resin on panel
31 5/8 x 31 5/8 inches (80 x 80 cm)



I have consistently aimed to add three-dimensional bodily aspects to my two-dimensional work.

In *Sparrow and Woman*, 2023, I infused silicone into burlap to create color fields, onto which I drew using a tattoo machine. In this work, I sought to alter the flatness of the image by creating protuberances using the texture of burlap and silicone.

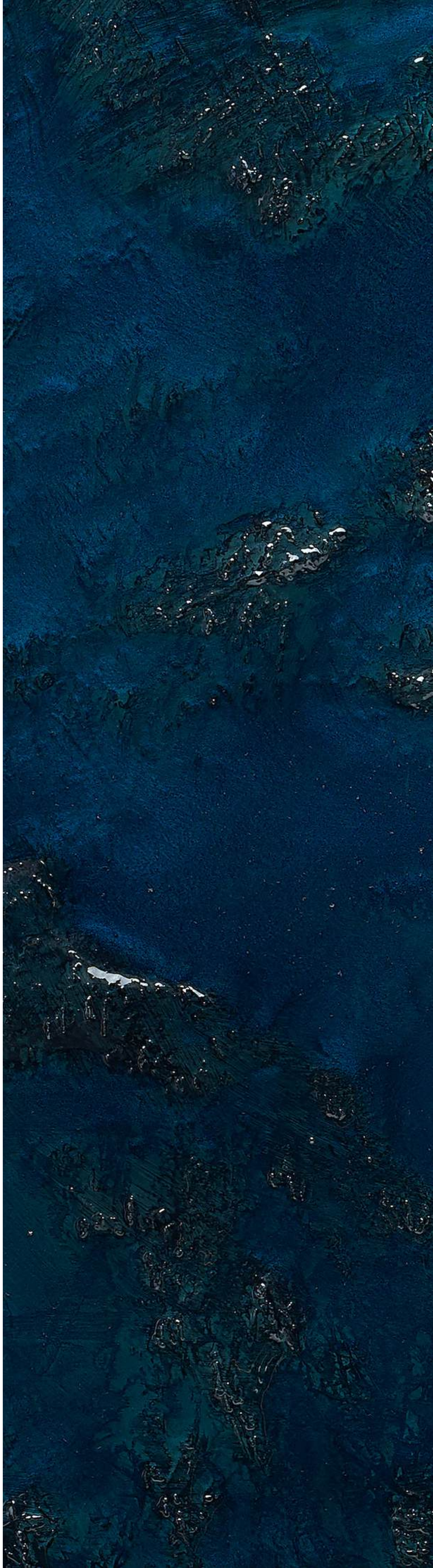
I combined mint, sky, flesh, and transparent silicone color fields on burlap, allowing them to flow vertically or outward to add dimensionality to the skin. Additionally, I aimed to capture various textures, integrating burlap, silicone protuberances, and aluminum frames into the canvas.

From the created surface, I imagined a sparrow, dinosaur, and woman, which I then embodied by drawing eyes and scale patterns with a tattoo machine."

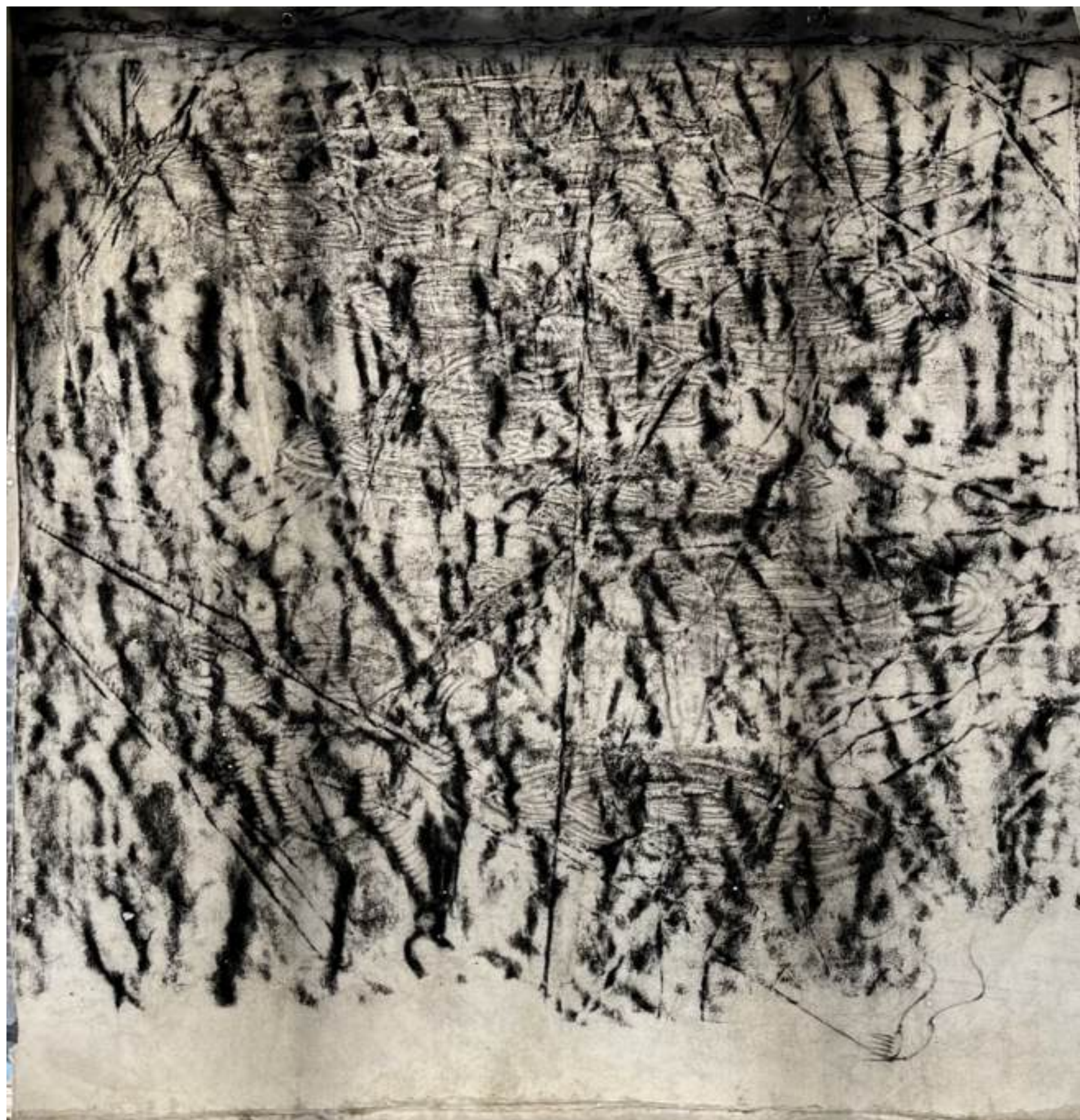
The Island Lives in the Whale, 2024 is a drawing with silicone and resin.

The marks inscribed on the silicone are surfaces cast from drawings made in clay. I added other drawings on the silicone using a tattoo machine, and finished with a resin layering. Unlike *Sparrow and Woman, 2023*, the initial drawing in clay did not rely on pre-forms that evoke specific images but was fully generated through random bodily movements.

I imagined subcutaneous tissue and fat layers from the initial silicone drawing, and after adding the drawing of the whale's eye inspired by those layers, I coated it with resin. In this way, the layer of resin functions as both skin and ocean, ultimately transforming into the image of islands drifting in the sea."

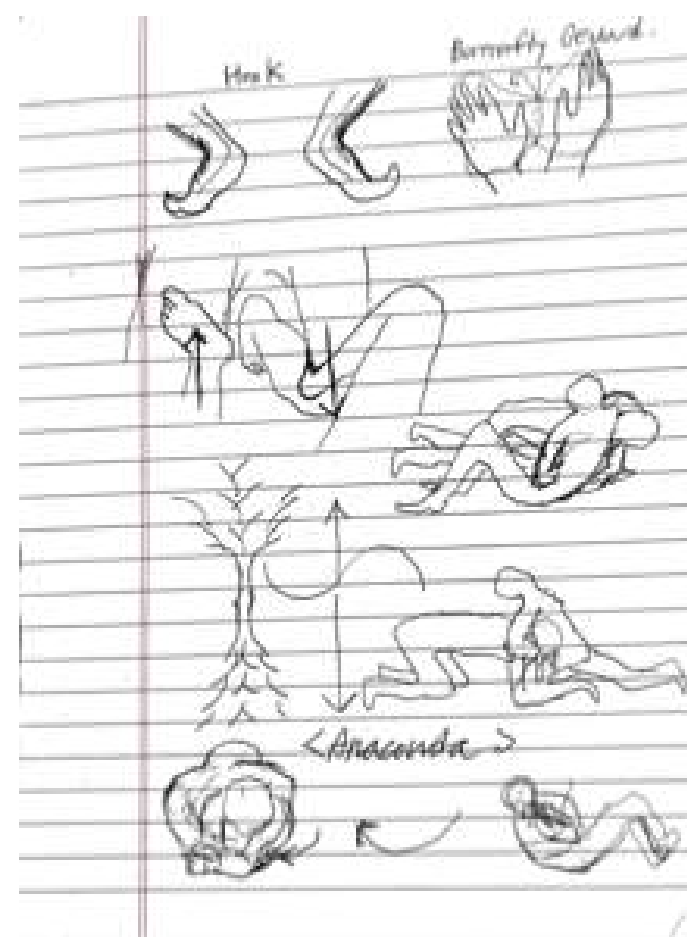
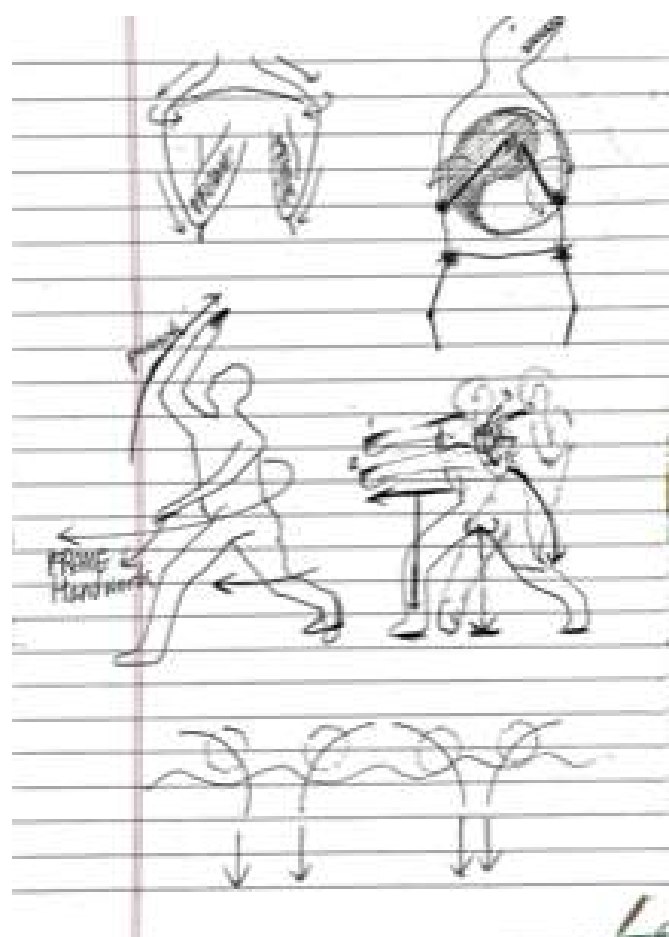
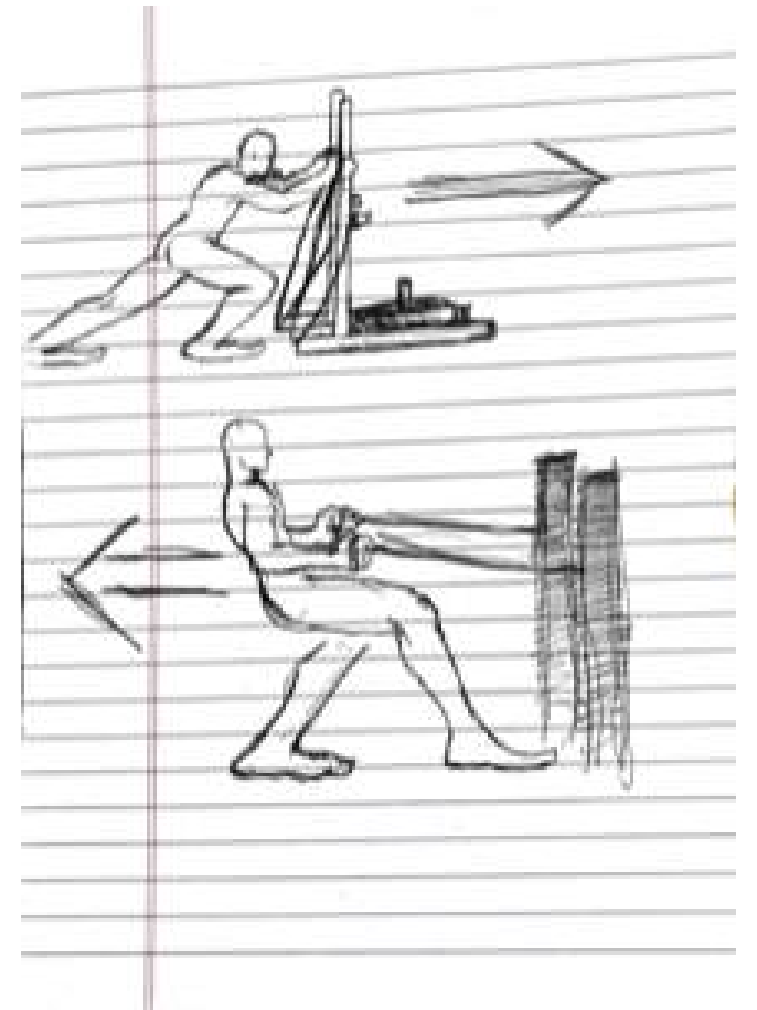
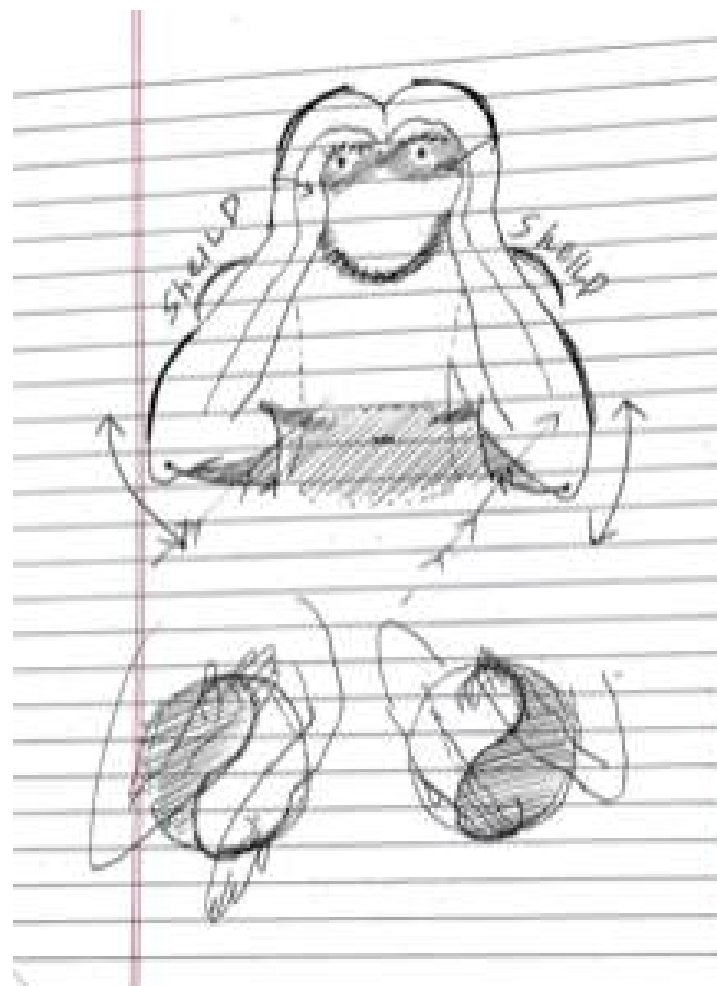
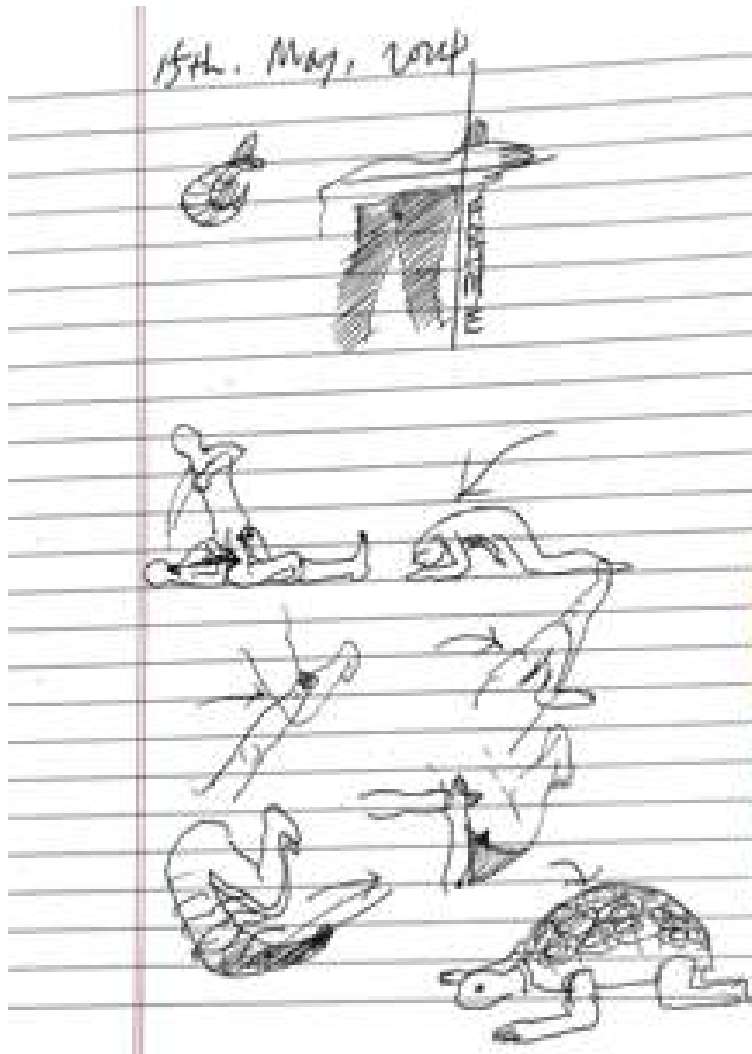


I create drawings by tattooing on silicone. Through the act of tattooing on silicone, I reflect on the body. In my work, tattooed silicone serves as a form of skin, through which I aim to create a body as an object, derived from my subjective body. In my works from 2022-2023, I use a tattoo machine and random body movements to etch marks into silicone, then recreate images inspired by these marks. This process is reminiscent of playing a game of imagining shapes from clouds. I have experimented with marbling silicone or soaking burlap in silicone to create the skin, upon which I drew various images that emerged. The surfaces created usually feature jade-like background colors, reminiscent of water surfaces or 12th-13th century Korean celadon pottery. From the random marks engraved on these surfaces, I often derive animalistic motifs, which I seek to animate by drawing eyes. I also incorporate patterns inspired by Japanese Ukiyo-e art. As I continue my work on the theme of skin, I have become increasingly interested not only in the mental and emotional expressions but also in the material structure of the body itself. Therefore, in my 2024 practice, I am creating works that incorporate a more solid and variety of layers.



Texture Drawing, 2023

Tattoo ink, charcoal, silicone on polyester
24 x 24 inches (61 x 61 cm)



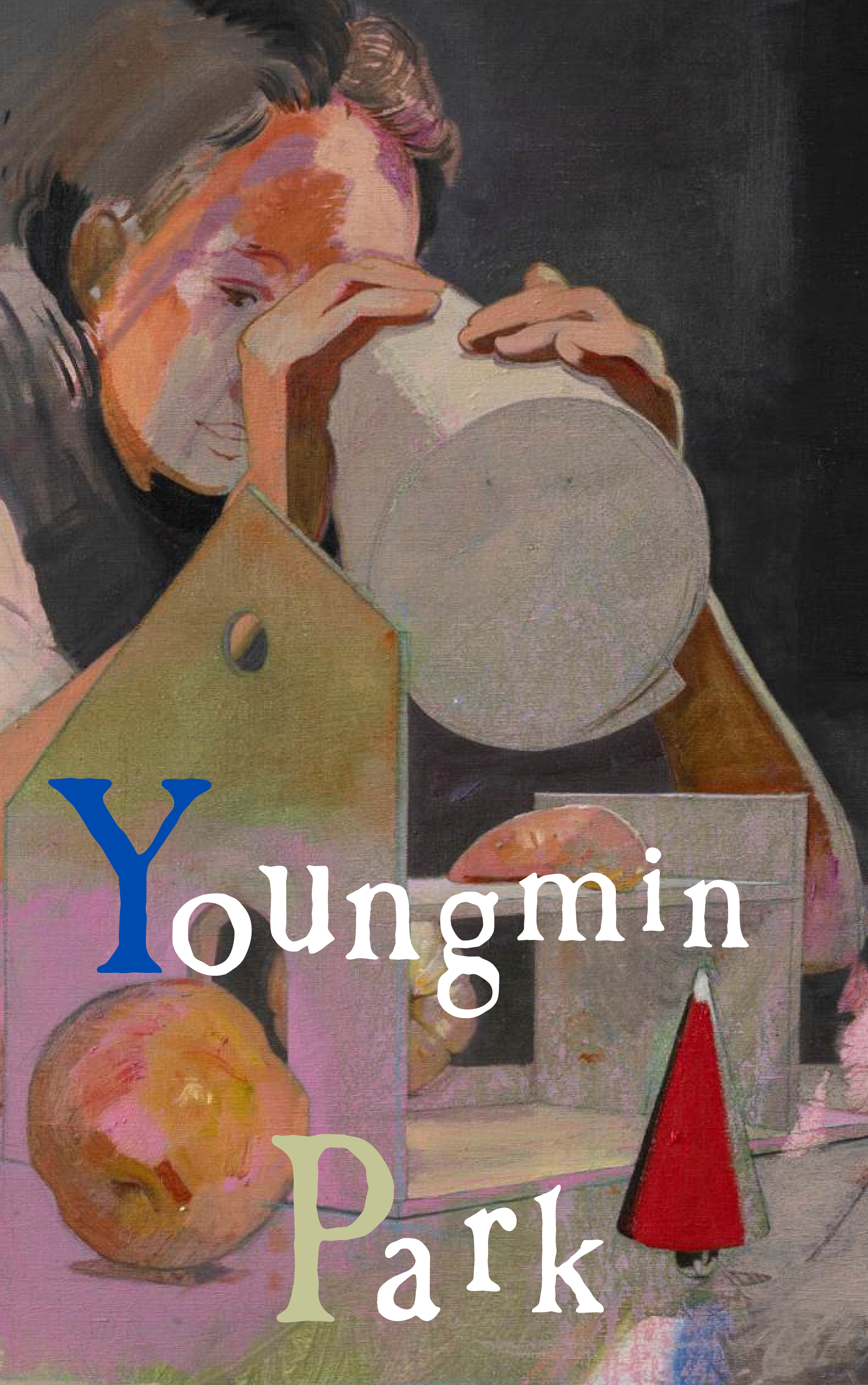
Body Sketches

“I define the relationship between the body and the world as one of interaction. In my practice, the body embodies itself as an inexperienced body, a body as an image, through the interaction of this relationship.

My newly created body is objectified as something that hasn't been experienced before, and thus, the relationship between myself (body) and the world shifts from subject and object to a relationship between objects.

Through this process of self-objectification, I secure my subjectivity as the most expanded unit of my world, as a collective of objects, ensuring subjectivity as a whole.”

– Yissho Oh



Youngmin

Park



Twins, 2024
Oil on linen
33 x 68 inches (83.8 x 172.7 cm)



I magnify the fragility of narratives created through perception and contemplation, revealing their susceptibility to errors and illusions. Memory-vulnerable to distortions, inaccuracies, and gradual fading over time, undergoes reconstruction and alteration upon recall.

Such interest in the fragility of perception and memory stems from my childhood as the youngest in a large family, with three generations and dozens of animals under one roof. This environment placed me in the middle of an intricate power dynamic of both humans and animals. Having awareness of never being able to see everything that happens concurrently when in a large group gave rise to fundamental doubts about the nature of experience, cognition, and memory.

To highlight the inherent limitations of our understandings, recurring elements morph in different combinations and situations, taking in the persona of each other. The parallax of gaze in the connected and disconnected images also contributes to the nonlinear storytelling. Through this play of confusion, viewers are challenged to connect the narrative dots in the skewed time and space of the enigmatic world.





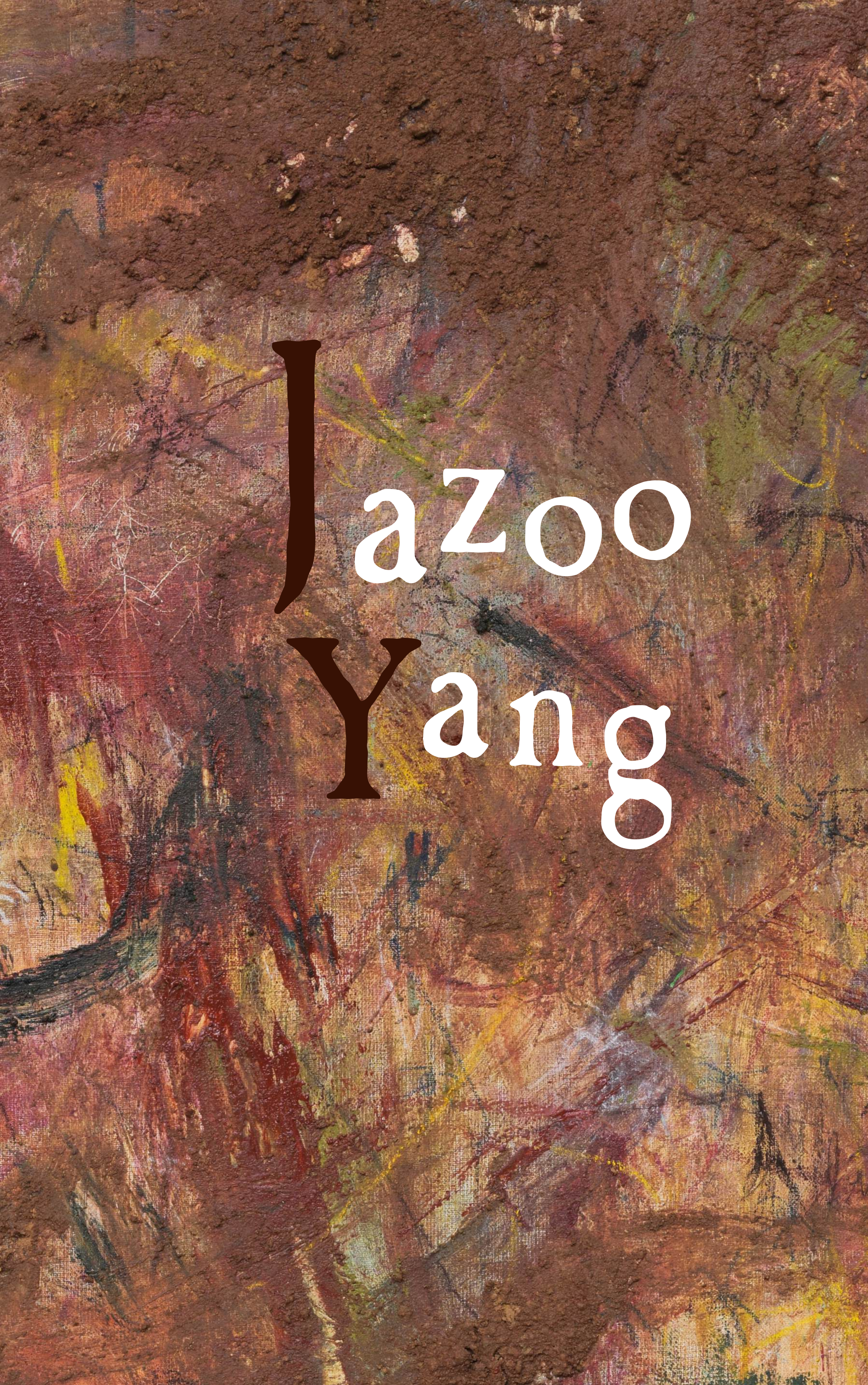
Recently, I read a book by David Levi Strauss named *Photography and Belief*. The book in general was talking about human belief through sensory knowledge and thus its' limits. There was a part where the author specifically relates the topic to this biblical figure Thomas. As is widely known, Thomas is a character who doubts the Resurrection of Jesus until he sees and feels the wound from the crucifixion for himself -which also turns out to be our false belief that we have developed because we have again seen with our eyes, the painting from Caravaggio. Anyways, the name Thomas in Greek, Didymos means twin - double - doubt. Again, Thomas in Aramaic, T'ome means twin - double - doubt. Therefore, as mentioned in the book, the entire discourse of doubt is centered on this one man.

Reading this was instantly attractive because the correlation between seeing and believing and its limitations has always been one of my main interests. And in order to articulate that quality into an image, I often used 'doubling' in terms of both making sets of works physically and also by repeating the elements inside the imagery. In fact, these seemingly plural elements may be a single image repeated, actually several, or fragments of time flowing differently. Whatever they may be, It's easy to think that repeating something is to emphasize an already important value, but for me, I take it more as a trace of an effort to understand something that has not yet been digested. It's more of the will to understand, believe, and to conclude in love.

Motivated by this figure Thomas, who himself is a representative of the struggle to believe, I wanted to directly depict an image of twins, doubt, and the twisted will to see something that cannot be seen.

In the painting, the twins are expressed as persistent observers trying to explore something. However, the model city they are exploring has either reached the end of its life or is a space where life cannot exist in the first place. Considering the flies sitting on the models, it could also be seen as an act of looking back on something that has already become the past -as flies are always the first to spot death(conclusion). The fruit-like objects nestled in between can be read as the distorted result of the twisted human psychology of having to see in order to believe.





Jazoo
Yang



Beings Living on Land No. 20240801, 2024

Soil collected from Gwanaksan Mountain, stone pigment powder, gelatin,
glue beads, oil stick, oil pastel, conte, pearl pin, fixative, varnish on canvas
35 7/8 x 28 3/4 inches (91 x 73 cm)



Skin of Everything No. 20240801, 2024

Soil collected from Gwanaksan Mountain, stone pigment powder, gelatin,
glue beads, oil stick, oil pastel, conte, fixative, varnish on canvas

35 7/8 x 28 3/4 inches (91 x 73 cm)



The abstract marks and connected lines on this painting, leave viewers to speculate what the so-called “beings” are enacting on the canvas. The natural pigmentations varying from different shades of brown with speckled warm hues of green, yellow, red, blue all literally and figuratively represent the origins of those colors—infrastructural materials that once belonged to decaying traditional houses and other neglected parts of Korea.



What once was left in an environment of destruction and end of use, is now brought back to life, into a community built on a rectangular space, open to interpretations.





This painting not only represents Jazoo's interest in destruction sites that were once home, but also her relationship with the canvas. Using materials gathered from traditional houses that still stand in rural towns of Korea, Jazoo would "dye" the canvas with earth and natural pigment waters, creating a skin of everything. According to Jazoo, the act of dyeing to her is not a one-sided attempt where all efforts are from the artist placing pigment on the fabric. To dye the canvas, the canvas itself must absorb the pigment, thus bringing forth a mutual teamwork between the canvas and the artist.





The process of creating this new earthly skin is accompanied by the artist's developing habit of listening to the friction between the canvas and her skin; the scratching sound of charcoal and oil sticks in the act of painting. Feeling the scratching, the vibration, hearing the sound—Jazoo engages with every physical sensory that emerges from the interaction she has while painting. This phenomenon encourages Jazoo to act as a communicator between the instrument-like materials and the visual messages those earthly concoctions are telling her to share to the world.





“Consciously trying to ‘paint’ the canvas makes me more considerate of the canvas, and in doing so, I develop a closer relationship with the canvas and communicate with it.”

- Jazoo Yang

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Curator: Phil Zheng Cai

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