

Inaudible Garden
Ram Han

22 November, 2024 – 4 January, 2025

Ram Han is known by numerous titles, including cartoonist, designer, illustrator, digital creator, and digital painter. However, while the materials and mediums she uses in her image-making vary, Ram Han is a painter at her core. The distinction between digital painting and traditional painting is often rooted in the conventional critique of media-based art, where digital works are perceived to lack substance in reality. Digital works make it difficult to trace the direction of the brushstrokes or discern the movement of the artist's hand—in other words, to imagine where the painting begins and ends. As a result, when interpreting digitally created works, the focus often shifts to informational details, such as which software was used to portray certain forms and expressions.

In her exhibition *Phantom Arm* (2018), Ram Han presented digital paintings as prints, extending her work beyond the screen and into a more tangible (and collectible) form. Since at the time, she was still primarily introduced as an illustrator rather than an artist, she put exceptional effort into finding the optimal ways of physically presenting works that were created on the computer. These decisions marked an important step in building and infinitely expanding the immersive world of her creations while moving fluidly between various mediums—whether through monitors or screens or in alternative material, formats, and scales, as well as defining Ram Han's direction as an artist.

Sun Woo-hoon, the exhibition organizer of Ram Han's first solo exhibition at Your Mana in 2017, wrote, "Ram Han is an artist who paints time, capturing moments that we may have missed. Following her works, one finds faint but vivid afterimages that remain in memory without much effort." Her images are intensely beautiful on their own, but upon closer inspection, one notices that she neither defines specific subjects within the paintings nor provides clear references for the origins of their backgrounds or atmospheres. Yet, her paintings evoke faint memories of our childhood—scenes that are unclear as to whether they were directly experienced or encountered indirectly through media, but linger vividly, etched in our senses. Even in the digital realm, memories and nostalgia continue to accumulate. Some may argue that these are false memories, but digital nostalgia is a real experience with a materiality to it. In his book *Foreverism*, Grafton Tanner discusses society's desire to eternalize the past and preserve it within the present. He asserts that digital technology plays a central role in this attempt to make everything eternal.¹

Perhaps, just as an artist accustomed to working late into the night while meeting deadlines might find nighttime more familiar than day, Ram Han may have come to embrace the digital world and its memories as more real than anything else, hence the dreamlike nature of her paintings. The glass screens of Ram Han's works glow sharply, ethereally, and mysteriously.

The exhibition *Inaudible Garden* marks Ram Han's third solo exhibition and showcases her engagement with the painting's pictoriality. While her previous works, such as the *Room type* series, consistently explored the blurred boundaries between digital nostalgia—represented through memories and dreams—and reality, this exhibition takes a more painterly approach to digital techniques. The creative process in digital media inherently lacks predetermined limits in size, allowing for infinite expansion and depth. This seemingly obvious quality serves as a crucial entry point for understanding digital-based works. Ram Han's abstract, expressive paintings leave viewers uncertain whether they are observing a fragment of something larger or an enlargement of something smaller. With no defined edges or sides to the canvas, these paintings simultaneously embody both the part and the whole, the beginning and the end.

In this exhibition, Ram Han experiments with traditional painting techniques while moving away from the concrete forms she previously employed, offering insight into her evolving visual language. Specifically, departing from her earlier processes, her works are completed by scraping away at the surface of the printed film using tattoo needles and fine-detail tools. This approach reflects her intent to engrave physical marks on the digital works that otherwise tend to easily be circulated and become deteriorated in the digital realm such as on social media, thereby granting them the unique and definitive status of painting. The title *Inaudible Garden* reflects her unique sensibility toward the essence of life and nature—elements that remain elusive in the digital and virtual worlds. This is explored through the depiction of vegetation and female figures which are two ongoing motifs in her work. Zooming in and framing the digital painting help emphasize the details of the subjects that were possible to be achieved by being drawn digitally, and the needle tools help finalize the paintings by giving them their abstract forms and patterns. Ram Han focuses on extracting the essence of the subject and delves into the concept of time and eternity which have been central to modern abstract painters.

The passage of time, non-existent worlds, undefinable beings, and ambiguous nostalgia are recurring threads in Ram Han's work that form the foundation of her world-building. Her paintings—familiar yet strange, beautiful yet uncanny—present themselves to viewers with the hope of provoking a sense of disorientation and sharp, lingering afterimages.

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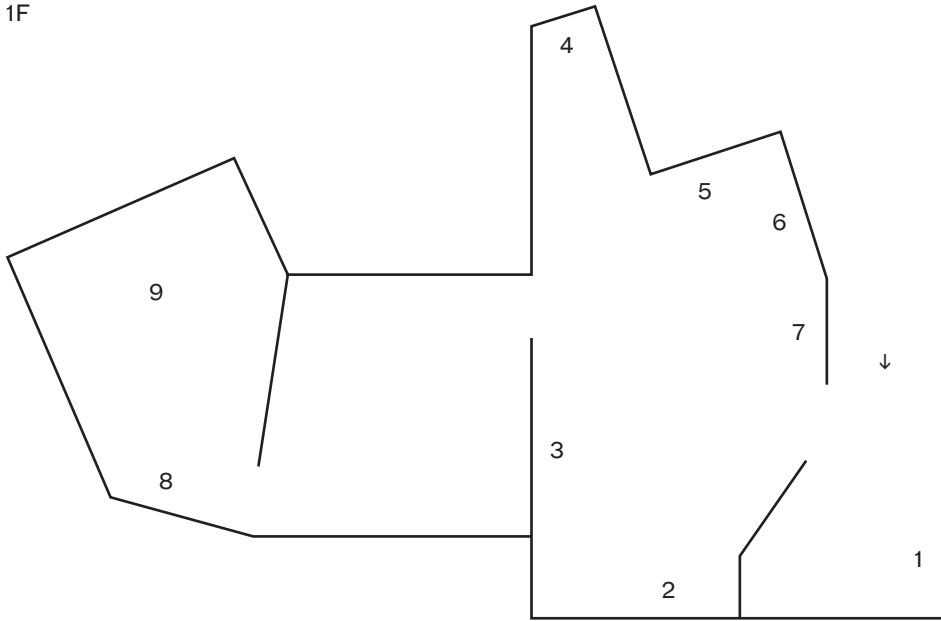
Text by Hong Leeji (Curator, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art)

Ram Han (b. 1989) is a digital painter based in Seoul who takes a strong interest in the fantasy inherent to media and old pop/subcultures. She believes that the essence of memory is the ambiguity between the virtual and the real, and through her work, she shares her personal and unique memories of places and experiences with the viewer. Ram Han studied Animation at Korea National University of Arts and held her first solo exhibition *Nightcap* at YOUR MANA in 2017. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions notably at MMCA, SeMA, Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, the 2020 Busan Biennale, D Museum, Audio Visual Pavilion, Culture Station Seoul 284, Château d'Aubenas and Whistle, while she is a frequent collaborator with a variety of fashion brands and companies including Apple, Big Hit Entertainment, SM Entertainment and Gucci.

¹ Grafton Tanner, *Foreverism*, Translated by Gwenzhir Kim, Workroom Press, 2024

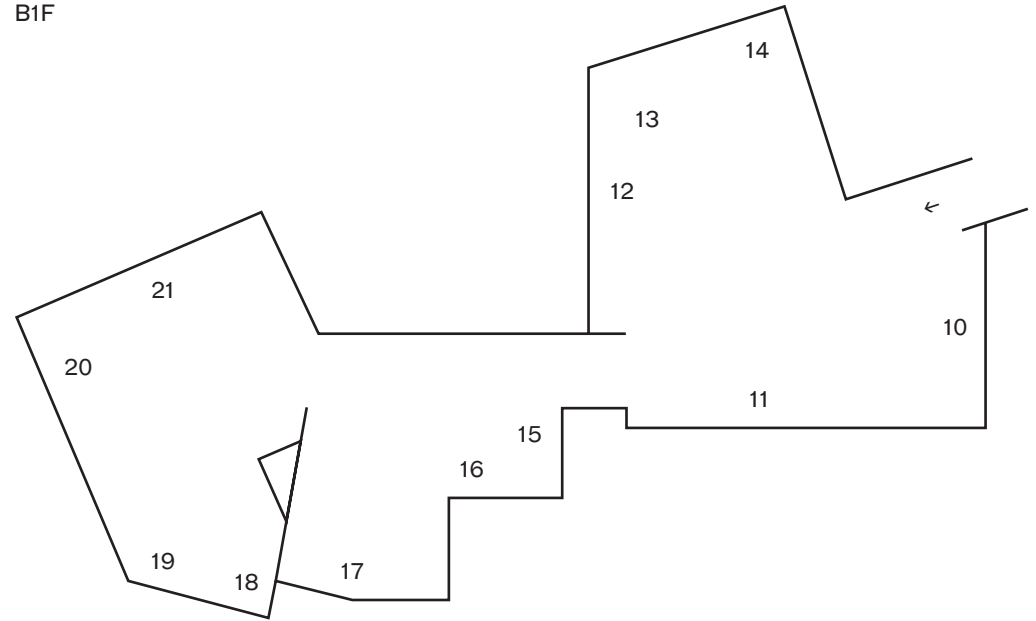


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- 1 maro and me 02, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, aluminum frame, 130×85cm
- 2 Window drawing 01, 2024, UV print on pvc, Size Variable
- 3 Tulip_01, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, aluminum structure, LED lighting on backside, 150×95cm
- 4 maro and me 03, 2024, Archival print, aluminum frame, 67.7×67.7cm
- 5 Beans_01, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, metal structure, LED lighting on backside, 150×95cm
- 6 Beans_02, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, metal structure, LED lighting on backside, 150×95cm
- 7 Beans_03, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, metal structure, LED lighting on backside, 150×95cm
- 8 Inaudibles 2, 2024, Archival print on photo paper, needle scratched, installed with metal structure, 17×23cm
- 9 Bye Bye Meat, 2023, Archival print on backlit film installed with metal structure, 150×200cm

B1F



- 10 maro and me 01, 2024, Archival print on backlit film installed with metal structure, LED lighting on backside, 157×95cm
- 11 Tulip_02, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, aluminum structure, LED lighting on backside, 150×95cm
- 12 Window drawing 02, 2024, UV print on pvc, Size Variable
- 13 Do Not Disturb : Director Wang's Last Prayer (Green version), 2024, Seamless VR world, Size Variable
- 14 Inaudibles 1-2, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, needle scratched, installed with metal structure, 15.8×9.5cm
- 15 Scar drawing 01, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, needle scratched, installed with metal structure, 13.8×25.8cm
- 16 Scar drawing 02, 2024, Archival print on paper, needle scratched, installed with metal structure, 11.3×26.7cm
- 17 Tulip_03, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, aluminum structure, LED lighting on backside, 150×95cm
- 18 Melon_01, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, metal frame, 76×47cm
- 19 Melon_02, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, metal frame, 76×47cm
- 20 Inaudibles 1-1, 2024, Archival print on backlit film, needle scratched, installed with metal structure, 20×13cm
- 21 Inaudibles 04, 2024, Lightbox, UV print, scratch drawing, 160×150×15cm