

press release

KUNSTHAL ROTTERDAM



Press release, 7 January 2025

Haegue Yang: Leap Year

1 March – 31 August 2025

Kunsthall Rotterdam will present *Leap Year*, the first major retrospective of the works of Haegue Yang (1971, Seoul) in the Netherlands, this spring. Considered one of the leading artists of her generation, Yang has developed a versatile oeuvre spanning over thirty years. *Leap Year* will showcase the artist's wide variety of media, including installation, sculpture, video, text, and audio. Evoking sensorial associations with everyday objects, from aluminium blinds and drying racks to metal bells, her works dissociate well-established dichotomies like abstract versus figurative.

Yang draws our attention to how movement, sentiments, and emotions operate in various social, cultural, and political contexts by mobilising light, sound, moisture, heat, and scent to disclose memories and associations. Choreographed theatrical lights brush over venetian blinds and cast constant but slow-moving shadows, while drying racks are transformed into anthropomorphic creatures in acrobatic postures. Over the past thirty years, Yang has been commuting primarily between Berlin and Seoul. Themes like migration, identity, history, and tradition are therefore naturally embedded in her practice, closely linked to narratives from music, literature, and politics. Folk rituals and traditional crafts have become another focus over the past decade. On the other hand, Yang also critically reflects on ideas from modern Western art history. Frequently departing from keen observation of social issues, her work always remains subjective, infused with an intense yearning for intimacy.

The Randing Intermediates and Quasi-Yves Klein Blue

Yang's colourful rattan sculptures, *The Randing Intermediates – Underbelly Alienage Duo* (2020), were made in collaboration with artisans in the Philippines. Their organic forms, reminiscent of sea creatures, have been woven using traditional techniques and are adorned with artificial plants. Equipped with industrial handles, suggesting they can be moved around, *The Randing Intermediates* could also refer to ceremonial rituals where non-human symbols are employed to represent human life. The walls in this space are painted a striking shade: *Quasi-Yves Klein Blue*, similar to the colour patented by the famous French artist Yves Klein

(1928–1962). Interestingly, this specific hue was selected by the Kunsthall's security staff, who picked it out of several locally sourced paint samples they thought it most closely resembled the original. The term 'quasi' is significant here, suggesting something that is very close to the original, but not quite the same. This subtle distinction raises questions about authenticity and legacy.

Star-Crossed Rendezvous after Yun

Especially created for Leap Year, the large-scale installation *Star-Crossed Rendezvous after Yun* (2024) was inspired by the life and work of Korean composer and political dissident Isang Yun (1917–1995). The installation comprises ascending geometric formations of venetian blinds and a choreography of light paired with the musical score of Yun's 'Double Concerto' (1977). Composed for a small orchestra and two solo instruments—harp and oboe, respectively representing a princess and a cowherd—this concerto is loosely based on a Korean folktale. It conveys the sorrow of separation of two condemned lovers, as well as the joys of their annual reunion—a possible analogy with a divided Korea.

The exhibition

Leap Year surveys many of Yang's major works, like *Storage Piece* (2004), *Dehors* (2006), and *Non-Indépliables – nues* (2010/2020), as well as noteworthy serial productions, such as *Lacquer Paintings* (since 1994), *Dress Vehicles* (since 2011), *Sonic Sculptures* (since 2013), *The Intermediates* (since 2015), and *Mesmerizing Mesh* (since 2021). In Leap Year, these are articulated in a broad and evocative thematic framework. The diagonally arranged walls enable spatial trajectories in the exhibition, where corridors and square-like open spaces emerge and provide dynamism as well as intimacy. In addition, several especially commissioned works as well as a number of new, specifically initiated productions, including *Sonic Arch Rope – Gold Hexagon Light* (2024), *Sonic Droplets in Gradation – Water Veil* (2024), *Mesmerizing Votive Pagoda Lantern – Dusk Marsh Ultramundane Flowers* (2024), and the large-scale venetian blind installation *Star-Crossed Rendezvous after Yun* (2024) will be presented.

About Haegue Yang

Haegue Yang (1971, Seoul, South Korea) lives and works in Berlin and Seoul. She has been teaching at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main since 2017. Yang regularly participates in international art events, and her work is represented in major institutional and private collections around the world. In 2018, Yang won the Wolfgang Hahn Prize at Ludwig Museum in Cologne and in 2022 was awarded the 13th Benesse Prize during the Singapore Biennale. Recent institutional solo exhibitions by Yang took place at Helsinki Art Museum (2024), S.M.A.K., Gent (2023), Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2023), SMK – National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (2022), MCAD, Manila (2020), Tate St Ives (2020), MoMA, New York (2019), The Bass, Miami Beach (2019), Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2018), and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016). She also participated in documenta 13 in Kassel (2012), and her work was represented at the South Korean Pavilion during the 53rd Venice Biennial (2009). In February 2025, the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas will present a solo exhibition of Yang's work.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated, 192-page catalogue (in English) that includes essays by Yung Ma (Senior Curator Hayward Gallery) and Berlin-based writer Pablo Larios, an interview with the artist Haegue Yang by curator and art historian Lynne Cooke, and

a graphic essay on Yang's life and work by Taipei-based illustrator Chihoi. The publication has been designed by London-based design studio Wolfe Hall.

Collaboration

Haegue Yang: Leap Year is realised in collaboration with Hayward Gallery in London (9 October 2024 – 5 January 2025) and Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich (27 September 2025 – 10 January 2026).

Press preview Friday 28 February

The press preview of the exhibition Haegue Yang: Leap Year will take place on Friday 28 February at 11:00 hrs. Members of the press can sign up to attend this event via communication@kunsthall.nl, specifying the media outlet they work for.

Photo captions from left to right:

1. *Reflected Red-Blue Cubist Dancing Mask*, 2018. Photo: Julien Gremaud. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.
2. *The Randing Intermediates – Underbelly Alienage Duo*, 2020. Photo: Maculangan/Pioneer Studios. Courtesy the artist and Museum of Contemporary Art and Design.
3. Installation view of Haegue Yang: Leap Year. *Sol LeWitt Vehicle – 6 Unit Cube on Cube without a Cube*, 2018. Background: *Eclectic Totemic*, 2013. Photo: Mark Blower. Courtesy the artist, Kukje Gallery, and the Hayward Gallery.

→ For more press information and/or photographic material, please contact Kunsthall Rotterdam's communication department: Lauren Brand, t. +31 (0)10-4400323, +31 (0)6-11625962; Sabine Parmentier t. +31 (0)10- 4400321, +31 (0)6-52636232; communication@kunsthall.nl

→ In case of publication please mention: info +31 (0)10-4400301, www.kunsthall.nl, opening hours: Tuesdays – Sundays 10:00 – 17:00 hrs.

About Kunsthall Rotterdam

Kunsthall Rotterdam is one of the leading cultural institutes in the Netherlands, situated in the Museumpark in Rotterdam. Designed by the renowned architect Rem Koolhaas in 1992, the Kunsthall has seven different exhibition spaces. The Kunsthall annually presents a varied programme consisting of around 23 exhibitions. As visitors are always able to see multiple concurrent exhibitions, the Kunsthall can offer them an adventurous journey through different worlds and art movements. Culture for a wide audience, from modern-day masters and contemporary art to forgotten cultures, photography, fashion, and design. The exhibitions are accompanied by an extensive programme of activities.

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