

On shelves, in stacks, scattered

Jessica Wee

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McBride Contemporain presents *On shelves, in stacks, scattered*, a solo exhibition by Jessica Wee. In this new body of paintings, Wee revisits traditional Korean still-life through a contemporary surrealist lens, examining selfhood, migration, and the shifting notion of home.

This new body of work draws inspiration from the *Munbangdo* tradition, an 18th-century Korean painting style on screens depicting shelves filled with books and precious objects within a flattened pictorial space. By recontextualizing objects from her own collection, such as books, storage boxes and fish-shaped plates, Wee transforms these items into an index of her lived experience: markers of migration, heritage, and the evolution of home across multiple apartments in Montreal, Paris, New York, and Korea.

Wee's paintings operate within an art historical dialogue rooted in cross-cultural exchange, the *Munbangdo* tradition shaped by illusionistic techniques introduced by Jesuit missionaries into East Asia. Trained in the academic tradition at an atelier in Florence, Jessica Wee brings moments of illusionistic depth and rendered surface, while embracing the flattening and decorative patterning of Korean folk painting, or *Minhwa*, producing a hybrid visual language that shifts between illusion and abstraction.

A recurring motif throughout the exhibition is the hot pink Korean rubber glove, commonly associated with dishwashing and kimchi preparation. Reappearing across the paintings, it serves as both a formal and symbolic



Jessica Wee, *Shelf, Portrait 1* (detail), 2026

device: a flash of saturated colour, a compositional anchor, and a subtle reference to gendered domestic labour, care and endurance. Elsewhere, ghostly vessels and stacked books hover between familiarity and estrangement, imparting a dreamlike quality to the works. Wee builds these compositions through vibrant chromatic relationships that evoke specific places and memories, from the blue of Parisian doors to the mustard yellow of her grandaunt's room.

On shelves, in stacks, scattered expands the still-life tradition beyond its conventional role as a study of objects. Wee's paintings act as repositories of personal and cultural memory, illuminating how objects bear histories across generations, borders, and domestic spaces. In her hands, arrangements are not only compositional strategies but also suggest that home is not anchored to a single place, but carried forward in the objects we choose to keep.

Jessica Wee is currently completing her MFA at Concordia University and holds a Diploma in Classical Realist oil painting from the Angel Academy of Art in Florence, Italy. Her work was most recently presented at Kiaf SEOUL in Korea, and in solo exhibitions at Maison de la Culture NDG in Montreal, Steve Turner Gallery in Los Angeles, Latitude Gallery in New York, and Spring Break, in New York. Her work has been featured in Hyperallergic and Artnet. Wee lives and works in Montreal, Canada. Her paintings will be featured in the 2026 Pictura Montreal Painting Triennial, curated by Eunice Belidor.