

Hanna Hur

Signal at the Wheel, Hover at the Gate

June 7 – July 20, 2019

Making chainmaille is a laborious, yet meditative process. Hanna Hur crafts individual copper loops and weaves them into chainmaille using just two sets of pliers and a metal dowel. The result is a malleable grid, a net that changes shape according to the demands of gravity. Adjusting one ring causes the entire structure to move. The field expands as Hur adds rings to the chainmaille mesh; some works have been growing for five years or more. Two overlapping chainmaille grids on the floor form *The Gate iii* (2014-19). The top layer of chainmaille molds itself around a clay ball nestled in between the two matrices. A work entitled, *Mother iii* (2017-19), consists of eight single strands of copper chainmaille lining the inner corner seams of the gallery walls. The artist indicates that the body of a spider connected to these eight “legs” hovers above the gallery ceiling in another dimension, immaterial and unseen.

Through sculpting, painting and drawing, Hanna Hur delineates planes of existence where the unexpected may occur. Locating the grid as a site for contending with both materiality and belief, she charts a liminal territory to make way for startling signals and vibrations arriving from unpredictable sources.

The chainmaille sculptures, an integral part of Hur’s practice since 2012, provide a driving logic for the wall works. Applying colored pencil to paper, silk and cotton, Hur relentlessly generates grids inscribed with circular portals, wheels and spheres. The slow and repetitive mode of drawing geometric forms enables Hur to enter into a more a receptive state of mind, opening channels for other imagery to come to the surface.

The compositions are at once protective boundaries and inviting through spaces to another realm. In Hur’s largest painting entitled *The Gate ii* (2019), a rectangular configuration of white and turquoise circles resembles a hallway or doorway, but the molecular forms occupying every corner of the raw canvas remind one that space is never empty. In other works, plant-like shapes and otherworldly beings emerge and insert themselves into the field of vision. The messages they carry may be lighthearted or loaded; we are not given complete narratives. Each work has a personal and ritualistic function for the artist, though Hur’s wider endeavor is to convey what happens when the unseen makes itself known.

In her own rituals, Hur uses certain pieces again and again to glean notes from beyond the veil. At Bel Ami she has installed paintings of the same scale opposite one another, casting an axis of an invisible grid for a private ceremony before the exhibition’s opening. In this blessing, Hur designates and then opens a gate for spirits to enter. The doorway to an alternate world now ajar, a wide range of visitors to the gallery may commingle.

Hur arrives at her current methodology through a long-term engagement with shamanistic practices from disparate cultures. More recently Korean shamanism has opened pathways. When Hur traveled to Seoul in January 2019 to meet with a shaman, or *mudang*, she was struck by the ancient religion’s thorough integration into modern society. Hur greeted a well-known mudang at her high-rise apartment, and later traveled to the mountains with two other guides to engage in what would be a seven-hour ritual, or *gut*, to appease her ancestors.

The majority of the work for this exhibition precipitates from Hur’s discoveries in Korea. The painting, *The Wheel* (2019), most explicitly visualizes *gut*. In a translucent celadon room, four empyrean figures hover around a wheel-like form as they commune with troubled ancestors. Hur began this painting before the planned ritual as a way to predict and heighten the experience; she completed the work after returning to the United States. In the process, the imagery and the painting itself became part of the ritual. For Hur, each work is a site for communion and shared transmissions with the spirit world. Her enactment of pattern on a plane suggests a wider horizon, making space for meanings and beings that remain yet to come.

Signal at the Wheel, Hover at the Gate is Hanna Hur’s first solo exhibition at Bel Ami.

Hanna Hur (b. 1985, Toronto) lives and works in Los Angeles. She recently received her MFA from the University of Southern California Los Angeles. She holds a BFA from Concordia University, Montreal. Recent exhibitions include *Four Pillars*, L’INCONNUE, Montreal (2018); *Cupping the Counter*, Motel Gallery, New York (2018); *undressing a clam*, Visitor Welcome Center, Los Angeles (2017); *Chance, on the edge of a line*, The Sunroom, Richmond (2017); *Trapdoor* (with Michael Kennedy Costa), 67 Steps, Los Angeles (2017); and *The fraud that goes under the name of love*, Audain Gallery at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver (2016). Hur will participate in forthcoming exhibitions at Heiwata, Mexico City, and Franz Kaka, Toronto.