

## In conversation with Hun Kyu Kim, young Korean contemporary artist

Our feral art hunters stumble upon wonderfully talented artists every week. But, sometimes, it's not the right time for us to work together. However, we still want to help them to convey their artistic message to a broad audience. This is exactly Hun Kyu Kim's case. We consider ourselves so lucky to have crossed path with him. Here is his interview.



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Hun Kyu Kim

*"My artworks are like the dishes of a delicious cuisine,  
and I see the ancient East Asia's traditions as a  
cultural spice that makes my political ideas and  
images more flavourful."*

— Hun Kyu Kim



"The fertile land", 2016

**To start with, tell us a little bit about you and about your artist journey.**

Since I was young, I've been so obsessed with drawing my surroundings. Trees, mountains, or some animals were main theme of my paintings. It was a kind of representation from which most artists start their first painting. As time goes by, I started to find something beyond the painting as an object, which led me to study art in more professional ways.

My previous works are about my personal traumatic events and frustrations most Korean people might suffer from, dragging me into a deep dark pit. They were quite dark and gloomy and I considered my artistic practice as a cure myself. However, there was a historical event that made me to climb up to the ground, speaking out my political voice.

In 2014, there was a historical tragedy, so called, Sewol Ferry Accident in South Korea. 304 innocent high school students sank to Jindo Ocean, and a previous Korean government tried to cover the accident. At that time, there were many people who insulted victims and their family just for fun and news companies frequently lied and mocked the victims to support the previous government. I felt incredibly disappointed about Korean society and decided to be an artist who acts as a pivotal role in changing sick society.

Now, it is proven that people were illegally paid off by the previous government, which made the Korean public politically woke up, resulting in the previous president, Park being jailed.

Due to the accident, I started to think about why I need to live and what I should do as an artist for whole my life. I personally believe that there might be many Korean artists like me.





"Don't be afraid my love" 2016

## How has your Korean heritage informed your art?

Korean traditional painting has many influences on my artistic practice. I spent a huge amount of time on observing old paintings in Korean museums, feeling the mysterious auras of religious paintings. In my case, I try to bridge traditional techniques and contemporary political issues to create unique images that might bring attention from both intellectuals in the art world and the general public. My artworks are like a delicious cuisine, and I see the ancient East Asia's traditions as a cultural spice that makes my political ideas and images more flavourful.

**Fascinating! Please, tell us a bit about the creative process you go through when making a new work.**

Before starting a work, I set up a theme and make several stories that can be connected to the theme. Each narratives act as an independent entity, but, when they are connected in a piece, a synergy effect starts. Despite of the precise and well constructed result, every process is pretty improvised and I really enjoy its unexpected narratives. I think that it somehow makes my work noisy, active and complicating, and create interesting conceptual layers.

### **What inspires your artworks?**

I got a large amount of inspiration from cultural resources. From pop culture such as movies or anime to contemporary art. Cultural eclecticism is the main characteristic of my works. As living creatures try to meet other creatures with different gene to make their offspring stronger and well adjusted, likewise, I really enjoy making a cultural hybrid creatures based on different historical and cultural background to make unique images.





"Bad morning", 2016

## What are some of your favourite philosophers?

Walter Benjamin is one of my favourite artists in that he tried to extend his personal memories to national history in his book, "Berlin Childhood 1900." The book consists of Benjamin's adolescence memories that suddenly went up to the surface from his deep inside. It is called Involuntary Memory, and is inspired by Marcel Proust. His story starts from his own perspective, but it becomes diluted in the end, forking the dark side of contemporary society.

Most artists start their works from their personal life and I personally think that it is crucial for them to bring their personal life to a public area

conceptually, sharing it with as many audiences as possible. Walter Benjamin shows me the fragmented piece which helped my perspective to be extended, making many spectrums in my conceptual background.

## **What do you think is lacking in the London art scene at the moment?**

Compared with the South Korean art scene, I think the UK offers more opportunity for its artists relatively. However, there are still many artists who are in need of help to sustain themselves financially as professional artists. The good thing is, there are also many people like you who try to help artists with various methods such as making a new type of art platform or changing the ways in the which the conventional art market works. I think Feral Horses is one of the most ambitious and reasonable attempts to support many artists in a variety of ways. As an artist, I do pray for its success and to be helpful for your group sincerely.



"Over the barricade"

## **What is the latest show that surprised you the most and why?**

Despite of controversial opinions regarding to Mr. Damien Hirst, I am pretty awed by his recent works in Venice, "Treasures from the wreck of the unbelievable." His works can be appreciated not only by its appearance but also by its conceptual factor, but what made me surprised is his willingness and boldness.

## **According to you, what is the role of an artist in our society?**

I believe that artists are a safety net and a cultural asset. Our contemporary society needs to support them to make our society culturally flourishing. As a reward, I personally believe that an artist need to feel owe from his or her society. I think that making social and political voice heard to our world can act a crucial role in our society, making our world better to live in, and it is how I pay my huge dept to our world. Thus, I highly encourage other artists to be more concerned about others, and to bring active discussions to the surface. This is why I think education for artists is a little bit different from art education, and I hope to be an educator for artists in the near future.

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