



**"I TRY TO EXPRESS MY POLITICAL IDEAS,  
THROUGH FAIRY TALES WITH BEAUTIFUL  
AND SUBTLE IMAGES COMPRISED OF  
HUMAN LIKE HYBRID ANIMALS, AS A FORM  
OF SATIRE"**



**Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your background? Where did you study?**

I am a Korean artist who studied Oriental painting BA and double majored in Aesthetics at Seoul National University of South Korea. I currently live in London after graduating from an MA at Royal College of Art. During my BA, I was trained as a restorer for ancient religious Korea painting, and I was so interested in traditional images of ancient oriental painting that I have trained myself the special technique over a decade during my school years.

Although my works are based on traditional technique, narratives in my painting share a contemporary pop culture in a harmonious manner. Through the cultural eclecticism bringing extra-ordinary experience, I make strange but subtle and beautiful stories about an imaginary world, combining a beautiful aura from traditional oriental painting and contemporary political discussion to bridge between the past and the contemporary.



*"Don't be afraid my love" 2016*



*"You are always welcomed", 2017*

**Your paintings are full of characters/beasts/scenarios. Could you tell us about these works? What is your inspiration?**

Much of my adolescence was unhappy because of the strict Korea education system. Severe

Due to the historical situation, some protests in South Korea looked aggressive and graphic as a description of the horrible history of South Korea. Fortunately, noble sacrifice from some activists made Korea government stop exercising physical violence to its public after late 80's. Nowadays, Korea people believe that they have



child abuse happened, so frequently, that nobody might believe it. I was also forced to join the army when I was 22, which was one of the most traumatic events of my life. Fortunately, the horrible experiences make me actively research social and political issues of South Korea, because I believe that my personal experience is closely connected with both Korean history and global politics. For your information, Korea's society was under a strong control of Japanese imperialism for 36 years and experienced over 40 years of dictatorship. Numberless Korean intellectuals who tried to overcome these historical tragedies were tortured and killed in 80's, which lead some artists to protest against the political power directly, unlike others who gave up fighting back.

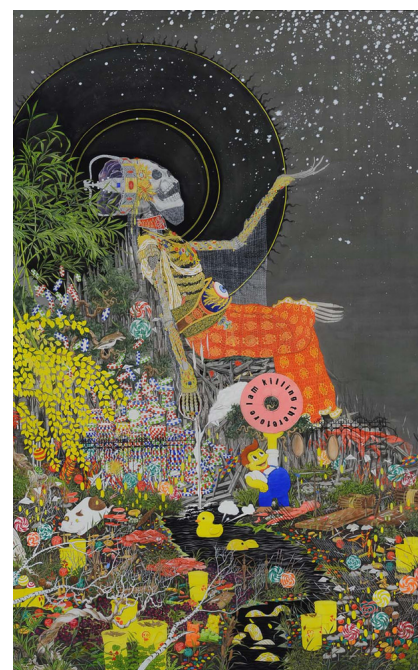
overcome their historical tragedies and seem to forget the ages of madness at some point, which allows artists to express their thoughts in moderate ways, compared with the past. Likewise, I try to express my political ideas, through fairy tales with beautiful and subtle images comprised of human like hybrid animals, as a form of satire to bring more attention from contemporary audience in a bright and humorous atmosphere. I personally believe that the cute and innocent images of my art works are able to act as a pivotal role in the spirit of Candle light revolution, evaluated as the most peaceful and successful contemporary political movement.



"Bad morning", 2016



"Pigdog", 2016



"The fertile land", 2016

**Your works are both beautiful and chaotic, brimming with symbolism. Would you say that some of your works have a political message?**

Most works of mine are closely connected with not only Korea political situation but also global politics because I strongly believe that Korea, the small peninsular country actively carries out

**Tell us a bit about how you spend your day / studio routine? What is your studio like?**

I work almost every day, holding a tiny brush and sitting on a floor for over 10 hours a day. Due to the nature of traditional oriental painting, my practice is painstakingly time and labor consuming, which makes my work special, I think. Moreover, my painting is also unrecoverable

exchanges with other contemporary nations and its political situation can act as a fragmented blueprint, where people worldwide are able to predict the near future of our contemporary world. Therefore, I try to hide national identity on purpose to make my story understandable in a universal manner despite of the fact that I got strong influence from Korea's history. In my last project, I made a triptych painting named "Over the barricade". The work is about a village where mice and frogs live. One day, a big snake starts to threaten the villagers and the villagers decide to devote their daughter to the snake. A few years later, heroes manage to kill the snake but then decided to pretend to be like a snake. Left panel is the birth of the snake and right panel is about another revolution after the existence of snake is forgotten.

The story was inspired by traditional folk tales and Korea's recent political situation as well. In 2017, the Korean public made the first female president of South Korea resign through peaceful political movement. Through the painting, I wanted to suggest some fragmented images of after the revolution rather than celebrating the catharsis of revolution.

when I made a mistake. Although I trained myself over a decade, I need to be very careful with lots concentration and patience, so not to make any critical mistakes. Ancient religious painters of South Korea used to take a bath before drawing their painting, to make their body spiritually cleaned, likewise, I did a special ritual ceremony before starting my painting to pray for its successful completion without accident.

### **How do you go about naming your work?**

I got large amount of inspiration from contemporary pop culture such as cartoons, movies, and computer games. Thus, I would borrow some ideas from them or a parody to make my work and titles harmoniously resonate each other. Sometimes, I use a form of conversation to deliver my message to audiences directly. For instance, "Don't be afraid, my love" is one of my favourite works because I think overcoming fear deep inside of a mind is a key factor for people to step forward and make huge changes, as history proves its authenticity. Therefore, every time I have a lecture for student artists, I quoted the painting in my last lecture to encourage them to speak out their voice and faithfully conduct artist's social role without fear.







"Over the barricade"



"Soon, life will become more interesting", 2016

**What artwork have you seen recently that has resonated with you?**

I saw documentary about an animation film named "the

My final dream is to change our world where every single person feels happy and makes their dreams come true. However I decide to be an artist not a politician.

**Is there anything new and exciting in the pipeline you would like to tell us about?**

I am preparing a new project for a solo exhibition at The



wind rises" produced by Zbri studio. It is Miyajaki hayao's last work. The animation film is about an areoplane engineer during WW2. The engineer has a dream to make a huge plane that makes people happy, but the government of empire of Japan asked him to design a combat plane. He already knew it is wrong but there was no choice and he couldn't give up his dream. Therefore, he decided to design a battle areoplane. The title of documentary film is "Ages of dream and madness".

Sometimes, there are some gaps between personal dreams and periodical requirement, I mean, ideal and reality. As an artist who makes visually desirable images, I also feel some gaps between the two.

Some people might think that it is a naive idea that art can change the world. However, I can't give up my passion towards art as well as my dream to be helpful to our world. Therefore, I want to make beautiful and attractive images as much as I can, and keep interiorizing the right things to do based on humanities, by hiding political narratives to act as a bridge between intellectually difficult contemporary art and the general public.

Approach Gallery in November 2018. The project is about 8 parallel universes based on dark fantasies. The story is inspired by contemporary economics, but I am going to reinterpret the complicating theories with a full imagination. I hope many people visit the show, sharing diverse discussion.

[www.hunkyukim.wix.com/painter](http://www.hunkyukim.wix.com/painter)

*All images courtesy of the artist  
interview publish date: 15/02/2018*



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**NED ARMSTRONG**

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