

Yeesoogyung

Born in 1963, Seoul, Korea / Lives and works in Seoul

Yeesoogyung has steadily expanded her artistic practice across diverse mediums, including installation, sculpture, performance, video art, painting, and drawing, each infused with a rich narrative imagination. She has crafted a unique artistic world that explores fundamental themes, including the intersections of past and present, life and death, reality and imagined, the secular and the sacred, individuals and communities, societal structures, and cross-cultural connections. Using unorthodox methods and working with traditional artisans – from ceramists, musicians, to dancers – Yeesoogyung creates new meanings around cultural translation and the coexistence of past and present. Inspired by ancient mythology and personal experience, she weaves these influences into an evocative artistic universe that seeks transcendence and enlightenment from within.

Yeesoogyung has held numerous solo exhibitions, including *Yeesoogyung: Temple portatif*, Musée Cernuschi, Paris, France (2023); *Moonlight Crown* at Art Sonje Centre, Seoul (2022); *The Story of a Girl Named Long Journey* at the Buk-Seoul Museum of Art (2022); *Whisper Only to You* at MDRE & Capodimonte Museum, Naples, Italy (2019); *Saint Breeder* at Atelier Hermès, Seoul (2015); and *When I become you, Yeesoogyung in Taipei* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan (2015). She also participated in the inaugural Korea Artist Prize at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (2012); and the 57th Venice Biennale, *VIVA ARTE VIVA* (2017).

Her works are held in prominent museum collections worldwide, including The British Museum, London, UK; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, USA; Seoul Museum of Art, Korea; Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv, Ukraine; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, Korea; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; and Bristol Museum, UK.

Selected Works

Translated Vase (2001-ongoing)

Using a labor-intensive approach, Yeesookyung reconstructs organic, intricate sculptures from discarded ceramic fragments—pieces initially crafted by master ceramists who destroy any vases with even the slightest imperfections. By filling the cracks in 24K gold, playing on the Korean homonym, *geum* (which means both “crack” and “gold”), she revitalizes traditional ceramics with a modern sensibility. Her hands-on process follows the body’s natural movement rather than a pre-structured form, allowing each sculpture to evolve organically and take on its own unique shape.

This series was inspired by a 2001 project in Albisola, Italy, where the artist commissioned a local potter unfamiliar with East Asian pottery to create twelve porcelains based on a poem about Joseon-dynasty ceramics. Through this act of translation and cross-cultural exchange, the *Translated Vases* emerged as hybrid forms, each embodying a unique narrative. Since 2010, Yeesookyung has incorporated not only Korean white vases and celadon but also fragmented North Korean and European ceramics, blending materials and traditions across cultures. (Explanation of work by Jeesun Park)



Translated Vase_2007 TVW 10, 2007
Ceramic shards, epoxy, 24K gold leaf, 122x84x81cm.
Collection of Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, USA



Translated Vase_Nine Dragons in Wonderland, 2017
Ceramic shards, stainless steel, aluminum bars, epoxy, 24K gold leaf
492(h)x200x190 cm
Installation view, *VIVA ARTE VIVA*, 57th Venice Biennale, Arsenale, Italy, 2017



Translated Vase_Thousand_2012, 2012
Ceramic shards, 24K gold leaf.

Installation View, *Constellation Gemini*, Korea Artist Prize, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, 2012
Image ©National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea

Moonlight Crown (2018-ongoing)

“For a long time, I thought of crowns as substitutes for the haloes depicted over the heads of Buddha, Jesus, and other saints.”

Questioning the meaning of a lustrous crown—a symbol of absolute power, opulence, and glory—Yeesookyung creates crowns that have transformed into body-like forms, too large and heavy to be worn on the head. Adorned with an array of shiny, ornamental materials such as crystal, glass, and mirrors, they are intertwined with tiny sculptures of angels, girls' faces, praying hands, limbs, plants, and animals, all recurring motifs from the artist's *Daily Drawing* and *Flame* series. Radiating an exaggerated energy with their maximalist aesthetic, these crowns are so resplendent they verge on grotesque, embodying a duality between desire and despair, fascination and horror. By inventing new mystical feminine figures inspired by Korean folklore, Yeesookyung imbues the works with complex identities and dualities. (Explanation of work by Jeesun Park)



Installation view. Moonlight Crowns, Art Sonje Center, Seoul, Korea



Installation view. Moonlight Crowns, ArtSonje Center, Seoul, Korea
Below: *Moonlight Crown_Intimate Sisters_East Peak*, 2021, Brass, epoxy, iron, resin, 114x73x74 cm

Flame (2005-ongoing)

Yeesookyung's *Flame* paintings evoke therapeutic and mystical allusions, rendered with exquisite detail using deep red cinnabar on traditional Korean paper – a material commonly associated with talismans and Buddhist paintings. Created instinctively and spontaneously, much like the Surrealists' automatic drawings, Yeesookyung views flame as a symbol of life and death, sin and healing. Through this intensely laborious process, she seeks enlightenment within the self-propagating painterly chaos, searching for meaning and insight in the organic flow of each work. (Explanation of work by Jeesun Park)



Flame 2013-2, 2013, Cinnabar on Korean paper, 100x100 cm



Flame 2013-4, 2013
Cinnabar on Korean paper, 100x100 cm

Flame Variation (2012-ongoing)

Flame and *Flame Variation* evolve from Yeesookyung's *Daily Drawings*, a series she began in 2004 as a daily practice of self-reflection and exploration of her identity as a woman. These early drawings, reminiscent of mandalas, are as meditative as they are awakening.

Building on motifs from *Daily Drawings* and *Flame* paintings, *Flame Variation* is digitally mirrored and then meticulously hand-painted, resulting in uncanny yet sublime images that duplicate the sacred and secular, the conscious and subconscious. Rendered on silk scrolls, the paintings echo the iconography of Gorguryeo tombs murals and incorporate the symmetrical spatial organization of Tibetan Buddhist altar paintings. Both meditative and energetic, these works evoke layered, allegorical meanings in a non-linear, contemplative manner. (Explanation of work by Jeesun Park)



Installation view, *Constellation Gemini*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, Korea, 2012
Bottom: *Flame Variation 1-1*, 2012, Pigment on silk, Painting 70x120cm / Scroll 195x138cm

Twin Dance (2012)

In this performance and single-channel video work, two dancers, styled to resemble identical souvenir dolls, perform in mirrored synchrony. They enact Gyobang-chum, a courtesan dance from the Joseon dynasty, floating dreamily as if enveloped in a halo within a timeless, ethereal space. With precise, mesmerizing movements, the dancers bring to life a traditional dance that emphasizes fertility and inner strength of the female form, embodying an idealized vision of womanhood in traditional Korean society. (Explanation of work by Jeesun Park)

Preview: <https://vimeo.com/151764725>



Twin Dance, 2012

Single-channel video & sound, 11 min. 52 sec

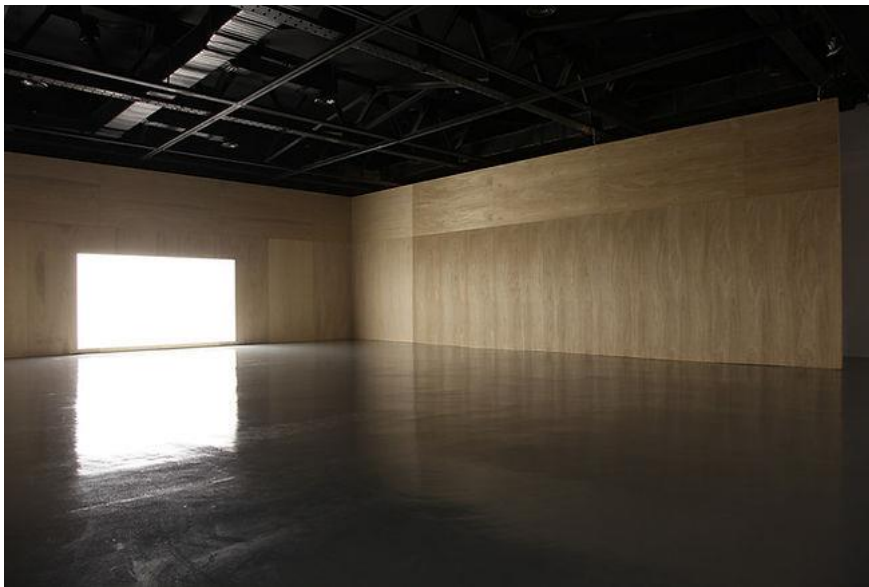
Performance and video directing: Yeesookyung ; Performance: Lee Junghwa, Chung Song Ii ; Music: Jang Young Gyu ;
Costume: Kim Youngseok ; Makeup: Soh In Gyeong ; Camera and video editing: Cha Eun Teak

Norae (2010, 2012)

Norae encompasses both performance and stage design for *Gagok*, a form of traditional Korean vocal music that harmonizes female and male voices accompanied by a small ensemble of Korean instruments. *Gagok* is regarded as one of the most sophisticated styles among traditional "proper songs" (*jeongga*). Yeesookyung designed a unique stage to faithfully convey *yeochang* – songs for women characterized by their delicate, high-pitched, and refined vocal quality – without the use of any electronic devices or amplification, preserving the purity of the original sound.

The music carries a serene, elegant melody that is neither lively nor somber; it is meditative, seeking a cleansing experience for the body and soul. (Explanation of work by Jeesun Park)

Exhibition video: <https://vimeo.com/31987004>





Norae-While Our Tryst Has Been Delayed, 2010

Stage design and performance directing: Yeesoogyung ; Producer: Kim Inseon, Space Willing n Dealing; Performance: Jung Marie ;
Stage Plan: Gim Youngjin ; Design Firm ; Film Editing: Kim Joonha ; Costume: Yeesoogyung

You Were There_Abu Dhabi 2024, You Were There_Al Ain 2024 (2024)

You Were There is created from an AI-generated rock form, covered in 24k gold leaf. It is a rock that does not exist in reality, a creation born of anonymous imaginations. Gilding it in gold transforms this imagined rock, rendering it eternal and unchanging.

Seventy percent of Korea is covered in rocky mountains, among which are stones that preserve traces of ancient dolmen culture and rituals.

Standing before a large rock, I often feel a subtle vibration, perhaps my own magnetic field reacting to the minerals in the stone. These rocks seem to radiate an inexplicable energy, embodying time from the beginning of the universe until now, evoking a mysterious, captivating presence.

Sending this imagined rock from Korea to Abu Dhabi brings with it a sense of nostalgia. To honor this journey, I decided to dedicate a song to the rock, performed by a traditional Korean musician. I asked the singer to deliver the message, “You are real; you are born from the alchemy of turning stone to gold. May you bring the spirit of peace and coexistence to your arrival.” This message was conveyed through a Gueum chant, a form of traditional Korean music that channels deep emotions through melody rather than words. This sentiment shapes the essence of the work.

Upon its arrival in Abu Dhabi, an Emirati musician welcomes this unfamiliar creation with a new song, celebrating its arrival in its new home.



Installation view. *You Were There_Abu Dhabi 2024, 2024*
FRP, 24K gold leaf, urethane paint, stainless steel, 172 x 187 x 182 cm
Heritage Park, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2024



Installation view. *You Were There _Al Ain* 2024, 2024
FRP, 24K gold leaf, urethane paint, stainless steel, 160 x 185 x 183 cm
Hili Archaeological Park, Al Ain, UAE, 2024



Performance *You Were There_Abu Dhabi 2024* in Korea
2024. 10. 10, Yeesoogyung's storage
Performer: Taeyoung Kim



Performance *You Were There_Abu Dhabi 2024* in Abu Dhabi
2024. 11. 07, Abu Dhabi, Heritage Park
Performer: Saif Al Ali