

NO THING IS WAITING

Artist Jung Min Park
interviewed by curator
Anna Nesterenko,
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Anna Nesterenko: Over the past year, we have been forced to mostly work remotely due to the pandemic, which was especially difficult for artists who need to physically work with materials. How did the lockdown affect your practice and how did you continue to work under such restrictions?

Jung Min Park: As an artist who works with clay, it is very challenging to work remotely due to the chemicals and dust associated with clay and ceramic glazes; it's really necessary to have a separate working space. I also need a kiln, which is expensive and difficult to own without a permanent studio. Luckily, I had a residency at Clayarch Gimhae Museum right after the pandemic started. Even though so many planned exhibitions and projects have been delayed and canceled due to the pandemic, I could access the facilities I needed while sharing a huge studio with other artists. As the residency was in an isolated place, it was relatively safe from Covid-19 and I felt lucky to have other artists around me to discuss and share ideas, as well as organise exhibitions and projects with. I could experiment and learn so much about ceramics during this period. It was actually a helpful opportunity for me to grow and reflect, while adapting to the new environment right after I came back from the UK, where I studied.

AN: Your sculptures are instantly recognisable thanks to their unusual shapes and colorful carved drawings. What is your process of making? Does the idea dictate the form of the sculptures or does material dominate the idea?

JMP: The process of making contains a metaphor for the idea. Clay is a unique and interactive material with its own rhythm, which I have to consider. The work begins with 'coiling', a hand-building technique where you repetitively pile up long coils of clay. When the shape starts to sag due to its own weight, I stop to let it dry and then continue coiling again. This process of building, collapsing, halting and rebuilding, naturally forms organic curves. This self-generation through repetition acts as a catalyst for my work. The process of making is full of coincidence and intuitive decision-making. Therefore, the idea itself becomes the process and the clay (as a material) provides the physical ground to record the process. The idea and the material naturally collaborate during the process of making the work.

AN: This is so relevant to theme of the exhibition, which explores how objects experience their own timelines, independent of people. In addition to time, sound is also crucial to your sculptures. How did you get the initial idea to use sound and how do you record it? What does it mean in the context of the sculptures?

JMP: The idea came from my previous video works, which recorded repetitive daily actions such as chewing and blinking. I was intuitively attracted to these daily gestures, which are so closely related to our existence. Although often unnoticed, these movements rhythmically repeat themselves countless times every day in order to keep us alive. All the sounds are recorded directly from my own body – the sound of my heart beating, breathing, eyes blinking, chewing and swallowing food, etc. I collected and mixed these according to the rhythm and texture of each individual sound. When the completed sound works are installed inside the sculptures, they add illusionary movement to each work, which instinctively leads us to feel an energy and rhythm, suggesting the abstract body of a living creature.

AN: In addition to sculptures, the exhibition also features your embroidery, which seem to intersect with the sculptures. What is the genesis of the embroideries, and how are the two related?

JMP: The embroidery drawings came before the ceramic sculptures. At the time, my interest was in human perception via the body, and I had a strong desire to express my memories of bodily sensations. I tried to translate floating abstract bodily memories into visual language. Often, they were expanding, multiplying, wriggling, soft, moving sensations with temperature, colours and textures, and so I brought various materials to the embroidery drawings to express those distinctive senses. As I continued making these embroidery drawings, I had a desire to move beyond the flat surface to a three-dimensional space. I started working in ceramic and soon the images from the embroidery drawings became part of my sculptures, inspiring their shape and the carved drawings on the surface.

AN: Currently you are in South Korea and worked with us on the exhibition remotely. Do you plan to return to London and what are your next artistic plans?

JMP: First, I want to express my huge thanks to Jess, Anna and everyone who helped me to be in this exhibition from far away. I am planning to return to London after I get vaccinated and it becomes safer to travel. I am looking forward to going back!

My next artistic plan is to keep going! Currently, I am preparing for upcoming exhibitions and art fairs in South Korea. I am also working on developing the sound works; previously these were focused on biological sounds like breathing, chewing and heart beats, but now I am looking for sounds of repeated bodily gestures that are closer to our social actions. I feel I have a long way to go with my ceramic

sculptures and the plaster plinths; I am carrying out lots of experiments so please keep an eye on my Instagram (@zoompark) if you are interested!

Jung Min Park (b. 1994, South Korea) graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Arts, London in 2019, and is currently based in South Korea. Jung Min explores the relationships between the body and the world through repetitive processes. In her glazed ceramic sculptures the vulnerability of the body and the clay come together to create an interesting rhythm. The artist believes that the stimuli received through bodily senses from our surroundings are translated and interpreted by each individual in a unique way, depending on the differing perspective of each person. Thus, through her practice, Jung Min questions the principles of existence and perception.

Anna Nesterenko is a curator from Ukraine, currently based in London. She is doing a MA in Curating and Collections, Chelsea College of Arts. Her curatorial practice focuses on art performances and installations and she has curated exhibitions for Zabludowicz Collection, Venice International Art Fair and independent galleries.