



# Meditative Journeys

Sungyee Kim and Kang Hyo Lee  
at  
Mindy Solomon Gallery  
*A Review by Brian Ransom*

UPON WALKING INTO THE MINDY SOLOMON GALLERY to experience her recent exhibition *Meditative Journeys* featuring devotional works by Sungyee Kim and Kang Hyo Lee (25 February to 7 April 2012), the viewer is immediately struck by two simultaneous impressions: the first, a visual unity that is created by the markedly similar colour choices made by each of the two artists, followed by the realisation that the works were made from divergent and disparate materials. Kim's five series of paintings are achieved with densely applied *sumi* ink, resists and mixed-media, on panel, while Lee's efforts are created in clay, which he high fires in gas and wood atmospheres. The featured works in the exhibition hail from two contemporary South Korean artists

who have never met in person, yet the textures, hues and feeling of the artworks are remarkably in sync. The landscape of pieces in the gallery presents us with abstraction and austerity in their tonal range. Light creams infused with greys darkening to deep charcoals and subtle nuances of bright orange and siennas creep almost identically into the colour palettes of both artists. As the design elements shared by these pieces congeal and merge, a relaxing calm permeates the exhibition space prompting onlookers to imagine that all of the works could have been conceived by the same mind.

In an interview with gallery director and curator, Mindy Solomon, she professed "unlike other frenetic and narrative exhibitions, this show inspires me because of its harmonious feel, it has a soothing effect on the audience." After a moments thought, she continued "... I was drawn to South Korean contemporary artists because of their resilience as a

Above: Kang Hyo Lee. *Sky Mostare*.

Below: Kang Hyo Lee. *Ceramic Puncheong squared bowl with Ash Glaze 3*. 2011. 6 x 13.5 x 13.5 in.







people who have withstood millennia of persecution. I appreciate their love for craftsmanship and material, as well as their distinct style and highly iconographic imagery . . . the show plays well because it is so expressive."

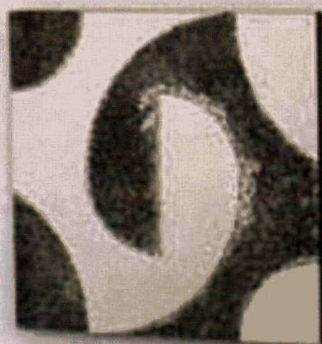
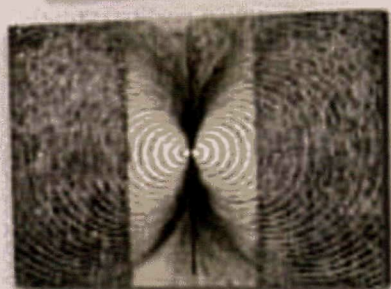
What is fascinating, however, by their own descriptions, is that the intentions behind the two artists' approaches to art making are strikingly different. The paintings by Kim are derived from a conceptual understanding of ancient eastern philosophy. In her words, "five series of paintings incorporate the principles of *I Ching* with the Taoist purism of becoming one with the material, as in the Transformation of Things (the Buddhist concept of a universe in a single dust particle) and the sword-polishing spirit of traditional metal-smiths." The results are beautiful and delicately wrought painted tapestries that conjure map-like imagery. Lee, on the

other hand, produces a wide variety of well crafted ceramic vessels ranging from whimsical lidded jars and tea bowls to large, relaxed pitchers and containers. His pieces, loosely textured and generously applied with white (and occasionally dark) slips on a high iron clay body, reflect Lee's study of the ancient Korean Onggi tradition. Many of his pieces evince a playful demonstration of inlay and sgraffito. According to some sources, Onggi sometimes refers to the ware's unique quality of breathing, both as a metaphor and as ideal vessels for storing and preserving food. Lee applies his slips quickly and spontaneously in a manner that yields surprising and

Sungye Kim. *Animal Path*. 2008.  
Sumi ink and mixed media on panel. 24 x 36 in.











unpredictable patterns. After firing, the surfaces of Lee's forms blend a mysterious combination of both texture and colour. Lee explains, "A true potter only speaks through his vessel."

As different as their approaches to art making may be, the combination of work by these two artists is truly alchemic. Both artists have embarked upon a cultural journey beginning with Korea's rich, yet misty past. Sungyee Kim and Kang Hyo Lee share a diverse understanding of Korean history from which they have initiated their individual creative processes; ultimately, the works in this exhibition



Facing page: *Installation View of Exhibition in Mindy Solomon Gallery.*  
Left: Kang Hyo Lee. *My House 4*. 2007. Glazed ceramic. 13.75 x 13 x 13 in.

Above: Kang Hyo Lee. *Puncheon flat ceramic bottle with Ash Glaze*. 2011. 12 x 6.5 x 10 in.

Below: Sungyee Kim. *Ocean Breathing Light*. 2007. Sumi ink and mixed media on panel. 24 x 36 in.

co-mingle in a kindred vision. The thrift of colour and topography-like imagery of these pieces leads us from a fractured past to a wondrous and unknowable future.

Brian Ransom is a Professor of Visual Arts at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, US. All images courtesy of the Mindy Solomon Gallery.





Copyright of Ceramics: Art & Perception is the property of Ceramic Art and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.