



Maraya Art Centre to host the first Korean Contemporary Art Exhibition

أنا **[ana] please keep your eyes closed for a moment**

Date: 14 October 2015

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

أنا **[ana] please keep your eyes closed for a moment** curated by JW Stella at Maraya Art Centre is the first exhibition of Korean contemporary art presented by a public art institution in the MENA region.

The exhibition, which will be opened on 21 October 2015 spreads over several floors of Maraya Art Centre, focuses on contemporary cultural practice in South Korea and across the Arab world. It arises from multi-sensory and intellectual interactions between the artists, curator, social anthropologists and audiences.

In pursuit of questioning the notion of identity and the condition of the individual being, أنا **[ana]** acts as an artistic forum, from within which the artworks facilitate a broader debate on the varying cultural conditions across different geographical boundaries ; and more specifically of cross-cultural societies, which have adapted and evolved into hybrids.

The Arabic term, أنا **[ana]** means 'I or oneself' in English, whereas it is written as '나' and pronounced as [na] in Korean. The three words, 'أنا', '나' and 'I', signify the same meaning within semiotics. The signification of the characters, however, can vary in accordance with the different ideologies, paradigms and value systems of the diverse cultures and societies from which they are derived. The question is asked: to what extent is أنا or 나 capable of defining her/his own identity rather than being identified by his/her surroundings?

Furthermore, the exhibition aims to bridge the gap that has been created by unfamiliarity and media-driven prejudice, and bring about a closer understanding of these two different worlds. By inviting our audiences to the relational practice of contemporary art, the exhibition acts as a platform for congregating and learning about each other through a curious journey of encounter.

Imbued with sensation and emotion, the subtitle, 'Please keep your eyes closed for a moment' is taken from the preamble to the novel Insung Lee's *The Infinite Ethereal Breath*. The author urges his readers to take action by closing their eyes briefly, with the intention of making the reader aware of their physical presence in their environment. Whether they like it or not the reader becomes part of the story; and this methodology allows the audience to play a role as active participants, rather than mere consumers of his novel. In this exhibition Lee's call to arms is used to offer the spectator a seat at the table, alongside the artists and curator.

Many of the works, by one Arab and twelve Korean contemporary artists together with their artistic collaborators in the exhibition, are new commissions and often the result of long-term artistic research.

Two single-channel video works, *Mouth to Mouth* (1975) by the late, great Theresa Hak Kyung Cha

(1951–1982) and *Twin Dance* (2012) by Yeesoookyung, present the ontological contemplation of ‘identities’ of *ana* by conceptually and physically floating around the exhibition.

Ingeun Kim creates a soundscape installation *Stampede Behaviour II* (2015) conceptually responding to Cha’s work *Mouth to Mouth* infused with the voice of the crowd in Korean public space and his own surroundings.

Yeesoookyung, as part of her long term project, ‘When I Become You’, has created *My Asian Modern Masters-‘Fahrelnissa Zeid’* (2015) for أنا [*ana*]. In an attempt to ‘become’ Zeid, Yee has reproduced one of Zeid’s most significant paintings, entitled *Divine protection* (1981), from the private collection of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

Gayoung Jun presents a time-intensive, meditative 15-metre-long mural drawing installation, *gayoung.drawing* (2015). Consisting of 176,956 squares in a grid, this is a self-portrait based on her observation of her inner self and her surroundings in Sharjah..

In his moving and complex project *Ordinary Monument* (2015) Hong Soun also explores subjectivity; if memories, that are highly personalised and vulnerable in our unconscious mind, can form archival objects of the events that one experiences.. His work is composed of a grand-scale triptych of still life and sixty small sculptures formed of tightly wrapped abandoned objects.

Artist and philosopher Juyeon Kim will continue her project, inaugurated in 2002, entitled *YI:SUK*,, a site and time specific seed-sprouting installation at Maraya. She explores how every being in the universe grows, matures and evolves in a different way. Using 7000 local Emirati newspapers as compost the 10th series of *YI:SUK* (2015), will provide the audience with the opportunity to ponder what it means to live as an individual being within a vast socio-cultural environment.

Hyojin Jeong has made a playful new performative video work filmed in Sharjah and Korea called *Alice in Tearpool* (2015) which is an expression of sympathy in the face of current global upheavals. She will show it alongside a new neon text work in Arabic, both works are inspired by Lewis Carroll’s novel *Alice in Wonderland*. Meanwhile, Young In Hong is creating a site-specific embroidered graffiti installation, ‘*Parallel Voices* (2015)’ in collaboration with UAE-based urban artist Steffi Bow.

Sujin Lee and Ghada Da will show the works researched and created during their artist-in-residence exchange programme inaugurated between Maraya Art Centre and Seoul Art Space Geumcheon earlier this year. *Flying Across The Moonlight* (2015) by Lee is a result of her research into the traces of cultural exchange made between Korea and the Arab world since 57 BC and her observations of contemporary Sharjah . UAE-based artist Ghada Da has created intriguing new commission, ‘*Orient* (2015)’, in collaboration with the wooden lacquerware with mother-of-pearl craftsman and Korean Intangible Cultural Asset, Son DaeHyun, supported by the fine craft brand in Korea, ‘Cheyul’.

The exhibition actively engages with wider audiences through its ‘Secret Cinema’ programme which will be shown at Maraya’s new screening room (every weekend throughout the exhibition period) and will also travel to ‘Abu Dhabi Art’, ‘A4’ in Alserkal Avenue, Dubai and ‘Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art’ in China. The selected short films allow us a glimpse into the diverse lives of individuals ,told by individuals and encourage us to emotionally connect with the protagonists in the stories

The films, shown for the first time in the region, are directed by Ayoung Kim, Sojung Jun, Hyun Mi Yoo and the artist collective Red Carpet Sprit, lead by Ingeun Kim.

In line with the exhibition a panel discussion 'Fabricating Culture, Curating Identity' will take place on 23 October from 6.30 till 8.00pm at King's College in London, Panellists include, Maraya Art Centre Director, Giuseppe Moscatello, JW Stella, Btihaj Ajana, and Jean-Paul Martinon.

During the exhibition which will run until 2 January, 2016, a Pop-up library in Maraya Community will allow visitors to learn more about the participant artists and Korean contemporary art.

end

Notes to the Editor:

Artist

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982), Hong Soun, Young In Hong, Hyojin Jeong, Gayoung Jun, Ingeun Kim, Juyeon Kim, , Yeesoookyung, Sujin Lee, Ghada Da.

Artists for 'Secret Cinema'

Sojung Jun, Ayoung Kim, Ingeun Kim (Red Carpet Spirit), Hyun Mi Yoo.

This exhibition is sponsored by Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), Art Council Korea, GyeongGi Cultural Foundation **and** Cheyul. **And supported by** Korea-Arab Society, Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Cinema Akil , A4 (Alserkal Avenue) and King's Cultural Institute, UK

Media Sponsors Noblesse, artnow both in Korea and China.

About Maraya Art Centre

Established in 2006, Maraya Art Centre is a three-storey non-profit creative space located in Sharjah, UAE. Since its inception, Maraya has offered the public an innovative exhibitions programme, showcasing the work of leading Middle Eastern and international artists. The centre also boasts multi-media facilities, a video archive, an art library and a regular public programme of workshops and events designed by its in-house team and guest curators. Outside of the main building, Maraya also has several public park art sites within its local vicinity that feature interactive projects and sculptures.

Attached images for possible use,

For more info about the press release please contact.

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