

Soo Kyoung Lee

Olivier Kaeppelin

Young Taek Park

François Michaud

Eunlog Sim

Jean-Louis Poitevin

Hyun Jung

Henri-François Debailleux

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Pulsations

Olivier Kaepelin

My first impression faced with Soo Kyoung Lee's paintings is that I'm standing in front of a bundle of concentrated energy. A power of attraction pulling me into a space, a vortex, a whirlpool... But, wait, isn't it rather an impenetrable volume, a block of colors whose density throws us to the outlines of its mass...?

Soo Kyoung Lee puts us across from a central figure that never stops challenging us, because it forces us to move from the substance to the form and the form to the substance. We can't grasp the figure, which keeps bouncing back, like a ball hitting a wall. We enter, we go around it, and we try to insinuate ourselves inside it once again. The movement has a rhythm, it beats like a heart, it's a vital principle.

When I observe the different ways in which it is made manifest, I hear the sound of breathing. Soo Kyoung Lee's subjects breathe. I'm not sure what their identity is if it's not that breath of air, spreading over or drawing itself in the background of the painting in order to rise back to the surface. It is the breath of all of the kingdoms: animal, vegetable, mineral.... That waft of air is not one of fragmentary singularities, but of a matter that "breathes in and out" through painting. It is incarnated before us in the center of spaces that are vaster than it is.

We sense the power, the dance and the light of the heart, the "nucleus," that the painter has entered into a dialogue with. Far from being defined by the immobility of lines that impose limits, it is composed of lines that intertwine. They confront and contradict each other, or embrace like skeins of wool or the blended substances of stars. If we follow them, we are drawn into spirals, leaps, concretions and expansions that connect the shapes, unlike what a hasty perception might have led us to believe because of their heavy outlines or their centrality.

Like in the work of the painter Pierre Dunoyer, they are driven by a vital space that induces them and carries them, like the being of a planet or a meteorite. If they seem static to us, it is only for an infinitesimal instant. They are actually suspended between levitation and falling, between the surface and the depth. Thanks to that intensity, and as Clarice Lispector put it, "Perhaps that is what we could call being alive. No more than this, but this: alive. And just alive with a gentle joy¹." Here, we are not talking about rain, as is the author of *The Hour of the Star*, but about the bodies from which emanate the whirling, vibrations, and movement in this colorful cosmos that is radiating that gentle joy.

1. Clarice Lispector, *Où étais tu pendant la nuit ?*, trad. Geneviève Lebrich & Nicolas Biras, Paris: Des Femmes-Antoinette Fouch, 1985, p. 15.

The painter seeks the lushness of colors through the bedazzlement they create thanks to the single-color backgrounds they float in. Her titles remind us of the importance she grants to words, to the literature and philosophy she has studied, from university to the present. I read them like a poem that accompanies her paintings. They refer to both the reality of the color used and to the virtual universe they project us into, letting our eyes and imaginations open the doors of pictorial skies.

Like this poem:

Pale smoky green
Deep magenta
Petite orange
Celestial blue

or

Deep maroon
Blue-hued anthracite
Chocolate
Shadow

and

Cloudy blue.

Just names of colors that do not, by any stretch, summarize the paintings. Rather they are appeals to “enter, wander around and away” thanks to the floating volumes in these places without limits, places or perhaps liquids, seas, airs... receptacles for strokes of artistic magic.

Looking at Soo Kyoung Lee’s paintings starts with looking at and experiencing the colors, remembering these lines from Michel Pastoureau, “A color never comes alone: it has no meaning, it only works fully –from a social, artistic and symbolic point of view– to the extent that it is paired with or opposes one or more other colors. By the same token, it is impossible to consider it in isolation. To speak of red also –necessarily– means speaking of blue, yellow, green and black and white even more so².”

2. Michel Pastoureau, *Rouge, Histoire d'une couleur*, Paris: Seuil, 2019, p. 15.

Paint’s necessarily plural state is like the state of color in Soo Kyoung Lee’s work. Color’s role in the work is key. It expresses autonomy, independence and freedom below or beyond the shape drawn. It toys with it, while at the same time pulling away in a precisely choreographed ballet, a “perceptive” to-ing and fro-ing. That ballet has the weightlessness, joy and fluidity of swimming on a summer day. The pictorial bodies avoid each other or meet, observing each other like shells, like fish on the seabed.

Color seeps inside and slips “in and around” the shapes, cradling them in an amniotic bath. It zooms by, remains suspended, flees once again, making the path of its story manifest. The odd couple formed by color and shape comes together and apart. Freedom of color –not in the manner of Fernand Léger or Juan Miró– freedom of color, less in the play of layering than in the principle of its contradictory manifestations.

Here, color, the palimpsest, contaminates shape, playing with harmony and discord. Its power is huge, as in the series starting with BA- (BAGPO, BAPVC etc.). It builds figures in paradoxical architectural suites. With tremendous mastery, Soo Kyoung Lee toys with their fragility. Her work isn’t lyrical, and her poetry isn’t based on excess or gesturing. Although color allows her to inhabit her aesthetic object, it does so in a way that I believe evokes a fertile dialogue with Jonathan Lasker. He, too, explores the question of the abstract object that is prevented by a free use of color from being defined or named. Looking at Soo Kyoung Lee’s paintings, we sometimes come close to recognizing a pattern, such as stones, waves, plants, sea creatures, a comet or a forest. But she pulls us back, turning us away from reality specifically in order to remind us that that’s not what they are, that these are first and foremost creatures of painting. That is the spring from which our emotions are born,

calling for a cheerful expenditure and a confident complicity with the axiom of mobility animating and regenerating the world, from the smallest to the largest dimension.

On that point, it is important to bear in mind that in some of her most recent paintings (starting back in 2012, although no longer in the central “nucleus”) the frequent appearance of figures lying horizontally render that essential poeticism of movement concrete. She is pointing out that her space cannot be reduced to the substance/form duality of that “map” because, through that relation, we understand that it is not a map but a living territory. Each of those cores indicates, not only a center, but also a movement inside that center, inside that figure that is stretching out, becoming elongated, going deeper, beyond what we can perceive. Each line invites us to assume a “beyond” to our perception: a future for that shape. We are being addressed by that figure which is becoming a journey, a “path.” Its crafting, position and nature invite us to see it, not for what it is, but for what it will become. We are in front of it thanks to perception, but its “development beyond,” is what we’re thinking of.

In this way, we can’t possess it because the question it asks us is, “What happens next? What space will it open by projecting its radiance?” That space to come and to experience, with it as a starting point, is the truth of its principle and experience.

Olivier Kaepelin has held high positions at France art institutions: from 2004 to 2009 as executive director for arts in ministry of Culture and Communication, from 2009 to 2011 as director of the Palais de Tokyo Project, then from 2011 to 2017, as director of Maeght Foundation.

Between 1999 and 2004 he was executive director in charge of broadcast contents in France public radio channel *France Culture*, counsellor to *Radio France* CEO for cultural broadcast content and for the cultural development policy of the institution. At *France Culture*, he produced several shows on literature, art, theater and contemporary city questions.

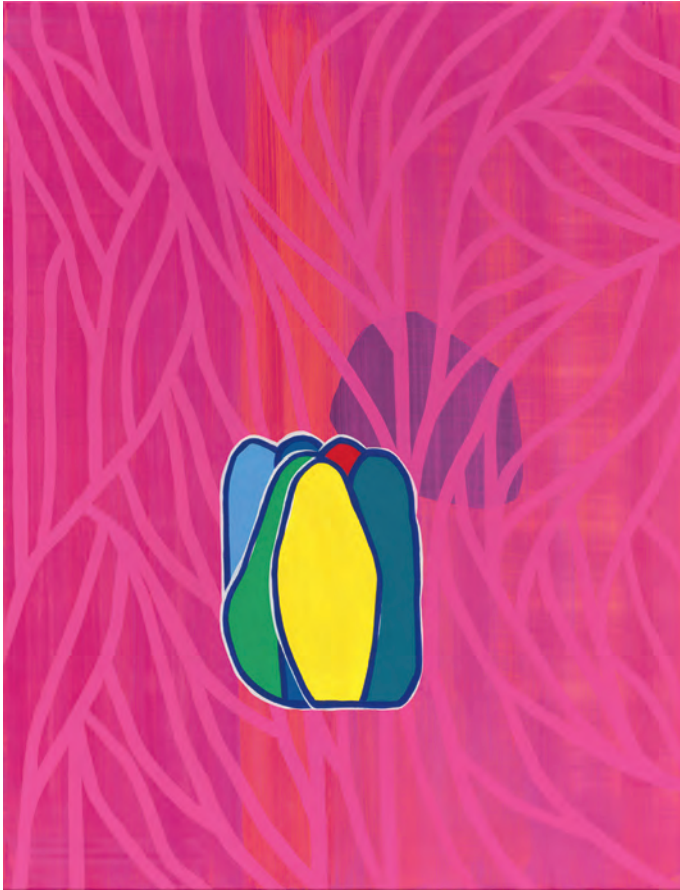
As a writer, he wrote poetry books published by various publishers. He is also the author of many books and texts about art, artists and theater.

Creator of art and literature magazines (*Exit, Le Grand 8*), he also collaborated in many other periodical, magazines and literary journals (*Art Press, Beaux Arts magazine, Change, La Quinzaine littéraire, L’Autre Journal, L’Ennemi, Libération, Opus...*)





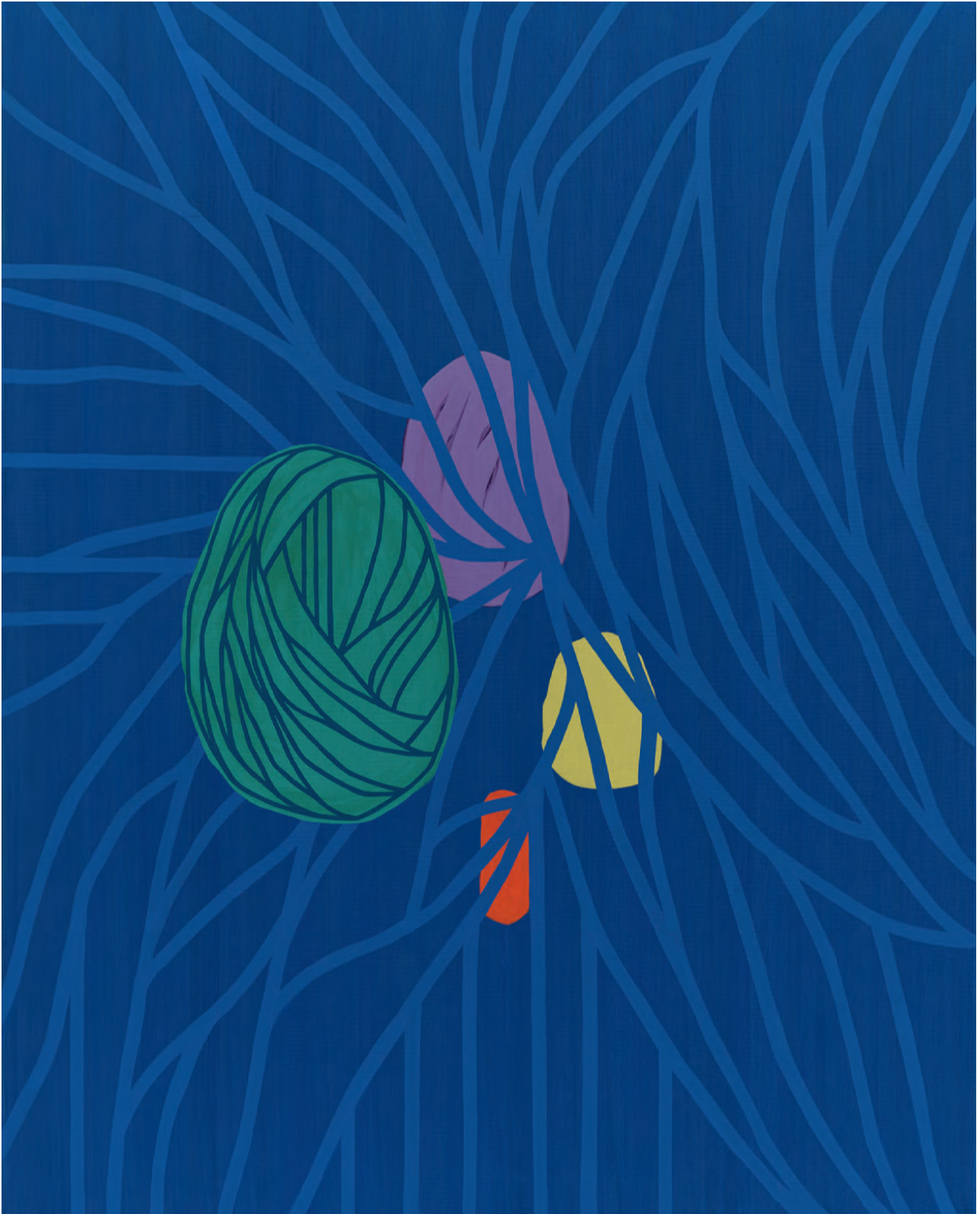




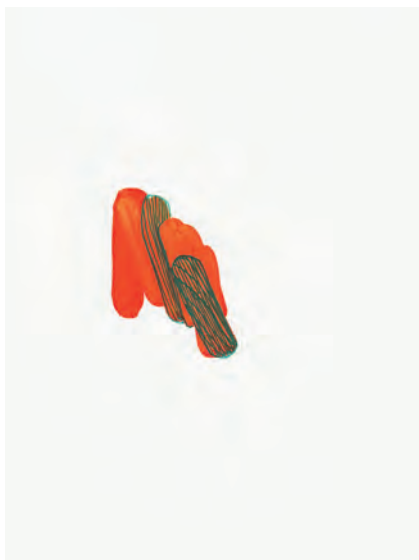


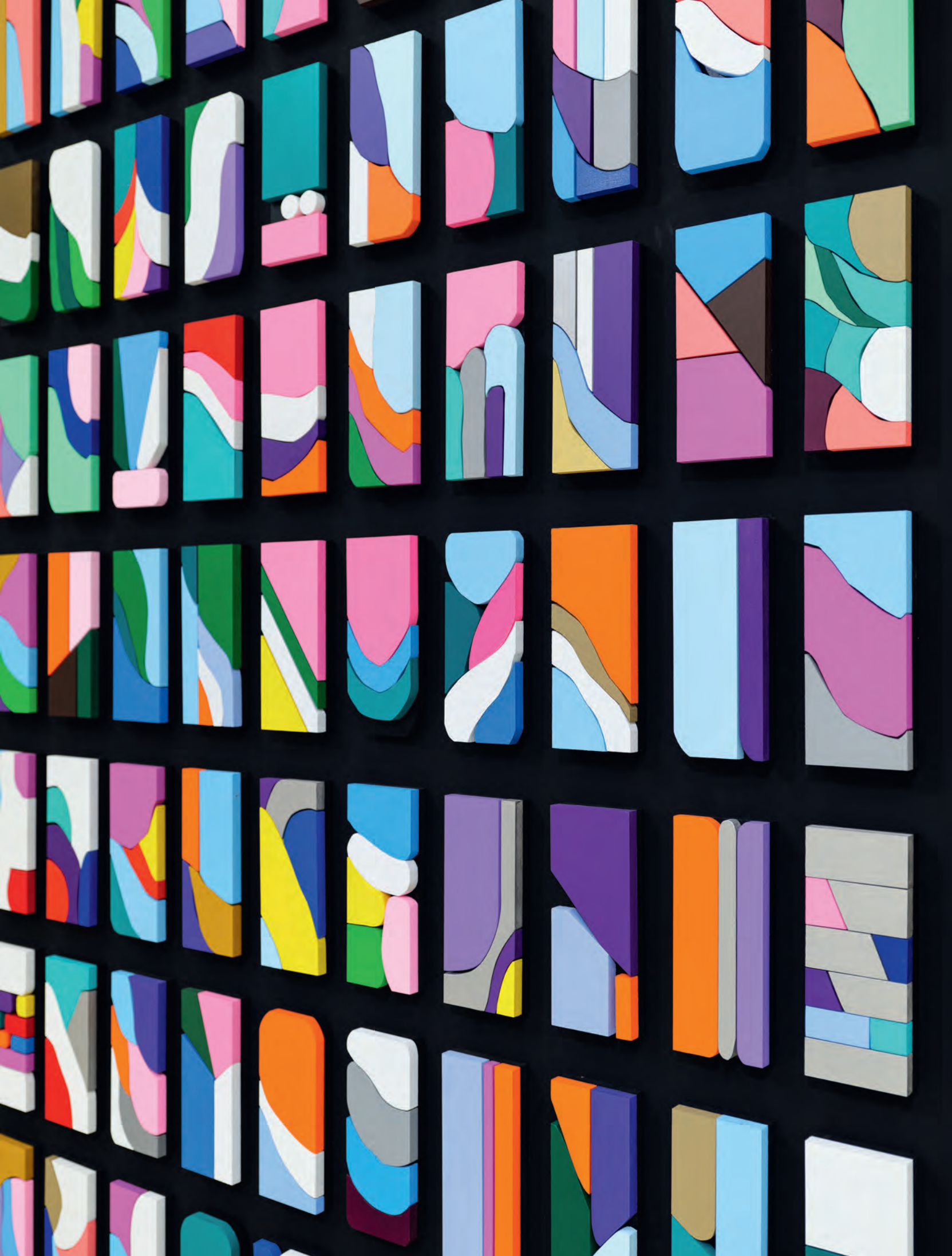












Interview

Henri-François Debailleux, Soo Kyoung Lee

Henri-François Debailleux How did you become an artist?

Soo Kyoung Lee I didn't come to the world of art through my training. My parents were small-scale collectors who invited artists to our home and loved to search for treasures at flea markets and estate sales in the provinces. They generally purchased traditional Korean paintings, which meant that we lived in a fairly black-and-white environment.

My father had a wonderful bookshelf with lots of books of western art, including the Impressionists. One day, while I was flipping through them, I discovered all those colorful paintings; it was magnificent. I felt like I'd gotten my hands on a treasure chest. Since we spend a lot of time on the floor in Korea, I put them on the ground and leaned my head over them. I used to look at those pictures almost every day, they energized me. As I grew up, I more or less forgot about all that. I studied French literature in both Korea and France, then I started to earn a living and came to live in Paris.

H.-F. D. So what was the lightbulb moment that led you to paint?

S.K. L. Korea is an extremely dynamic country that has undergone different evolutions over the past few decades. Present-day Korea is nothing like the Korea of my childhood, which was a developing nation. To achieve that considerable evolution, everybody worked really hard. It started in grade school, where you were stressed about middle school. In middle school, you had to worry about high school; in high school, about university, and at university, about earning a living. There was no time for leisure activities, we

Solo exhibitions (selection)

2024

- *Palimpsest*, Accompany Gallery, Busan (South Korea).

2023

- *Instant fugace* [Fleeting Moment], Marc Minjauw Gallery, Brussels (Belgium).
- *Munpei*, CJ Art Studio within CMOA Contemporary Art Museum, Cheongju (South Korea).
- *Vibration of Silence*, Artside Gallery, Seoul (South Korea).
- *It sounds Bleu*, L'Orangerie du château de Sucy-en-Brie, Sucy-en-Brie (France).

2022

- *Memoria*, Oniris Gallery, Rennes (France).

2021

- *Métamorphose d'un souvenir* [Transformation of a Memory], Marc Minjauw Gallery, Brussels (Belgium).
- *Parallaxe* [Parallax], Woonjung Gallery, Pankyo (South Korea).
- *Récréation* [Recreation], Artside Gallery, Seoul (South Korea).

2019

- *Dissonance harmonieuse* [Harmonious Dissonance], Marc Minjauw Gallery, Brussels (Belgium).
- *Yo I Tang*, Oniris Gallery, Rennes (France).
- *Here is*, HOBAN Contemporary Art Center, Kwang Myung (South Korea).

2018

- *In situ* installation at Chapelle Pithiviers, outdoor, exhibition of POCTB contemporary art center, Orléans (France).
- *Réminiscence* [Reminiscence], Sabrina Bakis, Paris (France).
- *Terra Incognita*, Choi Gallery, Seoul (South Korea).

2017

- Holly Hunt Space, New York (USA).
- *Dichotomie* [Dichotomy], Gallery 604, Busan (South Korea).
- *Mieux vaut attendre le printemps* [Better to Wait for Spring], Camille Lambert Art Center, Juvisy (France).

2016

- *À claire-voie* [Openwork], *in situ* installation at 3 CHA Art Center, Châteaugiron (France).

- *Supung*, L'Atelier d'Estienne Contemporary Art Center - at domaine de Kerguehenec's suggestion, Pont-Scorff (France).

- *Bleu* [Blue], Valence School of Arts (France).

2015

- *Poser-Déposer* [Set down-Drop off], POCTB Contemporary Art Center, Orléans (France).
- *La Borne*, outdoor installation, POCTB Contemporary Art Center, Orléans (France).
- Djeziri-Bonn Gallery, Paris (France).

2014

- Uhn Gallery, Königstein (Germany).
- *In situ* installation at Chapelle du collège des Jésuites, Eu (France).
- Baik Ja Eun Gallery, Seoul (South Korea).
- Anywhere Gallery, Paris (France).

2013

- Coat Malouen abbey, Kerpert (France).
- *Alpha Beta*, Kunst Doc Art Space, Seoul (South Korea).
- *ChomChom*, UM Gallery, Seoul (South Korea).

2012

- *1, 2, 3 Soleil*, CJ Art Studio, Cheongju (South Korea).
- Carré Noir Contemporary Art Center, Amiens (France).
- Jacques Lévy Gallery, Paris (France).
- UM Gallery, Seoul (South Korea).
- Uhn Gallery, Königstein (Germany).
- Hôtel Elysées Mermoz, Paris (France).

2011

- Knoeizmann Gallery, Frankfurt (Germany).
- "Moments artistiques", Christian Aubert, Paris (France).

2010

- L'H du Siècle Contemporary Art Center, Valenciennes (France).
- UM Gallery, Seoul (South Korea).
- Uhn Gallery, Königstein (Germany).
- DIO Gallery, Wonjoo (South Korea).