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Yeesoogyung: "Flame"

3 May – 15 June 2013



Opening Reception in the presence of the artist: Friday 3 May 2013 19.00 – 21.00

Ota Fine Arts is pleased to announce the solo exhibition of Yeesoogyung, the Korean artist's first in Singapore. She has been showing a rich variety of conceptual works, based on her country's cultural memories and a common sense of her people in the present time. "Flame" comprises a series of ceramic sculptures, scroll paintings and cinnabar drawings on Korean paper.

From ceramics villages throughout Korea, Yeesoogyung collects and sieves through their discarded remains to piece together fragments of ceramic wastage, smashed leftovers from earthenware flawed in the eyes of master potters. Yet the glazed pure white and deep jade-green tints that these Celadon ceramics are still so well-known for acquire a new hue by the artist's hand: she reassembles these *Translated Vases* by gilding them with fine 24 carat gold leaf.

Although touched with glints of golden antiquity, these newfound sculptural montages are freed from specific historical referents, genres or conventions. The bulbous vases become highly suggestive: they may be the ample, elegant curves of a woman's body, or the contorted abstractions of pain. By allowing these newly configured ceramics to depart from the bounds of their native Korean ceramic cultures, Yeesoogyung's transformation of their form yields to a translation into the experimental and the contemporary.

With *Translated Vases* and other works, Yeesoogyung remains near to the art

historical heritage of her home peninsula, while she speaks to it with new perspective. Her *Flame Variation* scroll paintings are engendered from the Goguryeo tomb paintings found in North Korea, but their mythologies are redrawn into fantastical amalgams of Judeo-Christian and Eastern religious iconography. But just as much as they are a postmodern patchwork of icons, the striking symmetrical composition of *Flame Variation* otherwise lends the work the graver tones of a Medieval morality painting.

So despite this sometimes light-hearted play with multiple and contemporaneous allusions, an austere sense of spirituality is conserved at the very heart of Yeesookyung's work. This is arguably most evident in her cinnabar *Flame* drawings, cinnabar ink itself being a medium used by soothsayers to draw charms against malevolent spirits. Remarkably, the artist's process is bound to the ground—she has completed the *Flame* series on her knees. Yeesookyung has likened this way of drawing to bowing in penitence or prayer, and if indeed some spiritual energy is delicately transferred to the Korean paper beneath her, it may be evinced by the pulsations and wave lengths emanating from the bronzed flames.

Yeesookyung's ardent devotion to her work is indeed unparalleled in Korea, and Ota Fine Arts is delighted to present her solo exhibition in Gillman Barracks, Singapore.

About the Artist

Born in 1963 in Korea, Yeesookyung studied painting at the College of Fine Arts of the National University in Seoul, where she continues to work today. She has since completed residencies at Villa Arson, Apex Art and the Bronx Museum, and her work has been shown globally at the 6th Gwangju Biennale (2006), ARCO 07, the 5th Liverpool Biennial (2008), the 2009 Vancouver Biennale and the 2010 Busan Biennale. Most recently, Yeesookyung has been featured in notable exhibitions including "Women In-Between: Asian Women Artists 1984-2012" at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, the "2012 Korea Art Prize" at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, and "The Collectors Show: Weight of History" at the Singapore Art Museum.