ALMINE RECH

Minjung Kim
The Pulse of Ink, Paper, and Fire

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Almine Rech is pleased to present 'The Pulse of Ink, Paper, and Fire', the first solo exhibition in Brussels by Korean artist Minjung Kim, bringing together a broad selection of her defining series.

Born in Gwangju, South Korea, Kim trained in traditional Korean painting before continuing her studies in Milan, Italy, where she developed a distinctive visual language at the intersection of Eastern sensibility and Western abstraction. Now based between France and the United States, Kim has cultivated a unique body of work that extends the possibilities of *hanji* – traditional Korean mulberry paper – and has exhibited internationally for more than three decades.

Hanji lies at the heart of Kim's practice and has become inseparable from her artistic identity. During her years in Milan, amid a shifting European art scene increasingly open to new media, she chose *hanji* as her own language. Over many years of practice, the material has evolved from medium to metaphor, serving as both vessel of memory and organic skin.

The traces of pigment, water, and fire impressed into its surface create a deep texture that evokes the physical imprints of time and process. Fragile yet resilient, *hanji* embodies the balance between contemplation and expression that defines Kim's art and bridges her dual cultural sensibilities.

Kim's work unfolds through a cyclical structure in which one painting gives birth to the next. Rather than following a predetermined plan, the artist allows each piece to emerge through the act of making itself. This intuitive rhythm creates organic connections across her series, shaping a practice sustained by repetition and renewal. Within this familiar process, she returns to the surface with the spirit of a new beginning, a continuity that transforms recurrence into discovery.

Kim describes her work as *"the act of leaving traces of the time I have lived."*

Her creations can be understood as a way of visualising the process of life itself. Each surface is built through layers of cut, scorched, folded, and overlaid paper. This slow and deliberate act of accumulation extends far beyond a simple painterly gesture. It becomes a form of meditation where remembrance takes form and emotion endures as a subtle trace of lived experience. Each canvas becomes a field where marks emerge over time, evoking both the fluid drift of existence and its irretrievable passage.

Among her major series, *Phasing* most clearly conveys the artist's essence and roots grounded in her lifelong practice of calligraphy. This body of work merges calligraphic gestures with the tactile nature of *hanji*, visualising a tension in which opposing forces – solidity and delicacy, control and release, permanence and change – coexist. Here, Kim's distinctive method involves burning a thin sheet of paper to echo the traces of ink lines drawn in calligraphy, attaching them onto the surface, and mounting thicker paper behind. Through this process, she creates complex depths that hold both stillness and motion, vulnerability and endurance.

As Kim reflects, *"Where we come from never changes."* Her work absorbs external influences while remaining anchored in its essential identity. Rather than seeking novelty for its own sake, she deepens what feels most authentic and resonant, strengthening it through years of sustained exploration. Through this enduring pursuit, her art emerges as an expression of quiet resilience – a meditation on continuity, balance and transformation. Each layer, each burn and fold records not only the passage of time but also a state of attentive calm. In this stillness, difference and duality coexist, revealing an art that speaks less of arrival than of becoming – a gradual unfolding that mirrors the rhythm of life itself.

— Sungyoon Ahn, Writer and Curator