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Cindy Ji Hye Kim
Saboteur: A Prehistoric Wish
September 4 – October 25, 2025

Casey Kaplan is pleased to present *Saboteur: A Prehistoric Wish*, Cindy Ji Hye Kim's second exhibition with the gallery.

Inspired by the pictorial tradition of medieval calendars and their depictions of farm labor, Kim's new site-specific installation and paintings on silk and canvas explore the psychic reconnection of the human body as it moves through the Autumn Equinox to the end of the Winter Solstice.

In traditional medieval calendars, the pages illustrating the six months from August to January are adorned with scenes of harvesting and threshing wheat, sowing seeds, fattening livestock, slaughtering animals, and resting. Kim reinterprets these labors of the latter half of the year as allegories for a period of closure, when the fruits of the land must be extracted, livestock sacrificed, and the laboring body comes to an idle pause. Against this melancholic backdrop of nature's transitional phase, Kim's silhouetted, skeletal forms teeter on the edge of decomposition. In pieces such as *The Dance of Janus* (2025) and *The Sower and the Plough, Midnight* (2025), visible limbs disintegrate into primordial marks, morphing into shadows of an unknown space richly rendered in the artist's grayscale palette.

Echoing the theme of dissolution, Kim views the act of painting as an act of sustaining loss. Alongside her allegorical paintings, the exhibition presents a selection from Kim's ongoing letter painting series which the artist began in 2019. As seen in *Mother Cadence* (2025), and *Harvester at Dawn* (2025), Kim reimagines the vowels and consonants of the Korean alphabet as bodies entangled in architectural elements, capturing the sensorial experience of the letters inside the mouth. As the artist's mother tongue fades into mere muscle memory, the rectilinear lines of the Korean vowels (ㅏ, ㅑ, ㅓ, ㅕ, ㅗ, ㅛ, ㅜ, ㅠ, ㅡ, ㅣ) shed their linguistic function and serve as a formal scaffold in Kim's compositions. A unique visualization made possible only through disconnection and loss of cultural memory, Kim conjures a kind of hieroglyphic mark of a forgotten human breath in her letter series.

Installed throughout the gallery next to the paintings are Kim's hand-carved wooden sculptures. The artist's figurines, called Kokdu, take on the form of carved ritual objects traditionally placed on casket biers in Korean funerals. Kim displays these totemic objects above eye-level on vertical rails, highlighting the architectural thresholds of the exhibition space. Through the latest iteration of her site-specific installation, the themes of endings as well as beginnings are exemplified by the artist's Kokdu figurines, as they resume their role as mythical guardians of the dead and the afterlife.

At its core, *Saboteur: A Prehistoric Wish* presents the unconscious architecture of Kim's visual voice. For Kim, painting is a psychoanalytic act of grappling with the past and forging the present, an embodiment of remembering as well as forgetting. Akin to a body in physical and psychic submission to the movements of the Earth and the Sun, the artist situates her practice at the threshold of primal urge and conscious will; a process of fragmentation in search of its wholeness in history.