

**ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL | SAMCHEONG**  
**AHN, Chang Hong Solo Exhibition 《Heart of the Artist》**



(Left) *Hand of the Artist*, 2019, acrylic on FRP, 300x200x45(d)cm / (Right) *Heart of the Artist*, 2019, acrylic on FRP, 300x200x60(d)cm

Exhibition Title	AHN, Chang Hong_Heart of the Artist
Exhibition Period	May 2, 2019, Thu - June 30, 2019, Sun
Press Conference	May 2, 2019, Thu, 2pm - ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL   SAMCHEONG
Venue	ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL   SAMCHEONG # 84 Bukchon 5-gil, Jongro-gu, Seoul (03053)
Works exhibited	26 works of sculpture and painting
Hours	Tuesday - Sunday 10:00 - 19:00

ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL | SAMCHEONG introduces《Heart of the Artist》- a solo exhibition by AHN, Chang Hong (b.1953- ), who has been crafting out critical reflections on reality in his artwork, on show from May 2 to June 30. This solo exhibition, which will be the second of its kind since its first iteration at ARARIO GALLERY CHEONAN in 2015, is a place where AHN, widely known and critically acclaimed as a painter, will be showcasing new sculptures produced since 2016, including recent works. The

exhibition will comprise a total of around 25 new pieces, including a massive relief, masks, and paintings.

Through comprehensive painting series including *Family Portrait* (1979-80), which depicts the dissolution of families in the throes of industrialization; *Forty-Nine People's Meditation* (2004), wherein he portrays the tragedy of the individual in the flows of history by painting over portrait photos with people closing their eyes; and nudes of healthy, ordinary people we often encounter in our daily lives, entitled *Bed Couch* (2009), AHN has told stories of the pains and alienation of contemporary Korean history in their projections on to anonymous individuals. From 2016 on, he expanded his reach to sculpture, introducing masks with their eyes covered or left open in gaping holes.

His new reliefs - including the trilogy *Hand of the Artist* and *Heart of the Artist* - will be presented in the underground floor exhibition hall at ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL I SAMCHEONG. The *Hand of the Artist* series, which features a jumble of discarded objects such as dolls, antiques, paint tubes, and paint dregs with a skeletal hand hanging in the middle of an extended board, is a giant relief that reaches 3m in height and 2.2m in length. The artist depicts the bondage of life through three stages - an assortment of colors, grey, and gold, analogizing them to the life of an artist whose success and failure, joy and despair depend on time and fate in the heat of the intense production process. *Heart of the Artist 1*, which centers on a painfully bleeding, scarlet-colored heart bound by thorns on a board as big as the one used for *Hand of the Artist*, metaphorically suggests that the value of life is based on pain and angst, which in turn gives rise to new vitality in our lives. *Heart of the Artist 2*, as a vollplastik expansion of the heart alone, sits in one corner of the exhibition space, sublime in its gesture to martyrdom.

Contrary to the underground exhibition space comprising large-scale sculptures, the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor exhibition hall houses two large-size masks and 16 small canvases featuring anonymous faces. The painting series *Sad Evaporation* (2018-) shows deindividuated faces, drawn in rough brush touches. The artist describes these expressionless faces as "anonymous people who not only lack names but also presence itself, their existence completely elided." He projects sad and forgotten realities on to these characterless faces, pointing to historical traumas such as the 4.3 Massacre in Jeju or the 5.18 Gwangju Revolution. The *Mask-Blindness* series comprises two masks that either lack pupils or have their eyes covered in bandages, devoid of facial expression; they remind the viewers of people who see, yet are blind to the absurdities of reality.

AHN's works have evolved into a variety of series since the 1970s, but they uniformly spring from his gaze toward those who have been victimized by or alienated from corrupt capitalist systems or the survivalist logic of social evolution. Many remember AHN as a Minjung artist based on his thematic focus and his past involvement with the "Reality and Utterance" movement in the 1980s, but AHN himself asserts that his art bears more affinity to "realism" or "art of life." His refusal to turn his back to reality and the needs of the time has sustained his body of work for the past four decades. The solo exhibition at ARARIO GALLERY aligns with his abiding interest in these topics. AHN's productions, which effectively capture his perspective and intent, will provide the viewers with an opportunity to reflect on their own lives and surroundings.

AHN, Chang Hong was born in Milyang, Gyeongnam Province in 1953. Refusing to subscribe to institutionalized education, he forged his own path as an artist. Starting with his series *Dangerous Game* in the mid-1970s, he persistently pushed his critical stance in his work, leading into *Spring Day Goes*, *Cyborg*, and *Bed Couch*. Since the solo exhibitions at Young Artist Center and Kongkan Gallery in 1981, over forty other venues including Kumho Art Gallery, Savina Museum, Busan Museum of Art, and Chosun Ilbo Art Museum have hosted his solo exhibitions. He also participated in numerous group exhibitions held at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwangju Museum of Art, Busan Museum of Art, Gyeongnam Museum of Art, Seoul Museum of Art, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, and others. In 1989, Ahn was awarded the Special Jury Award at the Cagnes International Painting Festival, the Lee In Sung Art Award in 2009, and the Lee Joong Sup Award in 2013. His works are

included in collections held at major art galleries and institutions including National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul Museum of Art, and Busan Museum of Art.

## [Appendix 1] Exhibited Works and Installation Views



AHN, Chang Hong, *Hand of the Artist 2*, 2019,  
imitation gold leaf on FRP, 300 x 220 x 45(d) cm



AHN, Chang Hong, *Hand of the Artist 3*, 2019,  
acrylic on FRP, 300 x 220 x 45(d) cm



AHN, Chang Hong, *Heart of the Artist 4*, 2019, acrylic on FRP, aluminum, 138 x 138 x 50(h) cm



AHN, Chang Hong, *Hand of the Artist 4*, 2019, genuine gold leaf on FRP, 175 x 134 x 29(d) cm



AHN, Chang Hong, *Sad Evaporation 2019-3*, 2019, oil on canvas, 38 x 38 cm



AHN, Chang Hong, *Sad Evaporation 2019-9*, 2019, oil on canvas, 38 x 38 cm



Installation view of AHN, Chang Hong *Heart of the Artist*, ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL | SAMCHEONG, B1



Installation view of *AHN, Chang Hong\_Heart of the Artist*, ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL | SAMCHEONG, 2F

## [Appendix 2] CV

**AHN, Chang Hong**

Born 1953 in Milyang, Korea

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *Heart of the Artist*, ARARIO GALLERY SEOUL | SAMCHEONG, Seoul, Korea
- 2017 *Blindness*, Johyun Gallery, Busan, Korea
- 2015 *A Broken Wing - Ahn, Chang Hong 1972-2015*, ARARIO GALLERY CHEONAN, Cheonan, Korea
- 2014 *At the Garden-Ahn, Chang Hong*, The Page Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- A Spot of Recollections*, Bongsan Cultural Center, Daegu, Korea
- 2013 *The 25th Ahn Chang-hong Exhibition in Commemoration of Lee, Jungseop Arts Prize*, Chosun Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- Discovery / Micro:scope*, Loop Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2012 *Arirang*, The Page Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- From Kuri to Gobi*, Lux Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2011 *India Trip*, Kongkan Gallery, Busan, Korea
- An Inconvenient Truth*, Gana Art Center, Seoul, Korea
- 2010 *10<sup>th</sup> Exhibition in Commemoration of Lee, In-Sung Arts Prize*, Daegu Culture and Arts Center, Daegu, Korea
- 2009 *Portrait of The Age*, Busan Museum of Modern Art, Busan, Korea
- Black & White Mirror*, Savina Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 2006 Ahn, Chang Hong, Kongkan Gallery, Busan, Korea
- Face*, Savina Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 2004 Kongkan gallery, Busan, Korea
- 2003 *A Record of Ahn Chang Hong's Travel to India*, Kongkan Gallery, Busan, Korea
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Buil Art Award*, Korea Art Gallery, Busan, Korea

- 2002 *Ahn, Chang Hong's Work Exhibition*, Savina Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
 2001 *The Sand Storm - Path to the Gobi Desert*, Yeemock Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
 2000 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Namsan Gallery, Busan, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong*, Gallery Grimshi, Suwon, Korea  
 1999 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Rho Gallery, Seoul; Savina Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
 1998 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Kongkan Gallery, Busan, Korea  
 1997 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Jeon Gyeong-suk Gallery / N-C Gallery, Busan, Korea  
 1995 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, The Picture and Poetry Gallery, Suwon, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong*, Namu Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong*, Yeemock Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
 1994 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Gallery Art Hall, Seoul, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong*, Gallery Nouveau, Busan, Korea  
 1993 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
 1991 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Samtoh Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong*, Mac Gallery, Busan, Korea  
 1989 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Ondara Museum of Art, Jeonju, Korea  
 1987 *The Story of Birds and Man*, Gallery Novo, Busan, Korea  
 1986 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Hangang Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong*, Sain Gallery, Busan, Korea  
 1984 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Korea Museum of Art, Busan, Korea  
 1981 *Ahn, Chang Hong*, Kongkan Gallery, Busan, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong*, Young Artist Center, Seoul, Korea

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *One Shiny Day*, Daegu Art Museum, Daegu, Korea  
 2018 *The Song on a Cloudy Day: Kyung koo KANG, Eul KIM, Chang-hong AHN*, Artbit Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*CRACKS in the Concrete II from the MMCA Collection*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, Korea  
*In the chasm between*, Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation Lobby Gallery, Suwon, Korea  
*Regrettable Times*, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
*The Veiled Landscape*, Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
 2017 *KOREA TOMORROW 2017: Narrative Landscape*, Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea  
*The Portrait of Youth*, National Museum of Korean Contemporary History, Seoul, Korea  
*Keyword Korean Arts 2017-Plaza Arts: From Torch to Candlelight*, Jeju Museum of Art, Jeju, Korea  
*Triangle*, Gallery Artside, Seoul, Korea  
*Samramansang : from KIM Whanki to YANG Fudong*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea  
 2016 *An Unfamiliar Face: Kyung koo KANG, Nari KIM, Chang-hong AHN*, Gallery Lux, Seoul, Korea  
*Art in Society - Land of Happiness*, Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
*Atelier STORY*, Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, Korea  
 2015 *Zeitgeist Chun Tae-il*, Ara Art Center, Seoul, Korea  
*2015 Seoshin Gallery's New Acquisitions: Women*, Seoshin Gallery, Jeonju, Korea  
*The 1980s and Korean Art*, Jeonbuk Museum of Art, Jeonbuk, Korea  
 2014 *That Thought, This Expression*, Kim's Art Field Art Museum, Busan, Korea  
 2013 *Tele-Be*, Gallery Hyundai, Seoul, Korea  
*Humans Humans; The Pictorial History of Ordinary People by Shin Hak Chul and Ahn Chang Hong*, Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan, Korea  
*Restructure of Scene #1 - Scene vs Scene*, Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
 2012 *Mapping the Gray*, Zandari Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*High Times, Hard Times -Objectify*, Interalia Art Company, Seoul, Korea  
 2011 *Mirror of the Age, a Portrait*, Bukchon Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
*Reopen at Hannam*, Gallery Skape, Seoul, Korea  
*Korean Rhapsody-A Montage of History and Memory*, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
 2010 *Artists and Their Families*, Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon, Korea  
 2009 *Mirror of Human- THE HEAD*, Kim's Art Field Art Museum, Busan, Korea  
*Ahn, Chang Hong and Kim, Jung Wook*, Gallery Skape, Seoul, Korea  
*Realism Interpreted as Contemporary Art*, Gyeongnam Art Museum, Changwon, Korea  
*Dissonant Visions*, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea

- 2008 *Spring Passing By*, Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju, Korea
- 2007 *Documenta BusanIII-Everyday is a History*, Busan Museum of Modern Art, Busan, Korea  
*Korea Contemporary Art 100*, Kora Art Gallery, Busan, Korea  
*How to Read a Painting*, Savina Art Museum, Seoul, Korea  
*Art Toward The Society : Realism in Korea Art 1945-2005*, Bandaijima Art Museum, Fukuoka
- Asian Art  
Museum, Muyakonojo, City Museum of Art, Otani Memorial Art Museum, Fuchu Art Museum, Japan
- 2006 *100th Anniversary Exhibition of Korea Contemporary Art*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea  
*A Face of Our Times*, Gimhae Arts and Sports Center, Yunseul Art Gallery, Gimhae, Korea
- 2005 *The Special Exhibition, Commemoration of the APEC-Korea Contemporary Art*, Busan Museum of Art, Busan, Korea
- 2004 *Busan Biennale*, Busan Museum of Art, Busan, Korea  
*Travel to Greece*, Savina Art Museum, Seoul, Korea
- 2003 *1st Beijing International Art Biennale*, Beijing, China  
*The Presentation of Hybrid Painting*, Youngeun Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwangju, Korea  
*Artist's Artistic Love Story for Alcohol*, Savina Art Museum, Seoul, Korea  
*Psycho Drama*, Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea
- 2002 *Korea Bloom(發)*, Seoul Auction, Seoul, Korea  
*Gwangju Biennale Project 3 - Stay of Execution*, May 18th Liberty Park, Gwangju, Korea  
*Korea and China 2002-New Appearances*, Seoul Art Center, Seoul, Korea
- 2001 *Korean Art 2001: The Reinstatement of Painting*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, Korea  
*Family*, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
*1980's Realism and the Age*, Gana Art Center, Seoul, Korea
- 2000 *Gwangju Biennale - Man and Sex*, Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju, Korea
- 1998 *Window - the Inside and the Outside*, Gwangju Municipal Art Hall, Gwangju, Korea  
*Rediscovery of Busan Fine Arts*, Busan Museum of Art, Busan, Korea
- 1997 *Contemporary Art 1997*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea  
*The Humor to Overflow at the Art Museum*, Sunggok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea  
*The Gwang Ju Biennale Special Exhibition*, Gwangju Municipal Museum of Art, Gwangju, Korea
- 1996 *The View of a Night*, Savina Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
*Freedom 50 years History Exhibition*, Hangaram Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 1995 *Reminiscing the Snow of Ten Years*, Hangaram Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
*Minjung Art 15 Years Exhibition*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea
- Korea  
*Road to Self-Respect*, Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea
- 1993 *Flower of the 93 Korean Contemporary Art*, Art Space Min, Seoul, Korea
- 1992 *Aspect of Korean Art in The 1990's*, Woori Art Research Institute, Seoul, Korea  
*Today's Life, Today's Art-Subconscious and Desire Show*, Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea  
*The Age of Tension and Confrontation-Exhibition for Open Hanwon Art Museum*, Hanwon Art Museum, Seoul, Korea
- 1987 *Existing Sense*, Sign Gallery, Busan, Korea
- 1986 *Reality and Speech*, Art Space Min, Seoul, Korea
- 1985 *The 4th anniversary exhibition of Seoul Art Gallery*, Seoul Art Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 1984 *2nd Spirit of the Era*, Busan, Masan, Seoul, Korea  
*Reality and Speech*, Arab Art Museum, Seoul, Korea  
*83 Painters at Issue Exhibition*, Seoul Museum, Seoul, Korea
- 1983 *Reality and Speech*, Kwanhoon Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*1st Spirit of the Era*, The 3rd Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 1982 *11 Human*, Kwanhoon Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*View of the 80 years of Korean Contemporary Art*, Arko Art Center, Seoul, Korea  
*Situation and Awareness*, Gallery Hyundai, Busan, Korea
- 1981 *Busan Youth Biennale*, Kongkan Gallery, Busan, Korea
- 1980 *21 Contemporary Artists' Invitation Exhibition*, Kukje Gallery, Busan, Korea
- 1979 *Korean Art Young Artists Association Exhibition*, Young Artists Art Center, Seoul, Chuncheon, Daegu, Jeju, Korea
- 1978 *Opening Ceremony Commemoration Exhibition*, Kukje Gallery, Busan, Korea
- 1977 *1st- 2nd Turbulence*, Busan, Korea

1976 *Joint Exhibition by Ahn, Chang Hong and Jung Bok Soo*, Gallery Hyundai, Busan, Korea

**AWARDS**

2013 25<sup>th</sup> Lee Jungseop Art Prize, Seoul, Korea

2009 10<sup>th</sup> Lee Insung Art Prize, Daegu, Korea

2001 1st Buil Art Grand Prize, Busanilbo, Busan, Korea

2000 10<sup>th</sup> Bongseng Cultural Award, Bongseng Cultral Foundation, Busan, Korea

1989 Juror Special Prize, Cagnes International Painting Festival, Cagnes-sur-mer, France

**PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, Gwacheon, Korea

Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea

Busan Museum of Modern Art, Busan, Korea

Gyeongnam Art Museum, Changwon, Korea

Savina Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea

93Museum, Heyri, Korea

Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea

Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan, Korea

Daegu Art Museum, Daegu, Korea

## [Appendix 3] Exhibition Catalogue Foreword

### Time Alone Is Eternal in This World

#### Heart of the Artist

What first caught my eye on entering the studio was a heart hanging from a crane. This gigantic, 150m-high object was hanging on a chain, encased in blue-green thorns. The bloodstain, running down the surface of the muscle as if red blood had just gushed out, gave the impression that the organ was still alive, pounding away. Moreover, the sharp thorns binding the heart posed a stark contrast in color and form, invoking the sensation of horror but also the sublime.

This massively heavy piece - the heart is made of synthetic resin, but the thorns are crafted out of aluminum, chained together - depicts Ahn Chang Hong's own heart as well as those of his fellow artists. Then why did he choose to entrap the heart in such pain, wrapped in thorns? His inspiration harkens back to *Heart of the Artist* from 2002, wherein he drew red and blue hearts that are either under attack or constrained by green thorns. Whereas the red heart features well-developed musculature and volume like an actual organ, the blue heart is notable for its pale hue and small size, as if it had been completely drained of blood. Furthermore, the blue heart, like his recurring motif of a butterfly, symbolizes the afterlife; set against a pitch-black background, it resembles an object floating in space. The thorns surrounding the red heart, meanwhile, look like veins that carry deoxygenated blood to the organ instead of signifying plunder or repression.

However, the thorns that pierce the heart fundamentally imply pain. Ahn posted a short musing on his Facebook profile on September 1<sup>st</sup> of 2018: "Most anything valuable in this world is accompanied by pain." This post clues us into the motivation behind his focus on suffering hearts. He says that anything profound and noble arises from desperation, that life is a record of scarlet passion and bloody wounds. In this light, the heart can be understood as an autobiographical confession of his life as an artist, and his empathetic depiction of the pain one experiences in artistic creation.

The thorn was already a recurring motif in his works from the 1980s and thereon, as seen in his paintings such as *A bird under pain* or *Blue-colored Crown*, or his relief *A face of pain - you shall repent in my blood*. As such, the thorn is a sign of a deep-set wound Ahn's heart harbors, a bondage to be discarded. Highlighted in the form of a gigantic three-dimensional piece, the thorns in his most recent work map the path to reflection and contemplation rather than heart-wrenching pain, catalyzing the heartbeat while inscribing pain. For the artist's consciousness to stay awake, the heart must remain in full operation, along with the brain. That which pierces the heart is not the thorns, but the heart-stopping kind of idleness or desires that propel the heart to beat toward random directions. Therefore, the thorn is like a whip that forces the artist to forge on without descending into the abyss of idleness or futile desire. Then, this pain is a form of joy. The thrilling pain he must have felt in the process of attaching the sharp aluminum thorns to the vines, suffering countless pricks himself, is what keeps him alive. He feels the joy of life in this pain, which may be why he said "most anything that is valuable in this world is accompanied by pain."

According to the well-known dictates of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the heart must be lighter than a feather for one to obtain promise of eternal life at the court of Osiris. Ancient Egyptians equated the heart to life. The human heart, the source of life and a pump that circulates oxygen and nutrition through our bloodstreams, weighs about 250-300g on average, 3kg when replete with blood. The mind is the product of the chemical reactions in our brain rather than the heart, but we still see the heart as the seat of our minds. We may not be able to gauge morality by the weight of our hearts, but our bodies would immediately stop functioning should the heart cease to circulate our blood. As the symbol of life, the heart is also closely tied to notions of death, as shown in Ahn's huge relief *Heart of the Artist*. In order to explore the heart, discarded among an array of abandoned objects like paint cans, artificial flowers, and congealed paint residue, we must first turn our attention to *Hand of the Artist*.

#### Hand of the Artist

One of the greatest joys of visiting Ahn's studio, apart from that of appreciating the assortment of random objects including an anatomical model of the human skeleton, antiques, artificial plants, and various tools, is observing the pile of empty paint cans and colorful, dried up paint residue, all piled into huge boxes. *Hand of the Artist* bloomed out of these discarded objects. He must have felt compelled to breathe new life into them, relegated to the boxes in disorderly jumbles. And now, they are brought back to life. The assemblage process, cutting and piecing the objects together, makes up a significant portion of his work - at least as much as painting does. Imagine finding oneself in the things one had thrown away. One day, he was possessed by the vision of an artist's hand, abandoned in the waste bin in skeletal form. This was when he realized that these objects in the boxes - broken knives tossed into paint cans, unusable old brushes, petals from the artificial flowers left over from his other works, paint dregs scraped off the palette - were all none other than his own portraiture. Immediately, he detached the arm from the anatomical skeleton he had acquired to study the human body, cut up and reassembled the finger joints, and inserted a used-up brush in their grip. *Hand of the Artist* was thus born. At first, he encased the things in the waste bin in transparent epoxy. He hung this object on his studio wall, gazing upon it for years and planning to expand it into a large-scale piece. The right moment finally arrived; building on the original work, he produced a huge relief in synthetic resin, 3m in height and 2.2m in width. He encountered an unforeseen problem when the relief he ordered arrived at the studio, for the relief was unable to fit through any of the doors, even those of areas remodeled for his production process. In the end, he had to tear out the door to move the piece in. As the works weighed over 300kg each, six men, including a fellow sculptor who dropped by to say hello at the time, had to carry them in. Ahn installed a temporary vinyl screen until he could build in a new door to facilitate the pieces' entry and exit, but since they were so big, he had to solely focus on completing the four reliefs all throughout the cold winter season. Because the steel structure he built to support the size of the relief was also extremely heavy, he had to order a crane.

As a trilogy of reliefs, *Hand of the Artist* gestures to the success, despair, and present of an artist, respectively. Reminding the viewer of Western triptychs, the colorful assortment comprises a brightly colored piece in the spirit of the original work, another covered in imitation gold foil, and a third piece to which Ahn applied a mixture of ash and medium on the surface. As such, the works are more time- and labor-intensive than flat-plane painting, featuring the unique colors of each of the objects as shown in the original piece. He had to invest further effort to accurately represent the curvatures of the objects and the texture of the paint residue. His fight against time did not end there. Applying the gold foil was particularly demanding, both technically and temporally. His initial plan was to consign the foiling part to a technician, but his curiosity and passion took over, and he eventually undertook the task himself. He sent real-time updates through social networking services throughout the process, keeping me apprised of the situation. Observing his toils, I discovered where his excessive confidence sprang from. Expanding an artwork into a bigger relief would require the touch of an expert, but the rest of the process is completely dependent upon his own handicraft. The intensity of the labor required, gradually filling in the giant plane while climbing and descending the ladder numerous times - his intuition and sensitivity is what allows for this kind of labor to shine, resulting in such a dazzling yet also profoundly distressing artwork.

Let us first look at the piece where discarded objects are reconfigured to present their original colors. He turns this jumbled assortment into a utopia, devoid of sorrow, wrath, pain, despair, or even death. However, the colors are also dismal and futile in that they are painted on expired bodies. The artist's hand, thrown on the objects and withered down to the bone, is reminiscent of a skeletal residue - that of a brilliance on the verge of annihilation. However, the hand never loosens its grip, asserting something... perhaps declaring art's victory over death, or a portending a doomed future that follows desires for prosperity and secular glory. Whatever it may be, the objects that constitute this piece seem to be preparing themselves for a resurrection rather than eternal rest, declaring their existence in a dimension that differs from religious salvation. The cries of all the objects that had offered themselves whole for his work, these are what motivate Ahn to view waste as something divine. Waste can be filthy and horrendous, just like death. However, all life expires, eventually. Because this is such a terrifying prospect, humans dream of an afterlife. There exists no life after death, final judgment, or eternal punishment for objects. The eventual destination for discarded objects would be the incinerator, but with time reversed, they are given new life as if nothing happened, attached to the white space. At this point, Ahn becomes someone who endows new meaning to the dead. This is a privilege reserved for artists.

The piece completely painted in gray pushes the viewer to reflect on death through objects. This work features things that are absent in the gilded or colored piece - life forms such as flies, cockroaches, or even snails. Upon close observation, one finds that they are not alive, but taxidermied. The cockroach

is flipped, exposing its belly; a carcass, if there ever was one. The fly has been a recurring motif in Ahn's work, symbolizing the death and corruption of dazzling exteriorities. Moreover, the gray color implies the cycle of life whereby one returns to Nature through the process of decay and decomposition. The brilliance of the golden hue, standing in contrast to the dark and pale colors of death, reflect on and resist each other. Glory and extinction, brilliance and destitution cannot be separated. Artists, or shall we say human beings, lead their lives like a pendulum, oscillating back and forth between the two nodes. The greater the amplitude, the stronger the shock or affective force of a given work of art.

## Facing Time

Now let us move on to *Heart of the Artist*, which builds on *Hand of the Artist* trilogy. Is the heart of the artist, placed atop discarded objects just as in *Hand of the Artist*, still beating away? He described the process of painting the heart in the last stages of production as adding the "final stroke of life." This metaphor suggests that the heart of the artist is not discarded, but transformed into a device that gives life to the abandoned. Ahn may even believe himself to be someone who breathes life into dead objects from a non-religious stance. Ancient Egyptians described artists as "he who keeps alive"; indeed, Ahn may have conveyed his belief that artists disavow the destruction of death, promising new life. Gilded in 24k gold, *Hand of the Artist* invites us to consider this possibility through the gold-plated skeletal hand. This object, however, is not indicating any desire for and celebration of gold itself, as one would imagine in connection to the myth of Midas. The appalling yet determined gesture of the hand may simply wear this particular form, signifying Ahn's reverence for the artist's hand and its production of value.

I discovered a short sentence written on his studio wall. It said: "time alone is eternal in this world." Indeed, time remains a mystery, despite all the technological and scientific advancements that shed light on temporal properties. As long as we remain finite beings, time is not a fate to be overcome, but a destiny to be embraced. Ahn said that art reveals the essence of life through materiality, and that he wishes to tell stories of life through his work. While his previous works gesture to the social, *Hand of the Artist* and *Heart of the Artist* point to himself and his fellow artists, which is why I would say his art aspires to contemplation and reflection. He however is no solitary hermit. The *Sad Evaporation* series in this exhibition pays homage to the nameless victims of tragic events such as the Jeju Uprising or the Gwangju Uprising, who are remembered only by the numbers their remains were given. This forgotten portrait, evidencing the kinds of truths that were pushed into oblivion for various reasons but have suddenly come to surface, is part of a history we must remember.

Choi Tae Man/Art Critic

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