

metamorphosis

A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

by
Oh Myung Hee

presented by



at
Saatchi Gallery, Duke Of York's HQ, Kings Road, London SW3 4RY
9-18 October 2017

curated by
Tatiana Palinkasev and Eva McGaw

Metamorphosis will celebrate the work of Korean artist Oh Myung Hee and draw attention to the constantly changing relationships between past and future, tradition and innovation showcased in her unique paintings.

The artist's central themes of change, renewal, nature and the search for one's true self will be appropriately displayed via both a unique installation offering a multisensory experience and a traditional wall display.

This polar relationship between the modern and traditional in Oh Myung Hee's art is born out of her conflicting views of Korean society. On the one hand she has a sincere and deep passion for its traditional, but restrictive, values; on the other, and particularly as a woman, she has an equally strong desire to challenge the status quo. Recurring themes in her art are flying scarves, falling petals, birds – all metaphors for spiritual and physical freedom.

If contemporary Korean artists disdain the past and celebrate high technology, she is unique in continuing to reference and celebrate the historical, simultaneously drawing it into the future. Her poetic world is rooted in her country's long and prestigious narrative, but her message is a precise observation of the difficult balance between what has gone before and what lies ahead.

Her technique, too, exhibits a dichotomy, this time between Western methods and Oriental ones. She uses lacquer, the centuries old Oriental technique that Westerners admired and tried to imitate. In this sense, she draws from the past – but then she experiments, adding oil pigment, bending the limits of lacquer painting, often using an unusual canvas support, building so many layers that details detach from the background and enter space, adding a marked three dimensional aspect to some of her works which become sculptural. She also adds unusual or precious materials, like mother of pearl, eggshell and gold leaf.

In some works she employs old photos of Korean streets and begins to work around them and on them, building up surface and colour as if they were the encrustations of time and mental reflection. In others, a traditional Korean appreciation of untamed nature as the ultimate expression of perfection is presented.

Gwangsu Oh, art critic and director of SAN Museum, calls Oh Myung Hee's contemplative and evocative art the place where “the current and past subtly overlap, bringing the dimension of time into space, to mix reality and memory.”



Oh Myung Hee

'Nostalgia'

Photograph on traditional Korean mulberry tree paper, fixed on a drawing board, mixed glaze (Japanese watercolor), mother of pearl, ink stick, pencil.

112 x 162 cm



Oh Myung Hee

*'Homeward journey'
part of a triptych*

Lacquer painting on wood board, mother of pearl, gold leaf.

120 x 120 cm