

# YOUNG KIM

2023 ART AND ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

May 9 – May 20, 2023

# 2023 ART AND ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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The *2023 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* presents the graduate thesis exhibitions of Young Kim, Ryan Lucas, and Melanie Miller-Silver in Columbia College Chicago's Art and Art History Department.

**Young Kim** presents *Shall We Go to The Happy Land?* is an immersive installation and performance that materializes a sanctuary where audiences experience comfort, serenity, transcendence, hope, or a moment of respite.

**Ryan Lucas** examines the ideas and perspectives of popular societal views of masculinity in *Our Sins and Where They Take Us*, through a sculpture and a series of paintings.

**Melanie Miller-Silver** exhibits *Women and the Invisible Labors of Ritual*, a series of ritual regalia incorporating beadwork designs common to many cultures around the world.

The *2023 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), the Department of Art and Art History, and Paul Catanese, Director of Graduate Studies for Art and Art History.

# YOUNG KIM

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I am an interdisciplinary artist from South Korea. I value Buddhist conversations that express this world as the suffering world, *sabba*, where humans undergo *dukkha*, meaning unhappiness, despair, or pain, due to excessive attachment to tangible or intangible materials. These conversations also promote practicing wisdom and loving-kindness to reduce *dukkha* and achieve *nirvana*, the ultimate state of serenity. Believing that the work of art can be another instrument to lessen individuals' hardships, I compose artworks to deliver life-affirming sensations – such as hope, joy, respite, transcendence, or tranquility. I dream of my showcase offering a sanctuary to the people of *sabba*.

**Young Kim** is a Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist from South Korea who works with painting, installation, hand papermaking, and performance, among others. Her art practice is concerned with offering affirmative spiritualities to comfort individuals who experience the hardships of living in this world. Young received a BFA in Textile Art from Hongik University in Seoul and is completing her MFA at Columbia College Chicago in 2023. She has participated in considerable solo and group exhibitions throughout Korea, the U.S., and abroad. Young is a recipient of the 2023 Albert P. Weisman Award.



*Nirvana Gate*, 2022, wood arbor, mineral pigment, and Heart Sutra on mulberry paper, 85" x 50" x 18".  
Photo by Hillary Johnson



*Nirvana Gate*, 2022, wood arbor, mineral pigment, and Heart Sutra on mulberry paper, 85" x 50" x 18".  
Photo by Hillary Johnson





Nirvana Gate (Detail of Heart Sutra), 2022, wood arbor, mineral pigment, and Heart Sutra on mulberry paper, 85" x 50" x 18". Photo by Hillary Johnson



*Young Kim wearing Korean traditional costume (Hanbok), holding Heart Sutra Lamp, 2023.  
Photo by Hillary Johnson*





Heart Sutra Lamp, 2023, led lamp, mineral pigment, and mulberry paper, 10" x 4.9" x 4.9"



# INTERVIEW WITH YOUNG KIM

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

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**Rachel Manlubatan:** Would you share how your artistic journey has been? How did you decide that you wanted your artwork to provide tranquility, and what responses do you hope to receive from these efforts?

**Young Kim:** I have been primarily a painter for many years, although I worked with weaving, tapestry, dyeing, and pattern design in my undergraduate major, Textile Art. Since the graduate program at Columbia, I have journeyed to other art mediums, such as soft sculpture, installation, hand papermaking, printmaking, and performance. I am so grateful for these various mediums conveying my statements and messages.

I have been interested in representing affirmative spiritualities – such as tranquility, hope, happiness, transcendence, respite, and the like – since I met Buddhist monks. I appreciated their everyday practice and conversations. They express that humans inevitably undergo hurtful emotions and hardships living in this suffering world, called *sabba*, due to their excessive attachment to tangible or intangible materials, including relationships, fame, money, or disturbing social environments and natural disasters. The monk friends also promote practicing *wisdom* and *compassion* for people to lessen their hardships.

Art is my instrument to perform *wisdom* and *compassion*.

**RM:** How has your practice given you comfort regarding your hardships? Would you discuss how physically making your art also delivers peace?

**YK:** I value the work and process of Wolfgang Laib (b. 1950, Germany). Laib works based on Zen Buddhism and Taoism. He spoke, “I feel like going into heaven,” creating *Pollen*

*from Hazelnut* at MoMA (2013) – a broad rectangle filled with the saturated yellow pollen he gathered around his German studio. Laib encountered optimistic emotions while installing his work.

Like Laib, I also experience positive sensations in my artmaking and its process that sometimes help me overcome hardships. Here is an example. Waukegan of Illinois became my new nest after my marriage in 2011. Yet, I underwent severe homesickness for years where only my body was in the new land, but my soul dwelled in Seoul every moment. I grabbed brushes and colors to paint all day long. Years later, the paintings filled my 8th solo show in Seoul, Korea. I can tell that art working was a healing resource.

Art gives me peace. I am working on my thesis project, *Shall We Go To The Happy Land?* to comfort the people of *sabba*. I am one of the *sabba* individuals. My mom passed away in a nursing home last year. The pandemic made her lonely facing her death. Nobody could be with her. I also could not visit her for years; therefore, my grief is unexpressive. My thesis project and its process are comforting me and leading me into peace.

**RM:** How does the collaboration between performance and papermaking impact your message?

**YK:** Papermaking and performance in my thesis project are my representatives in delivering my life-affirming statements: serenity, happiness, or comfort. The collaboration will *amplify* the statements.

I utilize Korean traditional mulberry paper Hanji which is related to my childhood. I was born and spent most of my childhood on Jindo Island, located off the southwest corner of the Korean peninsula. All doors of the island house

## INTERVIEW CONTINUED

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were made with Hanji. The paper doors were live theaters or picture frames for me that invited warm spring sun rays; the movement of clouds passing by the moon; birds' songs; and the subtle sound of snow, rain, and sea weaves. The dramas on the doors used to be my movies from nature, giving me serenity.

Performance is my sonic agent to create a calm vibe in my showcase. I will sing a Korean folk song, *Let's Go To The Happy Land*, in a gentle voice without the instrument accompaniment that evokes ASMR sensations. According to neurologist Anna Nordvig, ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) is a tingling sensation that makes people "relaxed, happy, careful, and more connected to others" when they encounter specific sounds and visual stimuli, such as "soft touch and sound, whispering, crisp sound ..."

**RM:** What is your process for exploring the colors, symbols, and structures that you use in your work? How did you decide on what would be the best palettes and texts to use in order to create a soothing atmosphere?

**YK:** I used to hire elements to compose my artwork relying on my personal experiences or my cultural contexts. For instance, I constructed the *Nirvana Gate* structure inspired by the meaning of the main sanctuary door in the Buddhist temple in Korea. The Buddhist door signifies a border on this suffering world, *sabba*, and the paradise of Buddha, *sukkavati*, welcoming visitors.

My Buddhist monk friends encourage worshippers and their friends to chant Heart Sutra – the most frequently read and recited by Mahayana Buddhists practiced in Korea, China, Japan, and other East Asian countries. The Buddhist text highlights practicing *wisdom* and *loving-kindness* to people. Therefore, I employ it as my messenger to deliver optimistic messages and embellish *Nirvana Gates*.

Once I completed the esquisse of my thesis project, I noticed the bright yellow palette fitted into the project and was an essential element to create a soothing vibe. Therefore, I carefully hired several definitions of yellow. Here is one of them. My grandma was my childhood best friend who taught me how to draw crabs, starfishes, trees, and fishing ships on the sand and composed fairy tales as lullabies. One of her stories said that rabbits live on the moon, making rice cakes that we sometimes can see from the earth. She calmed me: "If you sleep tight, the rabbits will bring you the rice cakes tomorrow morning." Looking at the full moon, I can see my grandma instead of the rabbits. To me, yellow is the color of my grandma and the moon, which I infuse into my color scheme, yellow, to form a soothing and comforting atmosphere.



## THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is also managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: [colum.edu/deps](http://colum.edu/deps)

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