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*Whisper Only to You*

12.10.2019-13.01.2020

From an idea of Sylvain Bellenger and Andrea Viliani with Sabrina Rastelli

**Madre · museo d'arte contemporanea Donnaregina**

Curated by Sabrina Rastelli and Andrea Viliani

**Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte**

Curated by Sabrina Rastelli, Paola Giusti and Maria Rosaria Sansone

The **Fondazione Donnaregina per le arti contemporanee** and **Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte** present *Whisper Only to You* (12.10.2019-13.01.2020), the first solo show of the South Korean artist **Yeesookyung** (Seoul, 1963) in two Italian public institutions, realized from an idea of **Sylvain Bellenger** and **Andrea Viliani** with **Sabrina Rastelli**. The exhibition is curated by Sabrina Rastelli and Andrea Viliani for the **Madre · museo d'arte contemporanea Donnaregina**, and by Sabrina Rastelli, Paola Giusti and Maria Rosaria Sansone for the **Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte**.

For this project, the **Fondazione Donnaregina per le arti contemporanee** received the support of **Fund for Korean Art Abroad 2019**, promoted by Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Korea, and of **Korea Arts Management Service**.

Yeesookyung is a visual artist whose practice includes the use of different media, among which video-installation and painting, with a predilection for sculpture. The project of this double exhibition is divided into two complementary exhibition paths.

The Facade Galleries of the Madre museum host some works that belong to the multimedia and multi-material production of the artist. *Whisper Only to You* (2019), which gives the title to the exhibition itself, is composed by the recording of a performance by Yeesookyung, who, in voice-over, whispers in Korean a never-ending story, while the images show the details of a drawing in red cinnabar – precious pigment of mineral origin, full of symbolic meanings in East Asia – entitled *Flame*. As the Buddhist monks concentrate on a single question on their path to the enlightenment, in carrying out this overwhelming and disturbing drawing the artist kept asking herself “What is the flame?”, while the brush, guided by the mantra, generated almost automatically the images. *Thousand Leaves* (2018) is a folding screen surrounded by a tree root and its copy, made with a 3D printer and painted in wood pattern. The passage of time is crystallized in the old root, whose natural energy is revitalized by the sculpture, the latter being the artificial duplication of the first and the second component of a couple, in a process of regeneration that, combining opposites and differences, tends to immortality. The two elements are joined by a screen whose folding panels are covered with white silk of different shades, a metaphor for the myriad of leaves that are born and die during the life of a tree. In Korea, white is the color of death, after which follows rebirth: the different shades of white therefore allude to the various states of the soul. *Bari* (2019) is a 3D rendered sculpture, based on an artist’s drawing depicting Bari, the “Abandoned Princess” who, in Korean mythology, sacrifices herself by marrying the god of the underworld to learn the secret with which she will bring her parents back to life; she is considered the ancestor of shamans. *Moonlight Crown* (2018-ongoing) is a series of sculptures, exhibited in absolute preview,

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inspired by an interview released by the American writer Isaac Bashevis Singer in 1973: “if the truth exists, it is intricate and hidden like a crown of feathers”. The basis of each of the five works exhibited at the Madre museum consists of a crown that supports a densely decorated sphere, on which a cuspid element is placed. Ubiquitous symbols are incorporated, such as angels, hands in prayer, dragons: if in the past these emblems were perceived as sublime and powerful, and therefore used only in the sacred environment, today their repetitive use has made them easily accessible, emptying them of their transcendent meaning. The decontextualized sacred emblems are arranged here in order to construct an organic structure and reveal the hidden links between past and present, myth and history: the *Moonlight Crowns* thus become the culmination of our individual spirituality. Finally, the acrylic on canvas *Past Life Regression Painting\_Saint, Making a Crystal Ball with the Impurity of the World* (2015) draws inspiration by a long experience of past life regression through hypnosis with which the artist has identified, with the help of a professional hypnotherapist, the traces of previous lives that her subconscious may have recorded. In these works, Yeesoookyung personally declines the theme of the transmigration of souls, pivotal in the Eastern thought. The exhibition is completed by a work from the *Translated Vase* series, for which the artist is internationally known. The project, inaugurated in 2002 and still ongoing, consists of the creation of sculptures and installations obtained by assembling shards, splinters and fragments of works by Korean ceramists specialized in the reproduction of pottery from the Goryeo (918-1392) and Joseon (1392-1910) dynasties. These works delineate a research oriented to the creation of narratives which starts from the existing, whether it is an artifact or a reminiscence, in an attempt to restore dignity to the vulnerability of the object and the experience of the individual, between fact and hypothesis, history and narration. The fragmentation of the experience and the attempt to recover it are translated into the restoration of the shattered vase through welding, such as the layer of consciousness is recomposed through the analysis, in a constant tension towards sublime beauty.

The exhibition at the Madre museum, which **will be completed with a performative event** in the spring of 2020, continues at the **Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte** with four additional works from the *Translated Vase* series, created by the artist specifically for this exhibition project using both fragments of the prestigious Korean white porcelain **Moon Jar** and shards of the 18th century production of the **Real Fabbrica della Porcellana di Capodimonte**: symbol of the conjunction between the cultural tradition of the Campania region and that of the artist's country of origin, a meeting between the cultures of the West and of the East that the exhibition intends to celebrate, as a first possible chapter of a story which is, at the same time, ancient and contemporary.

Personal exhibitions have been dedicated to Yeesoookyung from numerous international museums, including: *Yeesoookyung: Contemporary Korean Sculpture*, Asia Society Texas Center, Houston, USA, *When I Become You*, Daegu Art Museum, Korea and *When I Become You, Yeesoookyung in Taipei*, Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, Taiwan (2015); *Jung Marie's Jeongga, Yeesoookyung's Devotion*, Arko Art Center, Seoul, Korea (2010); *Yee Sookyung im Schloß Oranienbaum*, Museum Schloß Oranienbaum, Dessau, Germany (2009); *Earth Wind & Fire*, Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea (2007). Among the collective exhibitions and international periodical exhibitions in which the artist participated: *57th Biennale di Venezia*, Italy (2017); *Born in Flames: Korean Ceramics from the National Museum of Korea*, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia and *Earth, Fire, Soul-Masterpieces of Korean Ceramics*, Grand Palais, Paris, France (2016); *Busan Bien-*



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*nale: Inhabiting the World, Korea, Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale, Indonesia and Encounters 2014, Art Basel Hong Kong (2014); The Diverse Spectrum: 600Years of Korean Ceramics, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brasil, 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia and Arsenele: First Kiev International Biennale, Ukraine (2012).*

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