



Spike Island

YOUNG IN HONG
FIVE ACTS

3 FEBRUARY TO 5 MAY 2024

Spike Island

YOUNG IN HONG

FIVE ACTS

3 FEBRUARY TO 5 MAY 2024

Five Acts is a new commission and solo exhibition by artist and Spike Island studio holder Young In Hong. The exhibition brings together tapestry, sculpture, video and performance to explore the bond between humans and animals through movement, sound and other non-linguistic forms of expression.

The centrepiece of the commission is a forty metre-long, embroidered tapestry that documents the struggles for better working conditions and fair pay of women workers in Korea during the period 1920–1980. Inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry – an 11th century embroidery depicting the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England in 1066 – Hong’s version pays homage to the women workers who fought against Japanese colonial rule and became a driving force behind South Korea’s modernisation.

Divided into eight sections and suspended from the ceiling in an elliptical frame, the tapestry depicts historical events where women were the main protagonists. This includes the *gisaeng*, or courtesans, who in 1919 initiated a movement for Korean independence from Japanese occupation, and the *haenyeo*, or female divers, who led the Jeju Haenyeo Anti-Japanese Movement between 1931 and 1932. The tapestry culminates in depictions of the many textile workers who contributed to the economic growth of South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s.

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol’s harbour area.

Admission to the gallery is free.
Spike Island, 133 Cumberland Road
Bristol BS1 6UX
spikeisland.org.uk



Surrounding the tapestry is a group of willow and fabric sculptures that resemble animal toys found in zoos. A series of live performances taking place during the exhibition’s run invite a group of five performers to explore improvisation through movement and sound. Taking the tapestry as a manual for the performance and score, the performers interact with the sculptures while responding to the historical events narrated in the embroidery.

Additionally, Hong presents two recent works. *Ring of Animals* (2023) is an installation consisting of five sets of shoes for different animals, woven from straw by artisans and placed on a circle of white sand resembling snow. Bringing together a range of species randomly selected according to the shape of their feet – including a heron, a polar bear, a gorilla, a giraffe and a kangaroo – the work creates a mystical ring of animals that would not normally share the same habitat. It is accompanied by a soundtrack that plays intermittently, which incorporates field recordings and electronic sounds that blur the boundary between animals and humans. The video *The White Mask* (2019) features a musical ensemble responding to the notion of ‘becoming animal’ through improvisation. The musicians perform seven compositions in which they reflect on how it would feel to undergo such a transformation.

Five Acts is part of the West of England Visual Arts Alliance programme, with additional support from the Korea Artist Prize.

Image: *Meta-Hierarchical Exercise* (2022).
Performance, twenty-four scores, nine performers. Courtesy of Seoul Museum of Art and the artist

Performance dates:
2 February, 7pm
24 February, 3pm
16 March, 3pm
6 April, 3pm
27 April, 3pm