

Spike Island

PRESS RELEASE

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 fought for Korea’s independence during Japanese occupation in 1910–1945, and the *haenyeo*, or female divers, who led the Jeju Haenyeo Anti-Japanese Movement between 1931 and 1932. The tapestry culminates with depictions of the many textile workers who contributed to the economic growth of South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s. Working in extremely precarious and sometimes



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inhumane conditions, these women – most of them peasants who migrated from the countryside to the cities – were fundamental to the booming textile industry in the years preceding democracy.

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 score, the performers interact with the sculptures while responding to the historical events narrated in the embroidery.

In addition to these newly commissioned pieces, 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 salt powder 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), on the other hand, 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.

Please, note that the performance will take place in the gallery on the following days:

Friday 2 February 2024, 6-7 PM
Saturday 24 February 2024, 3-4 PM
Saturday 16 March 2024, 3-4 PM
Saturday 6 April 2024, 3-4 PM
Saturday 27 April 2024, 3-4 PM

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

– Ends –

For further information and high-resolution images please contact Niquita Munowenyu, Communications Manager on niquita.munowenyu@spikeisland.org.uk, or call +44 (0)117 9292266.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- *Five Acts* is part of the West of England Visual Arts Alliance programme, supported by Arts Council England, with additional support from the Korea Artist Prize.
- **YOUNG IN HONG**
Born in Seoul, Young In Hong lives and works in Bristol. Recent solo exhibitions include at Kunsthal Extra City,



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Antwerp (2023); Exeter Phoenix (2018); the Korean Cultural Centre, London (2017); and Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2015). Her performances have been presented at Seoul Museum of Art (2022); the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (2019); Arnolfini, Bristol (2019); Spike Island, Bristol (2017); Block Universe, London (2017) and the 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014). In 2019, Hong was shortlisted for the Korea Artist Prize.

- ABOUT SPIKE ISLAND

Spike Island supports, produces and presents contemporary art and culture across an 80,000 square foot former industrial building in Bristol. Its diverse artistic programme includes free major exhibitions, events and engagement activities taking place on-site and online. Championing outstanding work by emerging and underrepresented local, national and international artists, the programme enhances access to contemporary art for audiences from all backgrounds.

Alongside its public offer, Spike Island directly supports artists through new commissions, over 70 subsidised studios, and sector-leading artist development opportunities that widen access to its programme and facilities. Its Exhibition Services business supports the bespoke production and installation of artists' film and video throughout the UK and internationally. Spike Island is home to a dynamic community of hundreds of artists and creative businesses, working in flexible, affordable workspaces, alongside UWE Bristol's Fine Art department, Spike Print Studio, and café bar Emmeline.
www.spikeisland.org.uk

