

RYAN LEE

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Jiha Moon: Foreign Love Too

527 West 26th Street

February 1 – March 8, 2014

Opening Reception: Saturday, February 1, 4-6

RYAN LEE is pleased to present Jiha Moon: *Foreign Love Too*, a solo exhibition of new work by the Korean-born, Atlanta-based artist. On view is a selection of paintings, works on paper, and ceramic sculptures, both free standing and wall-mounted. Employing a range of traditional and non-traditional materials – from acrylic paint and ink to embroidery and synthetic hair – Moon carefully orchestrates hyper-dense compositions that not only reference diverse art historical styles, but also reference the commonality and disparity of multiple cultures. The title of the exhibition refers to the societal obsession with foreignness and the never-ending quest for “the new” that simultaneously expands and restricts our understanding of otherness. The show will run concurrently with *Jiha Moon: Folk Visiting Artist; Foreign Love* at the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, NC, which is on view from January 18 to April 13, 2014.

Culling elements from American, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and other Eastern and Western cultures, Moon’s work explores the multiplicity of 21st-century cultural identities influenced by popular culture, technology, racial perceptions, and folklore. She juxtaposes classical Asian motifs with contemporary and digital iconography such as the Angry Bird and Hello Kitty logos in contrast to the Korean folk mask, Tal. These co-existing yet disparate elements reflect the bombardment of visual information typical in daily life. Moon’s references to multiple artistic movements— from ancient calligraphy to abstract expressionism to pop art— are emblematic of the plurality and highly referential nature of contemporary art.

At first glance, the work conjures kitschy Asian references, but upon closer examination, it directly questions the role and necessity of cultural assimilation in an increasingly globalized world. A Georgia resident for more than a decade, Moon uses recurring imagery of the peach, for example, to explore the complexities of a famous regional icon by highlighting its use as a potent symbol of ancient Korean mythology. In the “Peach Mask” series, executed on Hanji, a traditional Korean mulberry paper, the peach not only gives shape to the overall work, but also suggests a more lascivious and humorous interpretation of the colloquialism, “georgia peach.” Here, the peach takes on qualities of many culture-specific masks, such as Hopi Kachina, Mexican, African, and digital (emoticons) masks, to examine the dual nature of identity and anonymity. Many of the mask works include numerous eyes rendered with a single or double lid or in various colors, in response to the increasing attention on K-Pop, Pan-Asian culture, anime, and plastic surgery.

The ceramics on display comprise the artist’s first foray into the medium of clay. Ancient techniques such as slip cast and crackle glaze are used in tandem with Moon’s characteristic iconography. The wall-

mounted works, called Norigae, reference the intricacy and time-consuming nature of certain ethnic beauty practices, including Asian, Indian, Caribbean, African, and Celtic traditions. Additionally, familiar archetypes commonly found in commercial product logos, like the tigers of Tiger Balm or dragons and bamboo on chopstick wrappers, evoke stereotypical Western modes of commodification. Moon is acutely aware of how Western perceptions of Asian-ness impact and reflect the current reality of both cultures. Through these reconfigurations, Moon explores her cultural heritage, the assumptions made about it, and its significance or lack thereof in contemporary life. Moon's work confronts the breakdown of cultural barriers by challenging common notions of East and West, ancient and modern, high and low to develop a rich visual vocabulary all her own.

Jiha Moon (b. 1973) is from DaeGu, Korea and lives and works in Atlanta, GA. Moon's solo exhibition *Foreign Love* was on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia in Fall 2013, later traveling to the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Spring 2014. Moon received her MFA from the University of Iowa. Upcoming group exhibitions include *Beauty Reigns: A Baroque Sensibility in Recent Painting* curated by Rene Paul Barilleaux at McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX, and *Made in America* at National Academy Museum of Art, New York. She has exhibited widely, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta; Savannah College of Art and Design, GA; Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC; Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA; and the Weatherspoon Museum of Art, Greensboro, NC. Her work is included in permanent collections, among them the Asia Society and Museum, New York; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; The Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC; Smithsonian Institute, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; and The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. She was included in the important exhibition *One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now* curated by Melissa Chiu at the Asia Society and Museum, New York in 2006, which later traveled to the University of Houston and Berkeley Art Museum, and *Levity* curated by Katherine Carl at The Drawing Center, New York in 2008. In 2010, she completed residencies at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA. Moon is the recipient of a Joan Mitchell Painting & Sculpture Grant (2011).

The upcoming exhibition at the gallery will be new work by Donald Sultan opening in Spring 2014.

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