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GUEST *of a* GUEST



Everything You Need To Know This Week on New York's Art Scene

In this week's art roundup, democracy is key as conferences and festivals open the floor up for spectators to take their part in art at the New Museum. The uncertainty of politics is explored in *Swing State*, and the reclaiming of public space by the global masses is celebrated by Sangbin IM in *Spectacle*. So take a stand and make sure to march on over to one (or all!) of these upcoming exhibits—after all, it's your creative duty!

Chelsea's newest gallery on the block, Ryan Lee, will be holding its opening reception on April 26th with an exhibition by Sangbin IM. The Korean artist, famous for his hyper-realistic composite combinations of paint and photography, will be presenting *Spectacle*, a series of works featuring crowds of people at famous tourist spots around the world. The cultural landmarks are, to IM, transcendent of any National identity, becoming instead the property of the globe.

Dates: April 26 - May 24

Where: Ryan Lee, 527 West 26th Street

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The Korea Herald

2013-04-25 20:32



Transcending borders in art

Ryan Lee Gallery in New York aims to introduce dynamic roster of international contemporary artists starting with Im Sangbin.



Labeling art or artists with a national identity doesn't hold much significance when geographical and national borders are being blurred in the international art world.

Chinese artists had been long associated with satire and social critique, as Japanese artists had with manga. But many international artists are now receiving attention for their creative artistic practice, rather than for their country or styles associated with it.

Ryan Lee Gallery, a new contemporary art gallery in New York, invited Korean artist Im Sangbin for its inaugural exhibition starting Friday in a bid to introduce a diverse range of international artists who stand out by virtue of their own individual practice rather than where they come from.

"He is an artist who has had worldly experience, born in one country, studied in another and traveled the world for inspiration and such for 'international spaces,'" said Jeff Lee, cohead of Ryan Lee Gallery in Chelsea, New York, in an email to The Korea Herald.

Im, who lives and works in New York and Seoul, studied painting and printmaking at Yale University and currently teaches at Sungshin Women's University in Seoul. He has been included in group exhibitions around the world, including the Seoul Museum of Art; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Sungkok Art Museum in Seoul and The Honolulu Academy of Art.

At the Ryan Lee Gallery inaugural exhibition, Im presents hyperrealist images of famous tourist destinations and cultural places around the world using a blend of two media: photography and painting.

"Im explores the way these sites have become global spaces, transcending their national identity

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and instead becoming truly international sites,” the gallery notes in the press release. The places he features in his works include Bulguksa Temple, the Palace of Versailles, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Times Square and subway stations.

Im participated in a group exhibition of young Korean artists in 2009 organized by Lee for which he selected artists who transcend their national heritage. The exhibition aimed to explore contemporary elements of art among artists of the same nationality.

“I am tired of labels when we are supposed to be global and international, and I think it is problematic to try to group artists together by their national identity, especially when even national borders have become much more fluid,” said Lee.

Lee, who is Korean-American, recently became a partner in the former Mary Ryan Gallery, after working 10 years with the founder. The gallery changed its name to Ryan Lee Gallery following a reorganization.

“Jeff Lee has continued to examine South Korean artists since then and he has great aspiration to bring a fresh take on the art scene in Chelsea at the newly opened Ryan Lee Gallery,” said Im in an email.

Lee said he plans to focus on contemporary art rather than highlighting artists of specific countries. “Some of the success stories (of Korean artists) are from a slightly older generation like Do Ho Suh, Bryon Kim, Michael Joo and Lee Ufan who all have had important international platforms to showcase their work,” he said. “The ones that will have success will be the ones that can work outside the parameter of a general label such as Korean contemporary art,” Lee noted.

The exhibition “Sangbin IM: Spectacle” runs from Friday to May 24 at Ryan Lee Gallery in New York. For more information, visit ryanleegallery.com.

By Lee Woo-young (wylee@heraldcorp.com)

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Sangbin IM

RYAN LEE GALLERY, NEW YORK

 *Spectacle. Best known for his composite photographs, IM's works seamlessly blend painting and photography, integrating the two mediums to create a hyper-realist vision.*

Mary Ryan and Jeffrey Lee are pleased to announce the opening of their joint venture, Ryan Lee, a new gallery dedicated to contemporary art. Located in the Chelsea district of Manhattan, Ryan Lee will be home to a dynamic roster of contemporary artists working in a diverse array of media, including photography, video, painting, and performance art. Representing an international roster of both established and emerging artists, including May Stevens, Donald Sultan, Sangbin IM, and Angiola Gatti, Ryan Lee is committed to showing innovative and pioneering exhibitions that represent the spectrum of contemporary artistic practices.

For its inaugural exhibition, Ryan Lee will present Sangbin IM: Spectacle, an exhibition of new work by Korean artist Sangbin IM. Best known for his composite photographs – vibrant works composed of hundreds of images taken over a series of days and embedded over painted surfaces – IM's works seamlessly blend painting and photography, integrating the two mediums to create a hyper-realist vision. Sangbin IM: Spectacle, will feature works from the artist's "People" series, a collection of constructed photographs that portray crowds of people at notable cultural destinations and tourist hubs around the world. To IM, these sites are the true global spaces, as they transcend their national identity, becoming, instead, a place that is truly international. In conjunction with the exhibition Ryan Lee will publish Sangbin IM: Works, a 228-page monograph, featuring an introduction by Nan Rosenthal.

Working together for more than a decade, Mary Ryan and Jeffrey Lee have had a longstanding interest in advancing and promoting contemporary art. The opening of Ryan Lee, which will be located at 527 West 26th Street in the former location of the Mary Ryan Gallery, will provide the opportunity to create a space dedicated to a contemporary art program. The space has been redesigned and renovated by SO-IL architects, the Brooklyn-based firm that designed the tent for Frieze Art Fair NYC in 2012, and the summer 2010 courtyard installation at MoMA PS1. The gallery has been re-envisioned as a platform for exhibiting contemporary installations and object-based art, providing a versatile space for artists to display new work.

In addition to a roster of new artists, Ryan Lee will represent several of the contemporary artists that showed with Mary Ryan Gallery. Mary Ryan Gallery will continue to operate as a private secondary market dealership with an emphasis on prints and works on paper that will be open by appointment only.

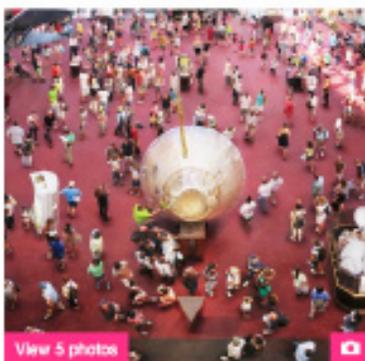
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Arts & Entertainment > Arts & Exhibits

New Contemporary Art Gallery to open in Chelsea



The Ryan Lee Gallery, a new gallery specializing in contemporary art, will open this month in Chelsea. Founders Mary Ryan and Jeffrey Lee say their new gallery will represent “original and engaging contemporary artists” who specialize in a diverse array of media, including photography, video, painting and performance art. Ms. Ryan and Mr. Lee have been working together for more than 10 years with the goal of advancing and promoting both established and emerging artists. The space, which formerly housed the Mary Ryan Gallery, has been renovated to accommodate more installations and to offer a more open space for artists to display new works.

The Ryan Lee Gallery will open in late April with an inaugural reception and the debut exhibition Sangbin IM: Spectacle featuring new works by Korean artist Sangbin IM. For this show, IM will present works composed of hundreds of photographs taken over a period of several

days and inserted onto painted surfaces. The photographs come from the artist’s “People” series, in which he depicts crowds of people visiting major tourist attractions in various parts of the world such as the Palace of Versailles in France, and the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

The Ryan Lee Gallery will be located at 527 W. 26th St. and will hold an opening reception April 27, from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m.

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ASIAN CONTEMPORARY ART WEEK



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INTERVIEW WITH SANGBIN IM

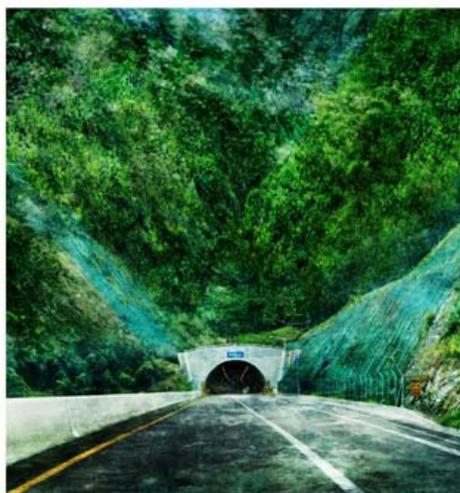
Posted by *acaw* on Tuesday, March 15, 2011 · [Leave a Comment](#)

1. How did you start making art?

I do not remember the exact moment. My mother told me that she remembers since I was little, painting was my love and it continued every single day. As I also vaguely remember, whenever I finished the works, my mom put them up on all the walls of my house, then onto the ceilings. My works became the wallpaper of my family house, where each individual piece served in



what became a big installation. As I look back, this was a formative experience: this collaborative installation at such an early age helped me develop my ongoing interest in the relationship between individual units within a larger whole.



At the earliest age that I could remember, I would like to say that my mind was somehow already made up as an artist, and since then, it has never changed. From the age of three throughout my elementary school days, I continued attending art institutions. Many art teachers urged me to apply for art middle school. So, I ended up going to art middle and high school before entering the Department of Visual Arts at Seoul National University. After graduation, I envisioned pursuing my studies abroad, so I went to art school at Yale University where I received an MFA in the department of Painting and Printmaking. Afterwards, my interest in sociological aspects of the artist, art, and the market led me to pursue

a doctoral degree at Teachers College, Columbia University. This degree kept my curiosity growing as an artist who would like to know better about my own art and how it fits in today's world.

2. Briefly describe your art from the perspective of what it could tell us about you?

I do not like to frame and limit my interests. I like them to flow around and expand, so I have developed many projects over the years. However, at this point, I would like to say that my main

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projects are People Project, Museum Project, and Cityscape Project. These projects tell a mixture of my impressions/expressions such as my fascination and anxiety of the spectacle of the modern megalomaniac city, institution, or other cultural sites that are driven and constructed by a capitalistic desire or vision, that stage and condition people in the way they live, work, and enjoy life. From this constant interest of mine, I would say that these projects indicate that I am the person who likes to live and work in cosmopolitan cities such as New York and Seoul, while being somewhat critical about those cities. In other words, I appreciate the contemporary spectacle. In the meantime, some aspects of it seem thought-provoking or problematic. As an artist, I desire to visualize both via my own artistic way of seeing and acting in the world.



military action. When I drew an electronic line, minutes later or days later, soldiers actually followed the line! Digital came first and analog followed. The perception of signal play preceded the imagination of the impact of actual physicality out there somewhere. (this last sentence is confusing, what does she mean?) This relationship between the virtual and the real fascinated me and finally made me seek ways to incorporate digital language into my traditional art making after finishing my military service.

In the meantime, my interest in the boundaries between reality and fantasy came from three major experiences which I often talk about. First, in 1982, I was conversing with my friend on a bridge. I was standing and he was on a bike. Suddenly with a slight misstep on the rail, he fell off the bridge in front of my eyes. Second, in 1995, I was driving with my mom and younger brother. I was about to park by the Samping department store to have dinner, when my mom suddenly suggested that the adjacent shopping center actually had a place that served the same menu with more delicious food and so we went to the other restaurant. The department store that we were originally going to go to suddenly collapsed; it was later revealed that faulty concrete cause the accident. Third, in 2003, my first day in New York was during the historic East Coast

3. What experiences have most influenced your choice of subject matter, medium and style?

Even though my major has always been painting, my interest in the digital language goes back to my military days from winter 1996 through spring 1999. Before the military, I did not know much about computers. I did not even know how to save a digital file. However, in the military, I suddenly became very good at using computers, simply because I had to. One of my jobs was to draw an electronic map for

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blackout and I wondered around with mixed feelings. The 'nonstop city' as the world knows it, seemed suddenly so far away from actuality. These experiences directed my attention to the larger system that is capable of making individuals thrive or get lost. In addition, the tragic, surreal accidents blurred my perception of the boundary between real and fantasy. Finally, the architectural condition of the city in which we are all bound up together became one of my artistic subjects of pondering.

4. Is your formal or informal training as an artist useful? How?

Yes and No. I have never stopped creating art except during my military days. Probably, I would have not gotten my hands as experienced as they are now without my intense formal training. I have studied at art focused schools since my childhood. By the time I reached the college level, I realized that university entrance exams in art were often not only boring but too rigid. So, I had to back out a bit to reboot my creative energy. My undergraduate art school did not even have a photography major, yet to me, photography was a really intriguing medium. My rationale at the time was that photography was more about ideas than the magic of hand. Moreover, by not using my hands too much, I would have the time and the chance to cleanse or reformat my hands from past training.

Of course, as a painter, my approach to photography was different from many traditional photographers. My interest was not to take or to capture photos, but to make or construct them. My concern was not the manipulation of the original image, but the construction based on photographs of real objects to create a visualization of my world. Likewise, I have actively incorporated the painting language into photography, and my works have a painterly surface. Interestingly, more people think of me as a photographer. However, in my mind, I am an artist who uses a hybrid of media as a tool for my art. This year, I will be making more paintings than before. I will not frame my relationship to a specific media but open it up for more possibilities.

5. Does your work reflect issues in yourself, in society or community? What would you say is the purpose for making art?

I would like to say consciousness is the fatal human condition. Due to its existence, we constantly seek meaning simply because we need to or have to find it. The lack of it may cause us emotional trouble such as emptiness or depression. I would like to visualize the way I see and review the world, as I desire to project and share it. If doing my art is meaningful to me, and if the meaning reverberates, it is very fulfilling. My subject is to review our human condition in the world of modern spectacle, but I certainly anticipate many meanings generated and shared by the viewers. Different understandings of my art are welcomed as it may always expand the horizon.

6. Do you appreciate culturally specific works of art? If so how does your personal and cultural background show up in your work?

Culture-bound perception often defines and projects who I am and how I think. My artwork is not only individualistic but also collective and may have originated from the Korean culture of collectivism and connectedness. In addition, the state of the Korean IT industry may have influenced me to pay special attention to digital language in art making. (Seoul is one of the

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most digitally connected cities in the world). However, it is only one component that has influenced my work. As I have been raised in a modern city delineated by skyscrapers, my interest in modernity has been incorporated in an important body of work that is Cityscapes. My personal and cultural background is more overtly shown in my work from this series, such as Tunnel – NY where the two cities I call home, NY and Seoul, are bridged together, both visually and mentally. Though many of my subject matters deal with places in Seoul and New York that are biographically significant, these specific places are mere stages to investigate and explore my interest in 21st century visual culture.

7. Is there anything you would like to say about your local art scene or the international art market, art education, and or system for art exhibition?

Some people would like to mystify or separate doing art from other activities. Others seem to overemphasize the business side of art. Either way, art may lose its rich layers of contextual meanings in the world. The purity of art cannot be simply tainted by the business of art. Art does not exist alone and the world makes various contexts for art to live. We do art as we like it and the world needs it. The meaning of art is not fixated but varies with regard to how we make sense of it. The so-called art world and art market condition art in various ways. We should constantly redefine what art is and how it is meaningful. Some people worry that too much money has flown into the art world, but a bigger pie may be better for art to thrive. Some people worry that the market could kill the true meaning of art, but it may add more layers of meaning to it. Some people regard making art as a competition to win, but if art is life, doing art may contribute to artistic development and personal growth in the world. After all, it is of significance to know how the world is shifting, and at the same time, to envision how we can create art more meaningfully. There's got to be a way, always.

8. How does your current portfolio fit into the rest of your body of work?

People Project, Museum Project, and Cityscape Project are my current main projects. However, I continue other projects and tomorrow's projects are definitely unknown, but that makes them so enthralling. In my case, as one project develops, it often leads to another. For instance, as of today, Paintings Project is a recent project and another branch of my current People Project.

People Project stages numerous people who are cultural nomads in this global world. They are not glamorous people, but everyday ordinary ones on the street who wear casual outfits for convenient travel. They happened to be present at the site during my shooting and were busy enjoying a cultural spectacle such as a museum exhibition, a tourist hub like Times Square, or a sporting event. Each person is shot individually and placed in the composition to create possible relationships and fictive narratives. They have their own stories, but as a whole, they signify and energize the site, and represent a global culture.

The people in Paintings Project are actual painted figures from various artworks, such as from Old Master paintings. In the original paintings, these figures are the main subjects as part of an acceptable canon of appropriate subject matters such as Madonna and Child, female nudes, gods and goddess in mythology, etc. They are often portrayed with great theatricality: their draped clothing to show form, deep facial expressions, contoured bodily gestures, dramatic lighting, or other clever ways to heighten reality. Throughout art history, many artists had to paint the same figure again and again as that figure sold well for its time. By placing similar painted subjects such as female nudes, male nudes,

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or Madonna and Child on the same stage, the project is about revealing the artistic variations among artists portraying the same characters.

Likewise, the two projects share their similarities and differences, so the tension between the ordinary and the theatrical is heightened and the meaning of both projects is expected to expand. There are many other projects in my mind that may or may not be realized; therefore, they will have to be discussed at another time. In art, I accept the fatal fact that nothing is fixed but everything is in constant motion. This uncertainty amuses me and also motivates me to keep on going.

ASIAN ART

THE NEWSPAPER FOR COLLECTORS, DEALERS, MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

2 ASIAN ART PROFILE

Sangbin Im

By Olivia Sand

AT THE AGE of thirty five, artist Sangbin Im looks to his life experience to create and develop his work. Born in Korea in 1976, he grew up in Seoul where he also served in the military before moving to New York on a Fullbright Scholarship. The three years spent in the army had a strong impact on his practice, triggering an interest in photography that Sangbin Im has constantly pursued ever since. His quest for innovation has led him to integrate skills in painting and drawing into his photographs, which concentrate on three main topics: people, architecture, and museums. His pictures are striking, as the viewer feels immersed in the photograph, but simultaneously the image captures a bird's-eye-view of the site. This dual approach, between the individual and the global, encourages the viewer to assess the individual with their joys and worries as opposed to an anonymous person who stands as a microscopic element in our global system.

Determined to push the media of photography towards new avenues, Sangbin Im has many ongoing projects on which he is presently working. Here, he provides more background information on his career and his work in the following interview with the Asian Art Newspaper.

ASIAN ART NEWSPAPER: You are presently based in New York. How long have you been in the US?

SANGBIN IM: I grew up in Seoul where I went to school and later to art school, majoring in painting. In 2003, I was accepted at Yale graduate school, and I have been staying in the US ever since – almost 10 years.



AAN: Initially, you were mainly involved in printmaking. Today, you are known for your photographs. How did the transition from painting to print, and ultimately to photography, take place?

SI: I never liked printmaking at all! I still paint, but so far I have never really shown my paintings, which is something I will do in the future. As an artist, I have been known as a photographer, showing my work in galleries and museums. Several years ago, while I was focusing on painting, I became slightly bored with the medium and decided to expand my horizon. It was around the time when I had to do my military service, in the late 1990s, for a period of 36 months (1996 to 1999). Before the military, I did not know much about computers. I did not know anything about the most basic things such as saving digital files, for example. In the military, I suddenly became very

good with computers, because of my job assignment. I was working on digital maps in preparation for military action. When, for example, I drew a line on the computer, people followed that line. The impact of what I was doing on the computer was a shocking experience for me, because first came the digital language with real action coming later.

The fact that the digital part preceded the actual movement is why I got fascinated by digital language. I learnt various digital programmes for the job, and subsequently, I was eager to go back to art school to take additional computer classes in order to integrate this digital language into my art making.

Back in 1999, I also knew nothing about scanners. I tried to develop my own photography in the dark room, but I did not like it. From then on, I decided to scan the photograph I had completed and adjust the colour to enhance it. Therefore, I used the scanner and became familiar with the way the beam of the scanner was moving and discover what I could do with it. While the beam was moving, I moved the paper while it was scanning. As a result, the image was blurred. I was fascinated by the fact that my actions were intercepted by the digital image. At the time, I also started to scan my own body, like moving my finger while it was scanning, so there would be a different image coming out. Then, I combined these different images to create a landscape.

I was interested in the relationship between digital – analogue – reception – virtual – the real. I called that early series, from 2003, *Bodyscapes*, but now, I tend to focus on the *Cityscapes*, because of three incidents that have taken place and affected my life. To me, the first one was the most shocking. When I went to New York in 2003, I was thrilled as I had been accepted at Yale. The first day I went to Manhattan, there was a huge blackout affecting

Continued on page 4

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Chrysler (2007), 152.4 x 101.6 cm



People-Met Museum (2010), 144.89 x 121.5, 24.4 x 121.5 cm



Tiananmen I (2006), 101.6 x 162.3 cm

the entire East Coast up to Canada. It was both, scary and fascinating. New York is known for being such an exciting big city, and suddenly, there was no light, and it turned into this dark city. It lasted on the East Coast for about 24 hours. Times Square, which is known for its neon signs, was completely dark. For my first day in New York, it was a very strange experience. From then on, I wanted to go and see the world, a world that would prove to be scary and fascinating.

Then, there were two other incidents. One was in 1995, when there was a department store building collapsed in Seoul due to poor construction. I was in that store right before the collapse and got out by chance, because I got a call from my mother who suggested we meet for dinner in one of the adjacent streets near the store. While we were having dinner, the store collapsed leading to the death of several people. Because I followed my mother's advice, I did not die. Following that incident, I became quite scared of elevators and large structures which house many people, as you can never completely exclude the possibility of a collapse.

Of course, there are also concerns about structures in New York, which has a lot of poorly built buildings. I love the city's lifestyle, but I still feel it is a little scary, and I am quite fearful of these projects attempting to make everything bigger, higher, larger... I like it, but it also leaves me worried. That is one of the reasons I ventured into the Cityscapes series, where I could express the extent of my anxieties regarding cities. The third incident goes back to 1982, when I was crossing a lake in Seoul and a friend of mine fell from the bridge. Again, the city is full of desire and anxiety which I feel drawn to and which I try to convey in my Cityscapes.

AAN: For Cityscapes, how do you go about completing the actual picture: is the image based on snapshots, and is it retouched?

SL: It is a picture of perception. It is a cityscape of my perception. A regular professional photographer would probably go about it differently. For example, when wanting to get a shot of people walking by a big building, they get the shot, and with the shot image, they capture a moment. That is how the professional photographer gets the image as a whole, quickly, and instantly. I am relying on a different approach. I am more into perception.

Maybe that is why I am still using a painter's language. Let us say I am in the street for an hour and I see all the people walking by in front of me. I want to show my whole experience of all the people that I have seen there. Therefore, I take as many pictures as possible, and with these pictures of my experience, I reconstruct the scene. One picture is made out of hundreds and hundreds of pictures that I have taken. Now, let us assume you see a hundred people in my photograph. For sure they were there when I took that picture, but they were not necessarily there all at the same time. In my picture, two people may look as if they were friends, but actually they are not: they are complete strangers. My role is similar to the one of a stage director: there are actors and actresses, and I direct their actions.

AAN: There is a series involving famous museums, like the Tate, the Met, and the Louvre. What is usually key for you, the

building or the people?

SL: Until a few years ago, I was only highlighting the architecture. I did not want to shoot people, but only the structure. Now, my interest has shifted and expanded towards people because by focusing on people, I can capture their energy. The piece *People MoMA*, for example, about the Museum of Modern Art in New York, features no art works at all, but in the aerial view, one can see all the people, certainly around 500, walking on the street on which MoMA is located. Without showing any of MoMA's artwork, I can convey the energy of all these people together. The Louvre museum piece is a new direction my work is taking where the tension of the people and the architecture meet. If I take all the various pictures of the people at the Louvre, I never know where these people are from: Paris, London, New York, Seoul or from other cities, but they are all there to witness that amazing cultural experience by going to the Louvre. I call them cultural moments. They travel to see the great museums, and they happen to be there with me. I want to express the cultural energy, as well as the cultural encounter. They are strangers to me, they have their own history, but I do not know them, however, I still feel the energy. Local and international people are going there: it is like a cultural centre that we have in this world, and this is something I am interested in right now.

AAN: You also completed photographs of buildings, but devoid of human presence, like *Tiananmen* for example, displaying a compelling view of the building. Is that an ongoing series as well?

SL: Yes. I have many different small projects, but I would say that my three main projects are dealing with architecture (*Cityscape Project*), people (*People Project*), and museums (*Museum Project*). They are all ongoing.

AAN: Is printmaking something that you are pursuing occasionally, or is it now behind you?

SL: It is not printmaking per se, but I always include some elements from other media in my photographic work. For example, as a painter in front of a blank canvas, you can accumulate and accumulate the brushstrokes until it becomes a finished painting. My process is very similar: I take many pictures and it grows, and I accumulate more pictures. I reconstruct and add more pictures with pictures creating brushstrokes. Similarly to a painter, I am always incorporating different textures. The texture of the sky and the ground in my photographs are taken from my abstract paintings. I take pictures, scan them, so in the final work I can have different textures for the sky and the ground. That is how I can include the painted language. These days, there are many people specialising in photography. Personally, I do not want to be confined to one medium. I want to incorporate other media, and I do not want to be labelled just a photographer.

AAN: What were your paintings like? Did they relate to your present series of photography?

SL: My paintings had many different aspects. I am deliberately using the past tense because I started to work with photography in 1999. In 2000, I showed a lot of photography together with some drawings. I have always thought of

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myself as an artist, and I guess this, or next year, I will start showing my paintings as well. Presently, I am spending some time in Korea as I noticed that, so far, a number of my photographs were taken in Europe or in the US, but very seldom in Korea. I would like to complete a People's Project in Seoul. As an artist, I always like to challenge myself.

AAN: In the People Project series, there is a strong contrast between the individual and people as a group.

SL: I am interested in the whole system holding people, but at the same time, people are so small, but turn into a big movement when they are together like in the MoMA picture. People tend to follow the system that is already set up.

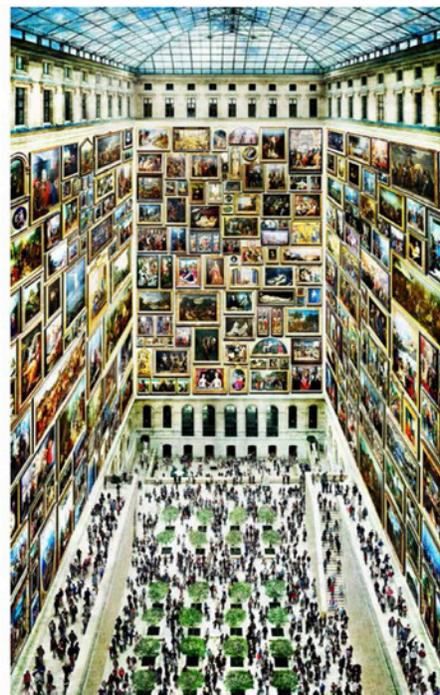
There are always people, and there are always different people. When you see all these people, you can imagine that they all have their own personal stories and agonies, their own lives and their own enduring moments. When you see the image from the distance, like an aerial view, you do not get their facial expressions, or their stories, but you can sense that they all have their own biographies, their own lives. It is like the human condition that exists in the city: you see all the people in the streets, and you know that they have their own lives, their own agonies, but we do not really know: until we make a real connection. Otherwise, we just see a big movement. It is like a bird's-eye view.

I am not interested in showing faces. I am more interested in showing the scene, the 'scape', so I can get the overall sense. It is similar to going into a forest: you can go into the forest, you can see and touch the tree, you can talk to the tree, but only from the distance can you see the outline of the entire forest. I am more into the distance so I can reflect on what it is that I am visualising. For example, when I took some pictures of New York, I was in Queens, not in Manhattan. I used to live in Queens and I did not know much about my neighbourhood, but I knew a lot about Manhattan. I was always looking at Manhattan from the distance. I knew the amazing outline of the cityscape of New York, but I actually knew very little about

the place where I was standing taking the pictures. What I was seeing is what I desired to see. I started to wonder why I was looking at Manhattan and not Queens? I questioned myself and my context and inwardly reflected the situation. I guess that is why I wanted to see things in the distance so I could reflect upon myself. I am more interested in the system and all its components. They are part of the system, but at the same time they are not. In the People Project series, for example, there may be 500 people, they may be replaceable, and they are not people who should be there. They were temporary, just visitors, it does not mean that they belong to the architecture. They were momentarily there. In a system that somehow makes sense: a system welcomes all the people whoever they are, but at the same time, people are not parts who belong to the whole. They are parts, but at the same time they are individuals with their respective lives. Consequently, there is a certain tension between the parts and the whole, it is this that I am trying to capture.

AAN: In recent years there has been a strong surge of Korean photography and growing interest from Western collectors. How do you explain that?

SL: Over the last decade of the 20th century, several great films came out talking about the real and the virtual, about virtual reality where you entered a dream, a game, and could express your identity. Many people were fascinated by the concept and I was one of them. That is why I began scanning my body and kept on experimenting. Every year, when I went back to Korea looking at exhibitions, I would be amazed that there were always be more and more photographers. When I started out working on digital photography in 1999, I did not find any other examples of similar work or technique. That is one of the reasons I tried to transform myself and incorporate painting more actively. Presently, some artists are starting to do the same thing, using the same media. Therefore, I try to renew myself. I am not an artist who is going to do the same thing forever.



Louvre Museum (2010), 193 x 121.9 cm

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COOL HUNTING

Sangbin IM: Confluence

Artist Sangbin IM exhibits his latest work at NYC's Mary Ryan Gallery

by Josh Rubin in Culture on 23 February 2010



The mixed media of Sangbin IM's latest exhibition "Confluence" challenges its audience to see the world through the Korean artist's eyes—a view that teeters between reality and illusion for a unified glare at the perceptions held by contemporary society.



Currently on view at NYC's Mary Ryan Gallery, IM's work is the result of a meticulous method that involves layering digital images of his original paintings (usually depicting an element from nature) over a digital photograph—typically one of hundreds he took over a period of time of the same location.

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The Yale University grad (who now teaches at Columbia University as he works on his doctorate in art education) creates these semi-delusional scenes to comment on the disparity between Utopian desires and the insatiable consumerism that modern culture seemingly wrestles with.



"Confluence" is on display at Mary Ryan Gallery through 27 March 2010.