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[Https://www.choiwongyustudio.com](https://www.choiwongyustudio.com)

CHOI WONGYU

2002 — BFA, College of Fine Arts, Hongik University

Solo Exhibitions

2025 — A Low Whisper / Space PPONG / Gwangju
2024 — Oblivion: Imprinted III / Space O / Seoul
2024 — And, It last / Pier2 Art Center / Kaohsiung, Taiwan
2024 — On the line / bynowhere / Gwangju
2023 — Oblivion: Imprinted / Bongsan Cultural Center / Daegu
2022 — Oblivion: Reflected / Daegu Art Factory / Daegu
2021 — Breath – Lifescape / Space9 / Seoul
2020 — The way back (Public Art Project) / Busan
2020 — The forest of oblivion / Hongti Art Center / Busan
2019 — Bitter sweet syphony / Studio B / Seoul

Residencies

2025 — Space PPONG AIR / Gwangju, Korea
2024 — Pier2 Artist-in-Residence / Kaohsiung, Taiwan
2022 — Horanggasyinamu Studio / Gwangju, Korea
2021 — Daegu Art Factory / Daegu, Korea
2020 — Hongti Art Center / Busan, Korea

Group Exhibitions

2024 — Digital Romance / Daegu Art Factory / Daegu
2024 — Under the surface / Horanggasyinamu Art Polygon / Gwangju
2023 — The Closest and Most Secret History /
Busan Modern & Contemporary History Museum / Busan
2023 — Hoppy together / Arts District P / Busan
2022 — Bukbyeon Diary / Bibi Gallery / Gimpo
2021 — From Hongti to Hongti / Hongti Art Village / Busan
2021 — Light here, light now / Gangnam-gu Office / Seoul
2020 — Rainbow wire / F1963, Seokcheon Hall / Busan
2019 — Inside out / Suchang Youth Mansion / Daegu

STATEMENT

From Forgetting Existence

We often live as if what is “invisible” does not exist. Something certainly “is,” yet in situations where it cannot be seen, we forget the very existence of “being.”

What is it that fills the world, yet we forget simply because it cannot be seen? Air that holds oxygen is one example, as are the white radiant light emitted from the sun, or ultraviolet rays—wavelengths shorter than visible light that remain unseen. What about energy—the capacity of objects or their movement? Though invisible, these too exist alongside us. That we forget something precisely because existence is so abundant is an irony of “recognizing existence.”

Breathing is no different. Breath is an essential act for living beings to sustain life, yet because it continues so easily, we often forget it exists. Although the subject of life continuously inhales and exhales through the mouth, nose, and lungs, we forget the preciousness of invisible air; likewise, we live in forgetfulness of the “steady act of will to sustain life” that is inhalation and exhalation.

In my work, “breath” is such an existence. For me, the irony of “recognizing existence” begins from a gaze filled with affection and compassion for real life through the theme of breath, and extends into a fundamental reflection on human existence—translated as visual language.

My work begins by tracing the forgotten traces of breath. I look closely into the day of an unnamed elderly person who sits idly at the corner of an alley and spends the whole day there, or a worker in a small factory where dust flies, living each day under red sparks. I create narratives from the stories gathered through this process, forming the foundation of my making.

My practice, based in installation, is completed by composing an imagined landscape using byproducts collected while tracing life—and sometimes objects gifted by the subjects of these stories, carrying their histories—as primary materials. Objects that hold temporality become symbols of “existence” living in the present.

Iron dust that splatters across a factory floor and hardens into countless dots, or sawdust pouring out from massive lumber-mill machines—byproducts that are inevitably produced in the process of labor to sustain life, yet discarded as worthless—are symbols of an intense life.

The labor of selecting discarded byproducts is also a crucial part of my practice. I apply these “existences of worthlessness,” formed through a primary transformation in production, to my work through repeated selection processes. Re-creating their value also carries meaning as a process of confirming the value of stories that “exist yet are forgotten.”

“Traces of forgotten breath.” I collect such traces, apply them as materials for three-dimensional forms, and assemble them with architectural elements to construct spaces—completing a visual narrative and offering these stories to people.

About the diverse lives that exist within “us,” where “I” belong—and their value.

An art practice that speaks of life in the sites of diverse living.

An art practice that speaks of will and hope within harsh and cold reality, and that can confirm and share the value of life.

Through such a process—confirming value and, as an individual living in this era, confirming my own existence—this becomes both my expectation and my driving force as an artist.



A Low Whisper, Hearing the Walls - 2025 / Cotton, Rebar, Acrylic paint, Speaker, Wire / Variable Dimension

ARTIST'S NOTE

Life is always smaller than words, and space is often deeper than time. The places we have passed through—irreversibly worn out, or so trivial they are hard to see—listening closely to them is the starting point of this exhibition.

[A Low Whisper] is a trace and a lingering resonance. Entering the old warehouse in Balsan Village, stone dust that has fallen and piled up, and dust clinging to the structure, still speak of time. And within that space, fragmented and stitched lengths of cotton cloth form another structure. Cutting through quiet, heavy air to reach our ears are very old stories—low, repetitive words. In that sense, this exhibition is not “an exhibition that restores what has been erased,” but “an exhibition that speaks again in the manner of what cannot be heard.”

Memory has a structure. But it is not a straight line or a diagram—it is uneven, slow, unfolding at the speed of people and emotion. The installations in this exhibition resemble that structure of memory. What is engraved on the surface is not a simple image, but a record of sensation and time—rubbed in countless times by fingertips. As you pass through, you unconsciously connect to someone else's memory: words that were never remembered, stories that lost their voice, and the low whisper that can be heard through the gaps.

Here, “exhibition” is not merely a way of arranging artworks, but a means of weaving layers of sensation. Within this structure, you participate as someone who lives memory again. It is not a matter of completing memory, but of quietly interlocking.

The question continues. This exhibition is not a single answer; it inscribes itself in sensation by slowly repeating an old question again. And within those repeated whispers, we are led to listen once more to that place.

Now this work is read again in the present. We have grown accustomed to the speed at which urban landscapes change, and have come to accept as natural the disappearance of spaces that hold the grain of life. Memory is not “a problem of the past,” but a present condition that decides “how we will live.”

[A Low Whisper] speaks in the way art can speak within that gap. In the face of disappearing memory, art does not simply mourn or replace; it changes the mode of sensation and builds a structure that resists forgetting. It is work that sustains community and protects the continuity of feeling.

Now, through this exhibition, I ask again—of myself, and of you who will pause here briefly:

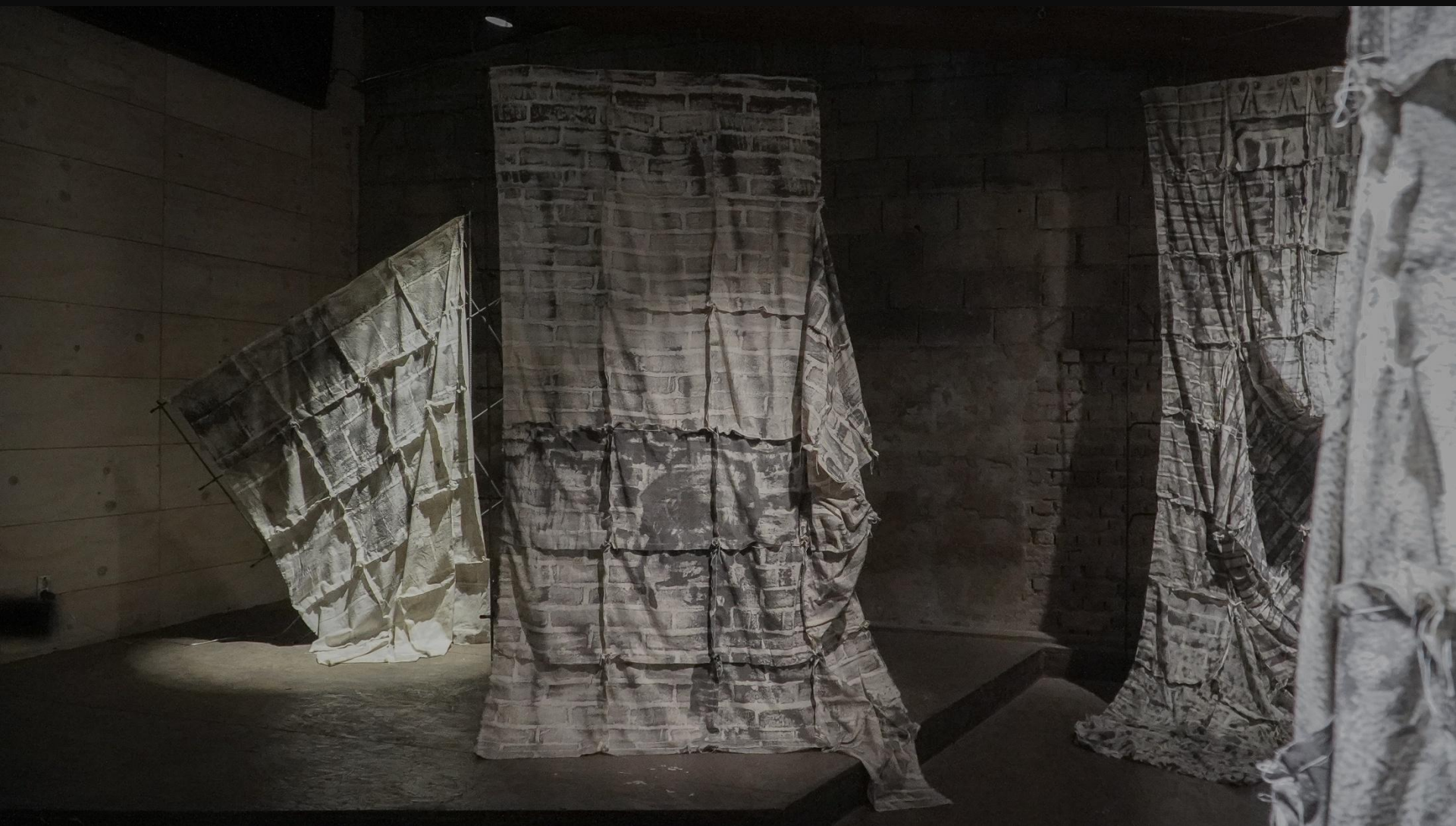
Within what disappears, what do we remember, and how can we exist together?

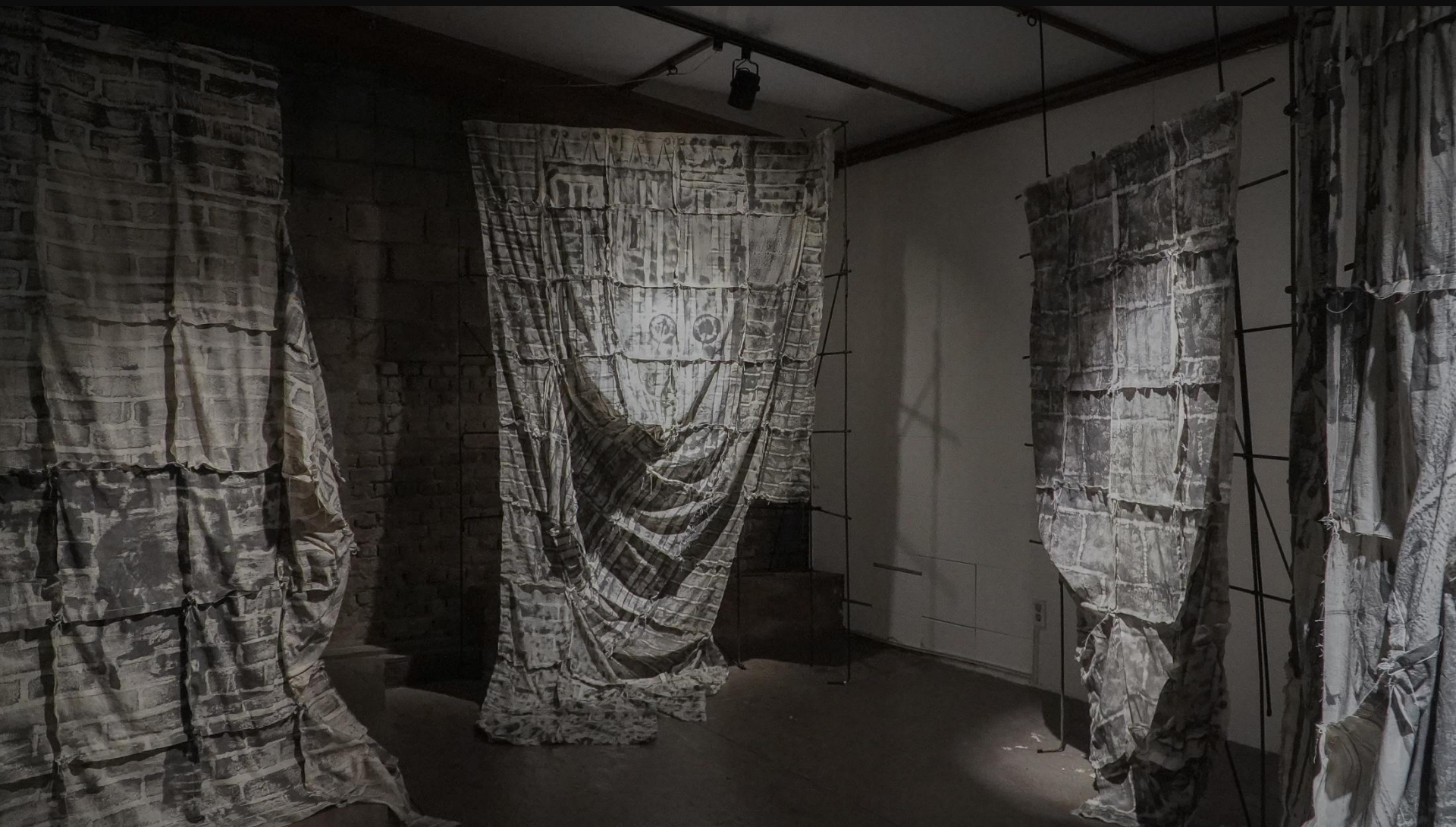
And if this quiet whisper is heard again, are we ready to sense that memory?











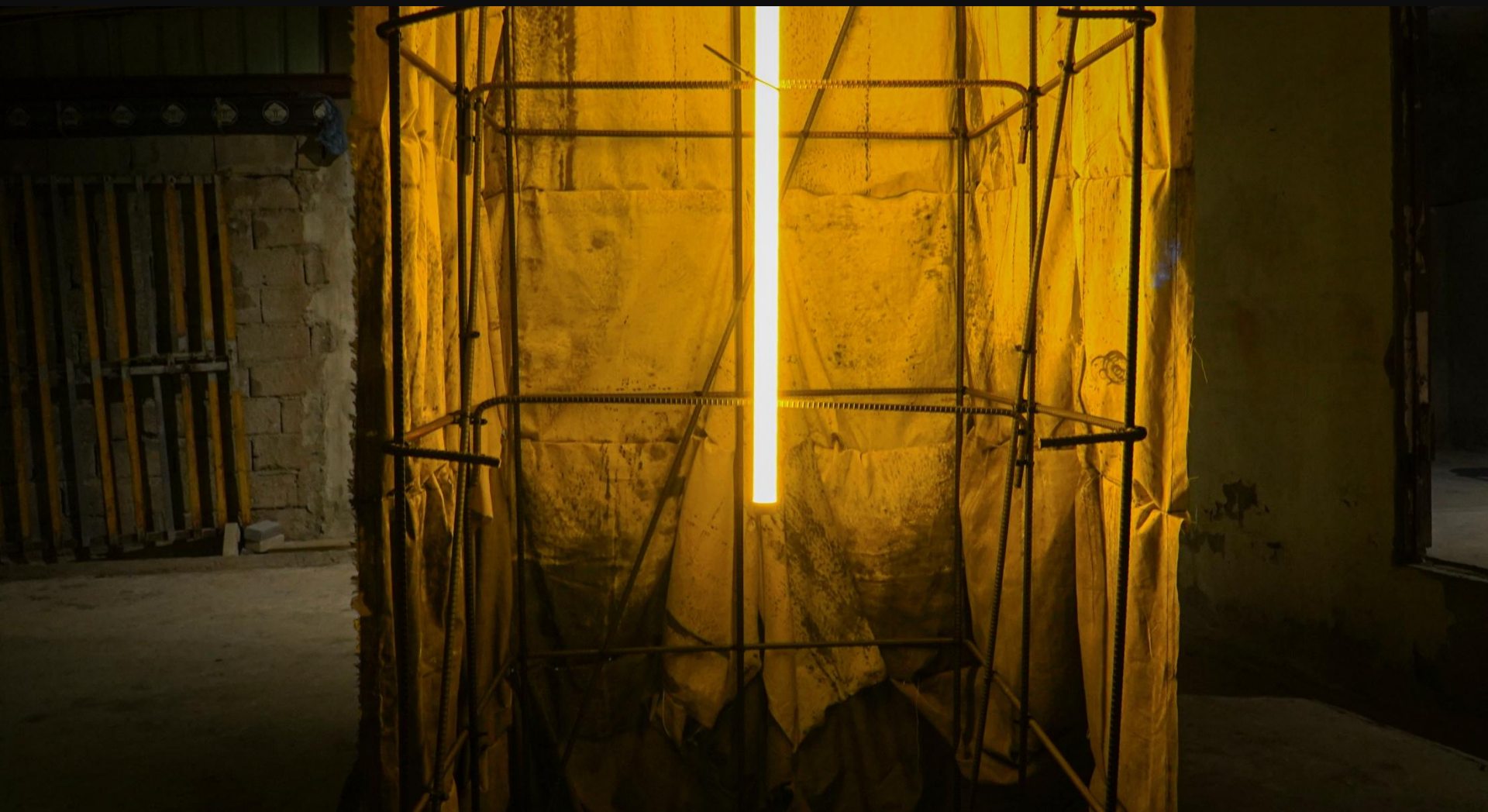






A Low Whisper, The Signal – 2025

Cotton, Rebar, Acrylic paint, LED, Wire / Variable Dimension





A Low Whisper, The Silence That Speaks - 2025 / Single channel video / 04:30

Click image to watch the video

Video Link



CRITIC

From Art to Society, the Sense of Coexistence

As the meaning of art becomes increasingly sophisticated, it is natural that the relationship between art and the social framework it belongs to also becomes multilayered and complex. Within these relational forms, art gradually departs—on the level of institutions—from an allegedly “pure,” autonomous category, and expands its own position as a starting point and occasion for performative action.

In the history of art, however, this dimension has generated opposing views on the necessity of artistic duty. Accordingly, art can be understood as having adjusted the distribution of its propositions as “art” in response to the demands of particular eras.

Such clashes of ideology overlap with the arduous procedures of modern and post-modern ideological antagonisms—still ongoing today. The structural tensions that result persist across politics, culture, economy, and society at large; the values pursued by each system come to determine individual members and their ways of life.

This spreads into conditions necessary for the formation of a system itself: “doing well” and “doing right,” from which notions of “rightness,” “truth,” and even modes of “being” diffuse across everyone.

These developments continually renew discussions surrounding the social practice of art, and urge us to ceaselessly reconstruct art’s ontological grounds from within and without. Art has thus recursively expanded its own concept, and seeks to innovate its role as a social mediator—one that transmits something through subjective utterance—into aesthetic forms demanded by the contemporary.

Within this context, Choi Wongyu’s practice can be described as a thinking-through of presence and the structures of existence at their source. He captures traces of alienation and silence embedded in the system of society; in doing so, he resonates with concrete narratives that build a region’s culture and sensibility, and explores layers of latent memory accumulated through their emergence—on the plane of emotional resonance.

In Choi's system of thought, art functions as a major occasion to critically return to: the subject as an agreed member of community; the perception of a world organized around that subject; and the identity of contemporary existence emerging from such intellectual operations. His appropriation of what could be called "political" discourse strengthens reciprocity between art and society while generating the possibility of reconfiguring norms.

This artistic attempt also appears close to using aesthetic form to recompose the relationship between: an economic "substructure" that shapes society's material base through production and consumption, demand and supply, accumulation and distribution; and a philosophical "superstructure" (often described in gestalt-like terms) of consciousness formation and institutional operation. Ultimately, by transforming art into a reflective field that connects these public structures in its own manner, his approach triggers effective fissures in the material and metaphysical frames that constitute individual and collective systems.

In other words, for Choi Wongyu, art seems to realize itself as a representative medium of the present—multiplying reality and rebuilding methodologies for new solidarity.

Accordingly, the artist exerts persistent effort to implement symbolic expressions of narratives connected to local history, so that the work can 밝히다 that it is oriented toward the lives of the public. For instance: in 〈Breath–The Way Back〉 (2020) in Busan, he adopted a touring-exhibition strategy, more directly fostering conditions for communication with citizens. In 〈Oblivion; Imprinted〉 (2022) at Daegu Art Factory, choreographic collaboration and mirror-reflection projection created a dramatic staging, while proposing a technological version of art enjoyment through VR documentation. In 〈And, It Last〉 Part 2 (2024) at Pier 2 in Kaohsiung, he implemented an audience-participatory interactive process in which viewers complete the work through the act of graffiti. These devices elevate the passive subject of "viewing" into an active subject of "participation."

Here, the viewer is incorporated as part of the work and naturally linked as a member of the creative collective, and the established status of authority is likewise naturally overturned. In this way, Choi Wongyu articulates art on an intensely sensory level while reconfiguring relationships among members within social structures—and further, between society and art. Such renewal at the level of perception is grounded in deep and broad research into locality-based affect.

At the core of his research lies the life of residents itself—individual anecdotes. In particular, the horizon of human rights forgotten at points of labor sustaining livelihood appears in *〈Breath—The Forest of Oblivion〉* (2020), where iron-powder byproducts collected from factories within ship-repair complexes unfold as symbolic material images of environment; and in the *〈Breath—Lifescape〉* (2020–) series, where material images are recorded as form. Works like the flooring pieces in *〈Oblivion; Imprinted〉* (2022) that draw in actual objects used at sites of daily life,

and the installation sculptures in *〈And, It Last〉 Part 1* (2024) that appropriate fragments of those traces, visualize how matter and memory interact beyond mere transformation.

Thus, by summoning existences that have vanished for whatever reason to a portal at the boundary, Choi sublimates the organization of a geopolitical community—under the name of “the era”—into a symbolic medium of universal empathy across generations of human life.

Ultimately, Choi Wongyu’s work begins from fragments of forgotten lives and concludes in an affective representation achieved by revisiting their archetypes. To realize this process, he synchronizes with layered territories of memory and gathers the inner affects and traces of local members into present phenomena. In his context, art transcends the superficial level of simple imitation and rises into an active mode of performance that enables our entry into the level of the real.

Through this, he brings into the present the voices of others concealed within the formation of society, mediated by artistic form.

In unfolding art so that the conventionally assigned position of the minority can speak directly as utterance, his practice also urges art to renew its position in the present as something legitimate. What responsibilities must art truly fulfill to recover, in our time, the sense of coexistence? His work can be read as a declaration of will toward that question.

Jang Jin-taeg

(independent curator, contemporary art researcher)



And, It last part 1 2024 / Mulberry paper, wire, projection mapping. / Variable Dimension

[Click image to go project page](#)

ARTIST'S NOTE

To you, standing here in front of me

When I was just beginning my work,
for a year when nothing remained except one friend who
always willingly gave me their time,
not knowing what or how to do, every night I pulled a cart
with a broken wheel down an unlit dirt road,
collecting abandoned wood and making something.

Continuing something without a purpose was tedious and
painful, but if I didn't do even that, it felt like I would
disappear from the world without a trace.
I endured that time to escape oblivion through daily labor.

As that endurance approached a year,
I heard that a place across the sea called PAIR would gladly
offer me their space,
because of that one first work where I wanted to speak
about the anxiety of my existence.

Then the era of COVID-19 gave me four years to become
stronger as an artist,

and through several residencies in Korea that gave me
opportunities,
I spent the time faithfully, refining my own world.

Now, in this place that remembered me when I was
nothing,
I begin three months.

With the memory of escaping the anxiety of oblivion,
I will meet people here whom I never knew, and remember
them.
I hope that memory meets someone else,
and that moment remains as another memory.

So, that the moment you and I share—meeting for the first
time in this unfamiliar place—
and the instant another you faces that memory,
may remain as a somewhat warm memory.

I will
remember you.



2024.07.08 Mon / Madam Hong

I first saw her during the Yancheng Tour run by the PAIR (Pier2 Artist-in-Residence) team. As we looked around the Kaohsiung 1st Street Market with constant curiosity, she watched us with a gentle smile and a small nod.

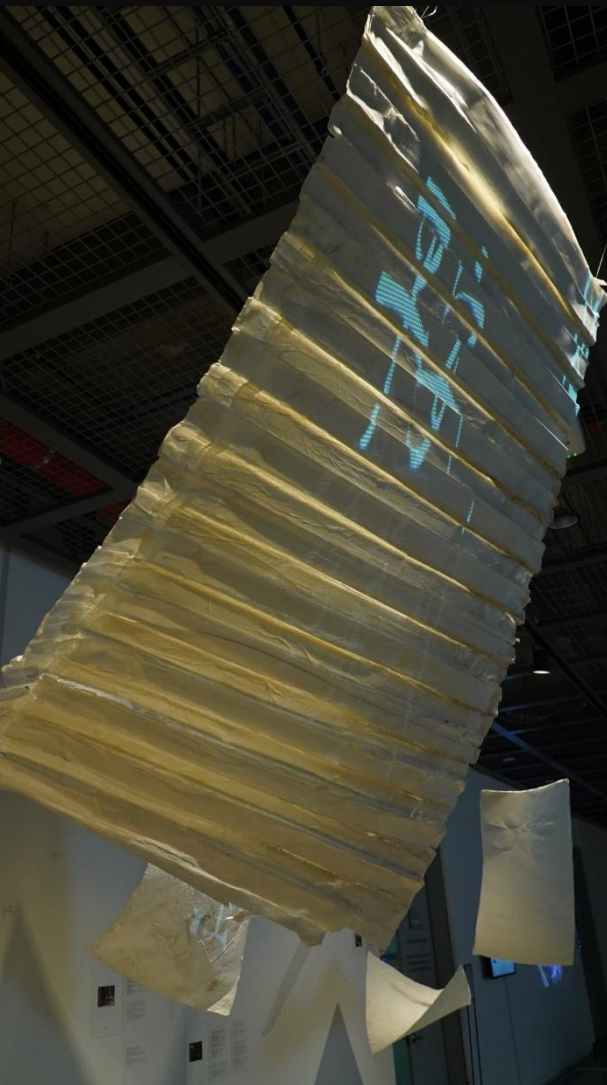


Before that image disappeared from memory, I met her again. We continued our conversation inside the meat shop she had run for over 30 years, with a slab of meat between us. To the question, “What is your wish?” she answered: “World peace” and “Taiwan peace.” I answered that I truly wished for Taiwan’s peace too.

On the cutting board where she cut meat every day, I laid paper layer by layer, sprinkled water, and struck and pressed with a brush—engraving those years.

Because of her business schedule, I had to peel the wet paper off before it fully dried, and carried it carefully back; the raw smell of pork lingered the whole way. Even after drying it for hours under Kaohsiung’s hot sun as soon as I arrived at the studio, the smell remained faintly.

Like her smile that stayed in my mind,
I wished the smell wouldn’t disappear,
and I engraved her wish.



2024.07.10 Wed / Sir Liao

He was old enough to be my friend. He had two grown children, lived in a modest but satisfactory home, and ran a small bakery that wasn't too crowded. He said he tries to find balance in life. For health, every weekend he rides his bicycle to the Sizihwan seaside, feeling the night wind. Perhaps because of that, he didn't show the common middle-aged belly, and maintained a balanced physique.

A few days earlier in Korea, a tragic accident took the lives of nine men in the street. One had just had a light meal with colleagues to celebrate a promotion, and was returning to work for overtime; another was on the way home to a family waiting.

All were someone's son, father, husband.

As Liao said he would ride his bicycle to Sizihwan again this weekend—smiling plainly—I overlapped that smile with my thoughts: What had those nine people planned for that weekend?

I thought maybe Liao's happiness is on the road to Sizihwan after he closes his shop.

A few days later, after business ended, I returned and decided to imprint the corrugation of the closed shop shutter—when he wasn't there.

Wishing that his small happiness—setting out after the door closes—can continue,

he wrote briefly, to the question “What is happiness?”: “Night wind.”

May his pleasant night wind continue always.

I wish him health.







2024.06.15 Massager #53

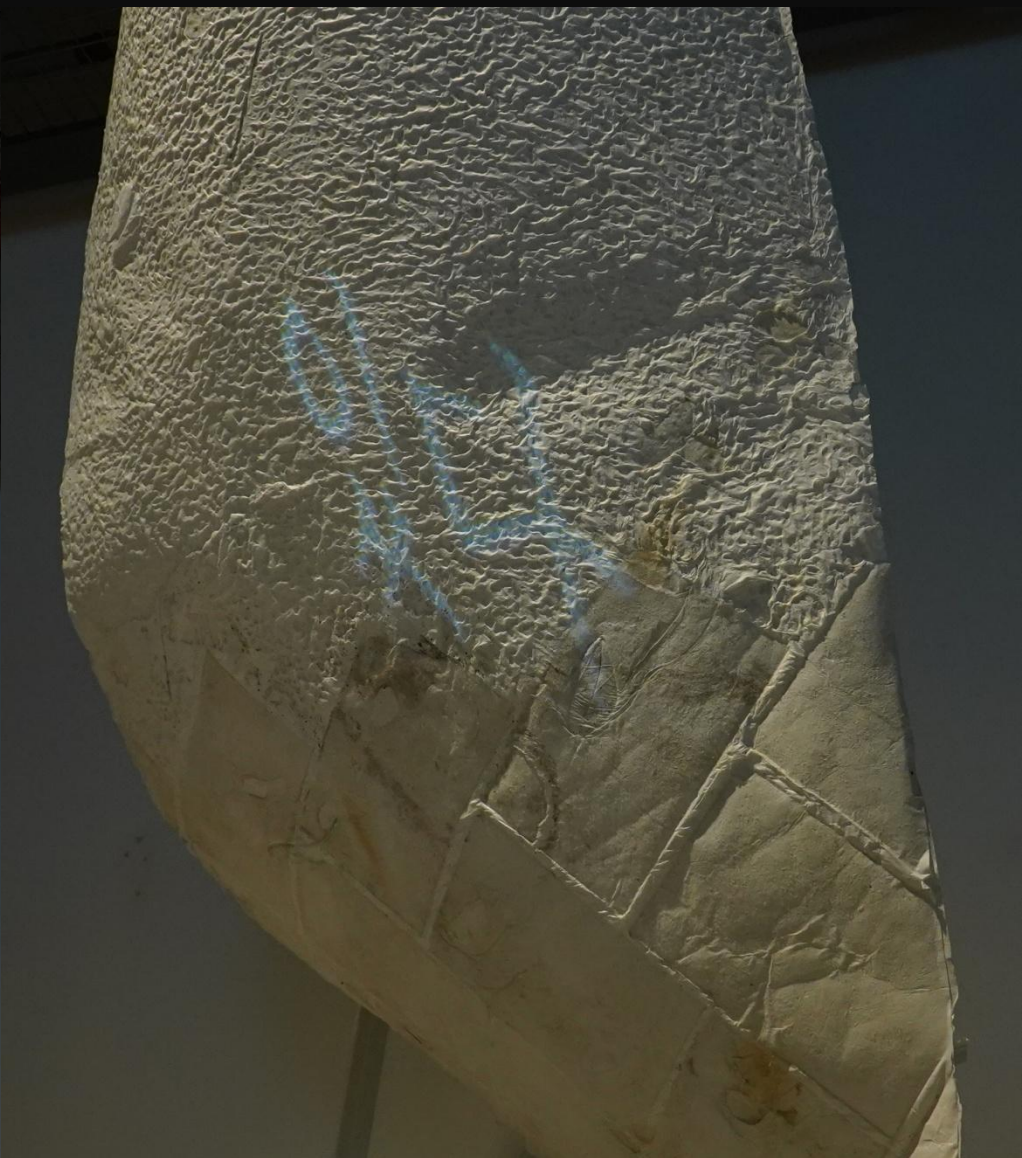
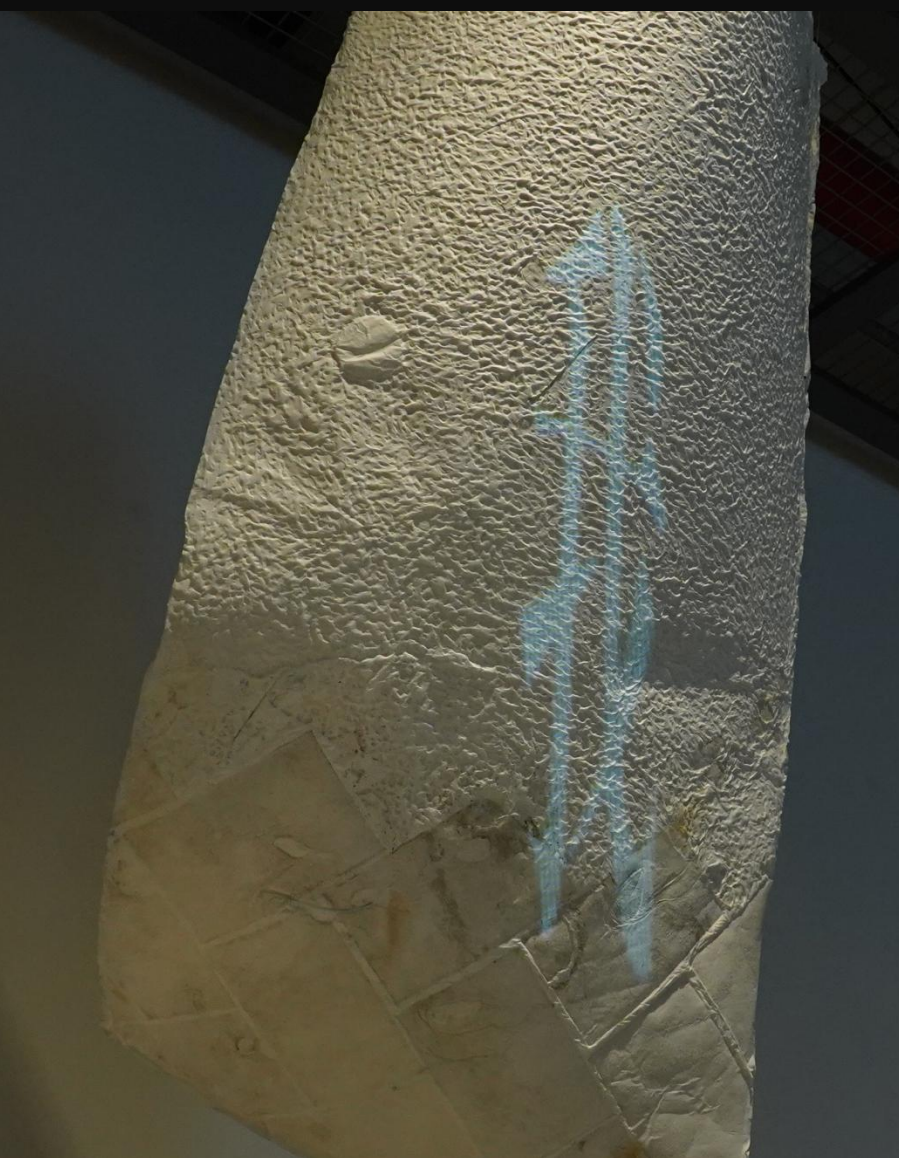
He was born in a small town on Taiwan's east coast.
His grandfather crossed from China and worked in a western city,
then settled in a quiet eastern village.

But wanting to raise his descendants in a bigger city, he headed to
Kaohsiung—he said he was 27 then.

After working at a mobile phone store, then at a small engine
factory in Yancheng removing oil, and other jobs, he said it has
already been nearly 20 years since he began working as a masseur.

He is known as Masseur No. 53, touching different people's heads,
shoulders, and feet every day.
Thin veins stood out on his arms, and his body was firm for his age.

Wishing that he can keep the health to remain the strong pillar of
his family as he wants,
I took the building column of the shop he goes to every day,
and engraved not a number, but only his name—
his father's name.



2024.07.02 /



Every morning around 9, I hear the sound of sweeping with a twig broom from outside the studio.

When I hear it, I lower the music volume to listen—because that brisk rhythm makes for a good morning.

I bent my knees and tapped the floor where they sweep leaves every morning, imprinting it onto paper.

For some reason, I couldn't formally interview them.

All I had were a few words: while handing them ice cream and thanking them as they rested from the hot sun, and a few words exchanged with someone who came to empty the trash in the shared kitchen, curious about what I was cooking for lunch.

Every day, there is someone we pass by.

They are always there, quietly doing their work every day.

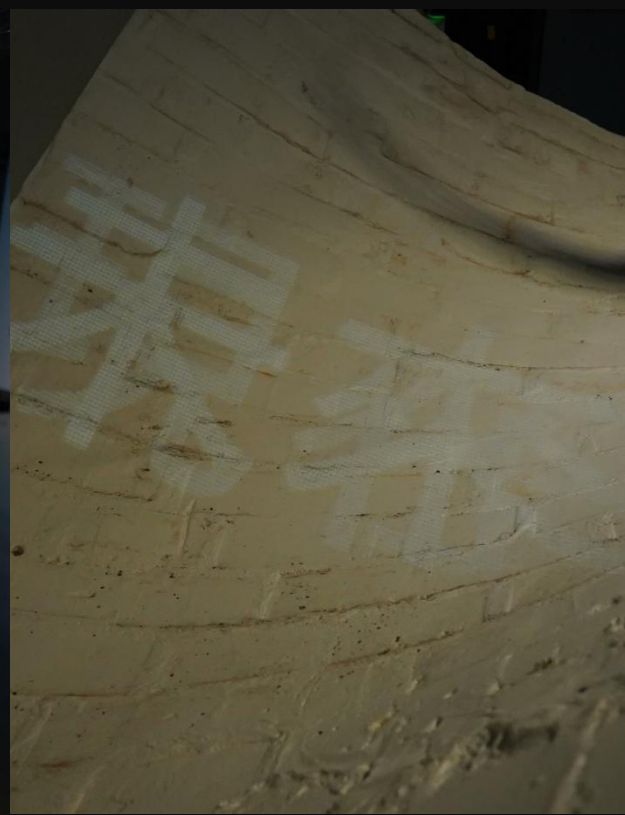
Because someone cleaned the street trash while we slept, we walk on a clean floor on the way to work; we eat something in the early morning that fills our hunger just enough.

Like the ground we step on every day as we head somewhere, it is so natural that we forget it.

I hope we offer, at least once, a light greeting to the efforts of those we pass by.

CHOIWONGYU PORTFOLIO







2024.07.07 Sun / Dancing team “Now4”

Every night, countless people gather at the Kaohsiung Culture Center.

A couple playing badminton; b-boys sweating to intense music, putting their heads to the floor practicing headspins; middle-aged couples practicing waltz to a gentle rhythm.

But it’s especially easy to find dance teams practicing to Korean idol music. I watched them from a bench in the corner, then approached one team. Not so much “talking” as handing them a prepared notice requesting an interview.

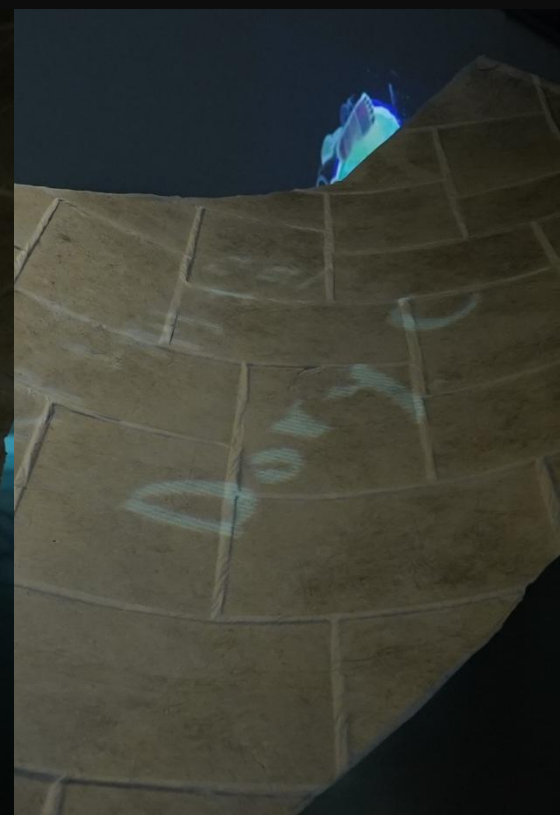
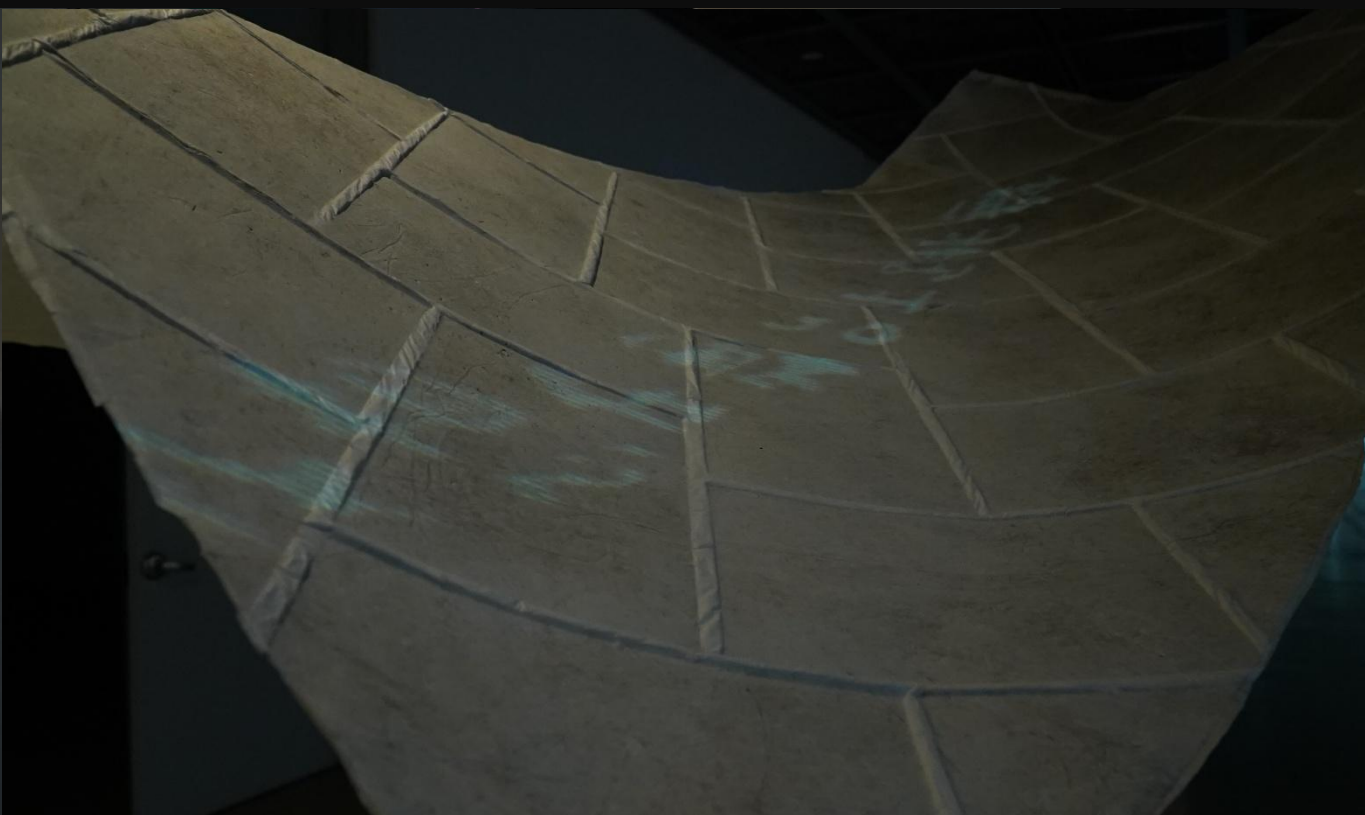


They gladly agreed. Sitting down on the floor, laughing and chatting, they filled out the questionnaire. Some answers even appeared in Korean. They all wanted stable jobs in the near future.

I hope they enjoy the present—where they can dance joyfully and forget worries for a while.

At dawn after everyone left, I imprinted onto paper the wall they leaned against during breaks.

Hoping that the world adults made becomes a future where they can rest.





2024.07.14 / 2024.07.23 @Dory C

I like the healthy energy of the beautiful river and park that unfold the moment I step outside the studio, and of the tourists who bustle from place to place with curiosity. Children running and sweating as they play; a young couple smiling brightly as they happily capture them on camera; elderly couples walking hand in hand. In Korea I drive most of the time, so I don't walk much, but here I enjoy morning and evening walks.

That day, a big market opened along the Love River. In the crowded plaza where people brushed past, I met her singing—wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a light dress with ruffles. Between passersby and the market's yellow bulbs, her clear and solid voice spread into the air.

She, in that hat and dress, captivated the Love River plaza with voice alone. After watching her street performance for a long time, I returned to the studio and a few days later requested an interview via her Instagram.

She gladly accepted. With the PAIR team, we set the date, and on 7/23 she came to my studio.

Beginning with light talk—her stage name “Dory” comes from Pixar’s character Dory—we started the interview.



During the interview I asked her a foolish question.

When I asked if she ever thought about entering a famous singing competition, she said she was happy meeting audiences by singing on the street and in restaurants.

After the enjoyable interview and listening to her sing, when she left, I regretted my foolish question.

I too have never exhibited at a famous gallery or museum.

But every time I open an exhibition, I believe that the place where my work stands is better than any other place.

She said she is afraid of such competitions, but to me it sounded like: she wants to live for “now,” singing purely with her own voice.

I imprinted onto paper the plaza floor where she stood firmly on two feet and filled the Love River air with her voice.

On the paper, dust and small leaves from the plaza were imprinted.

I felt that the plaza floor—no one’s but hers—where she endured and sang, was more splendid than any stage.

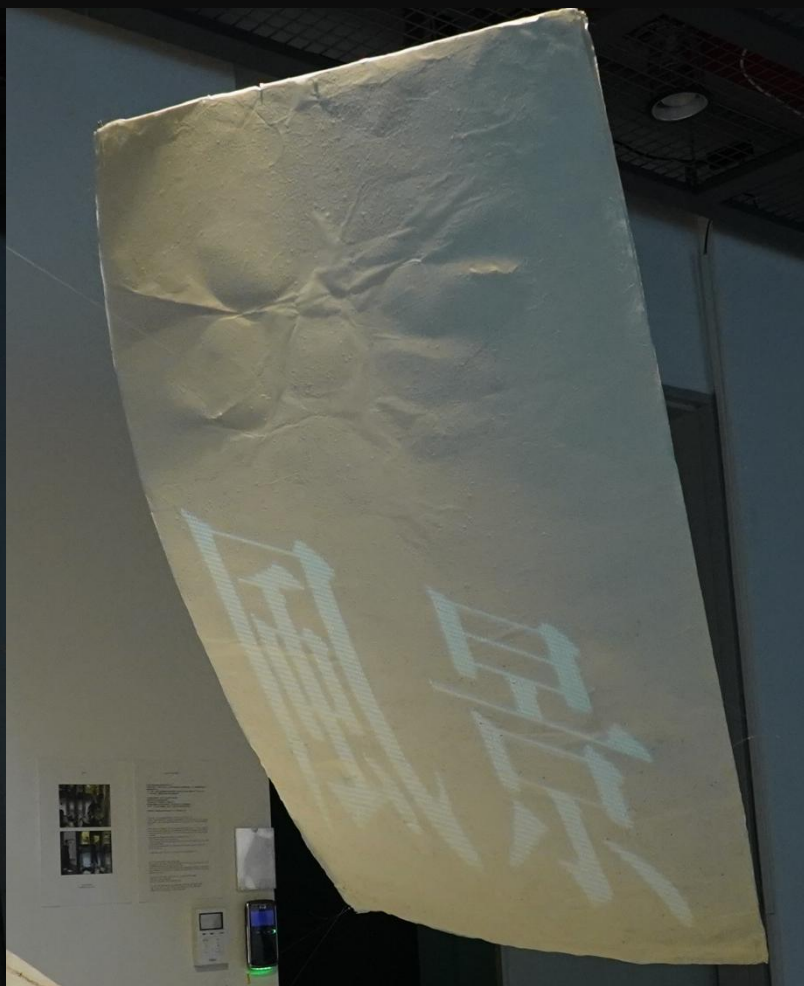
During the interview she sang an original song filled with love for her music.

I proposed that she perform at the exhibition opening, because I wanted more people to hear her voice.

She sang of her happiness and hope right where you are standing now.

Please listen to her song.

I sincerely hope her joyful singing continues, and that heart reaches many people.





2024.07.08 / Xing

When I visited his home, I was seized by complicated emotions. His room—about one pyeong, with no window—trapped the daytime heat even at night. In less than a minute inside, sweat poured down.

There was no kitchen, only a small microwave.

I carefully asked if Taiwanese young people live in homes like this, and he answered yes, as if it were nothing.

Why was I careful?

Because I was looking at him through my present self.

Like many young people in Korea, he too was simply within a process.

His room did have a window—but it faced the shared corridor of the building, and was covered so he couldn't see outside.

I imprinted onto paper the ground near his place—by a house with a large window.

I hope his window—the window of where he will live later—can open wide, as much as he wants, whenever he wants.

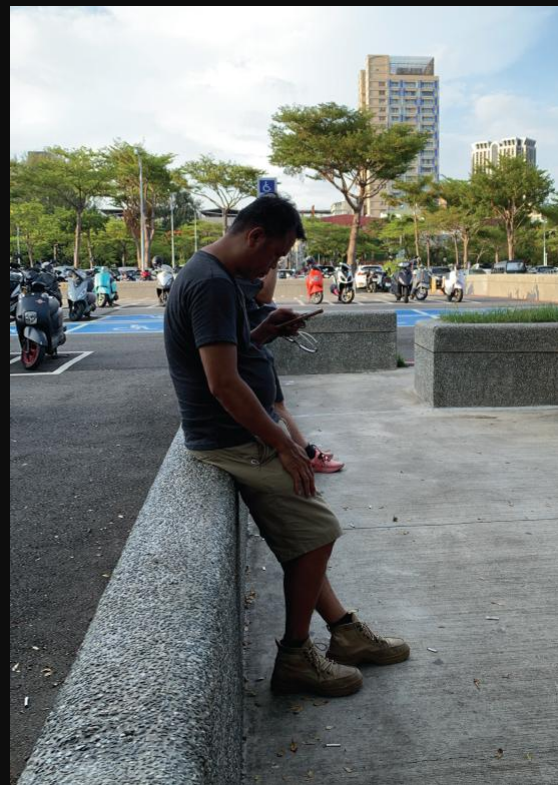
We are all on a road going somewhere.

I cheer for you, walking that road at your own pace, and for myself, too.





2024. 07. People sitting on street



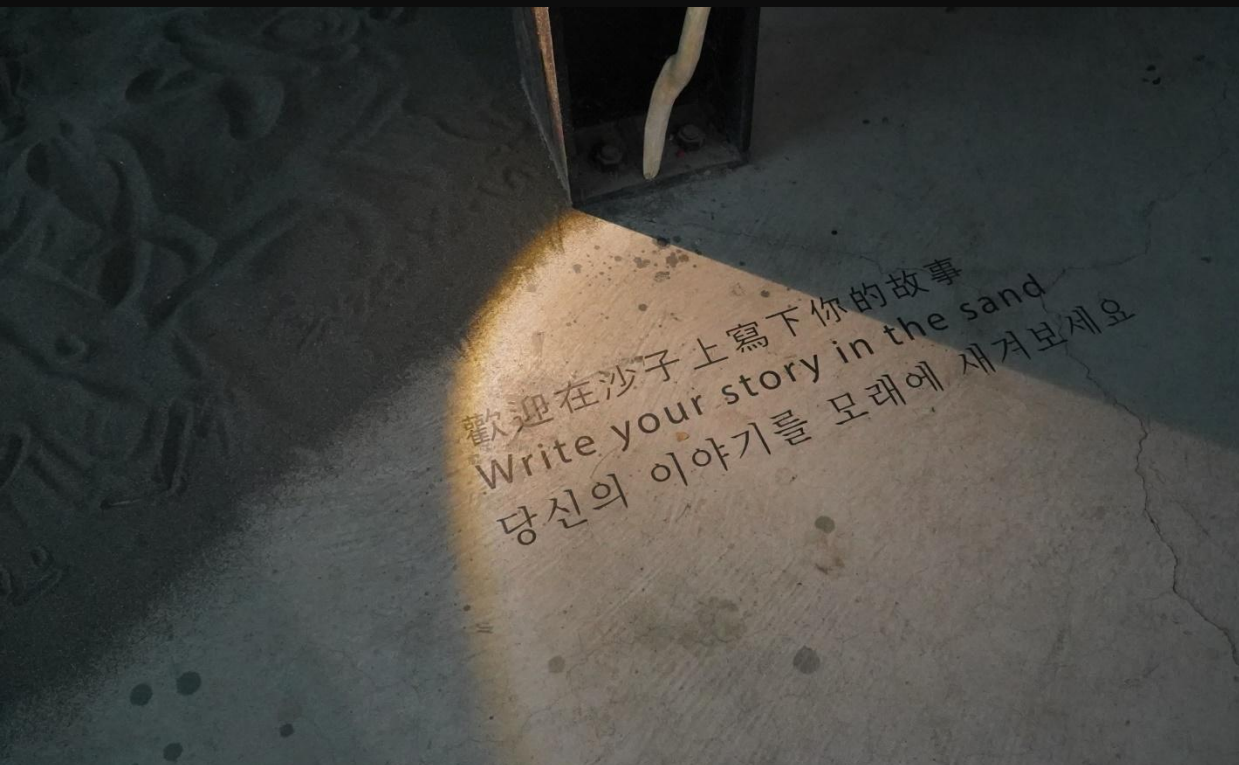
2024. 07. People sitting on street





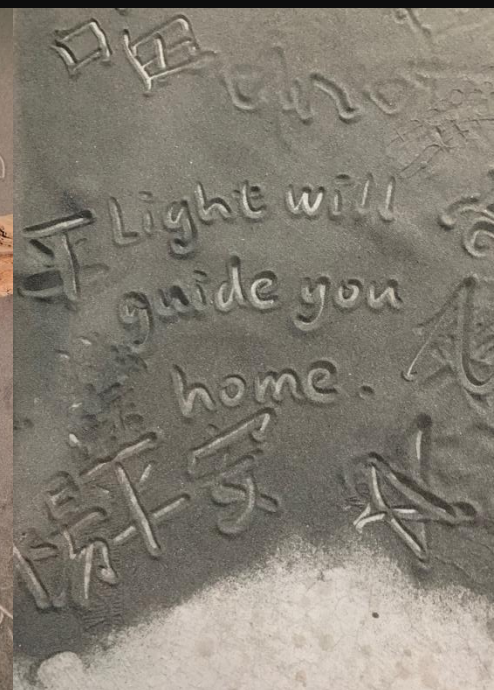
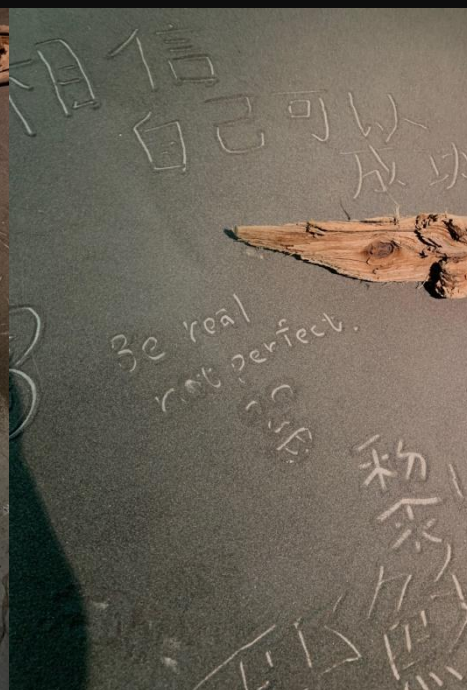
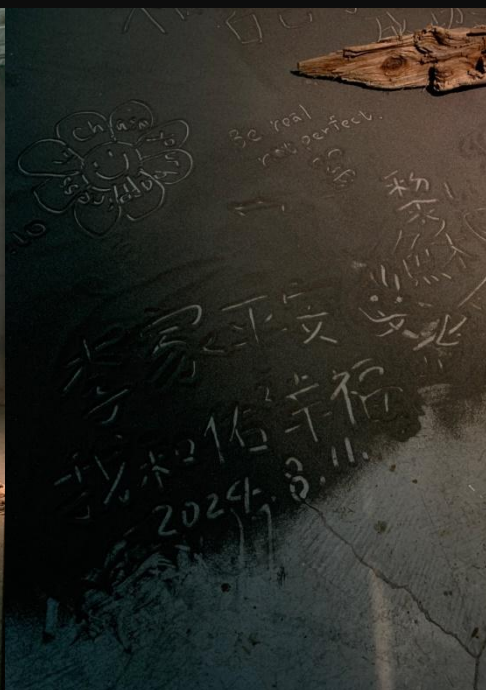
And, It last part 2- 2024 / Single channel video, sand and wood collected from Qijin island, / Variable Dimension

[Click image to watch the vVideo](#)



Video link [And, It last Part 2 / Single channel 18min]







Oblivion, Reflected 2021-2023 / Projection mapping on 200 mirrors collected from citizens, stories. / Variable Dimension

[Click image to go project page](#)

“Signals of Existence, Flickering”

In 2021, while researching a project on large-scale redevelopment in Daegu, I toured redevelopment areas where all residents had already left. I passed countless abandoned mirrors. In mirrors visible between piles of waste in alleys and empty lots, the desolate landscape was reflected—sometimes an unrealistically blue sky. Facing these mirrors, I grew curious about the stories of the people who had once looked into their frames every day.

Mirrors that held someone’s past and present came to me as symbols of existence. Wanting to speak about existences that brush past us, I traveled back and forth between Daegu and Busan for a year, meeting citizens and collecting their stories and mirrors.

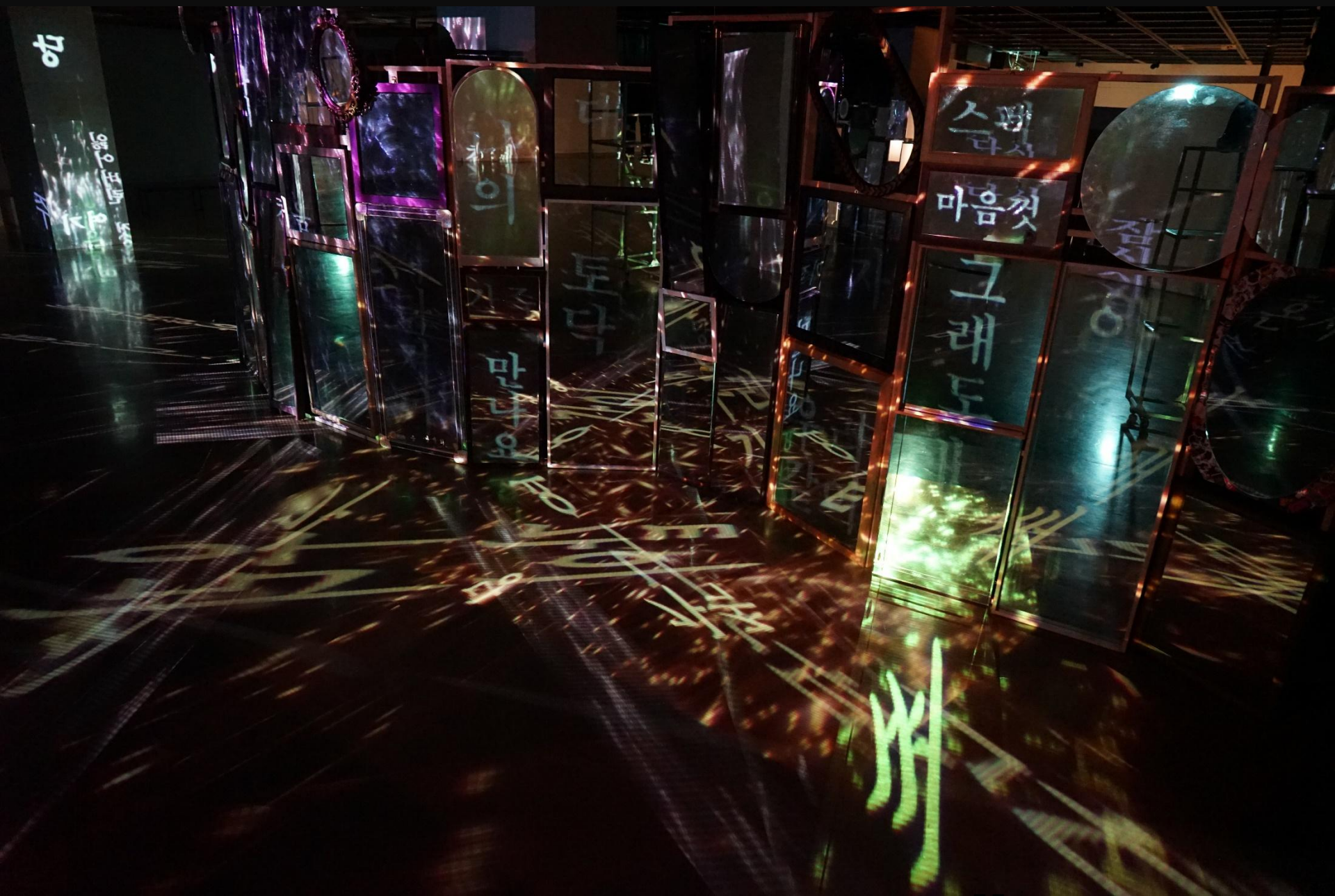
A shop owner who ran a chicken store for 20 years and endured the COVID-19 period only to finally close; a young person who quit a first job after various violence from coworkers and a boss,

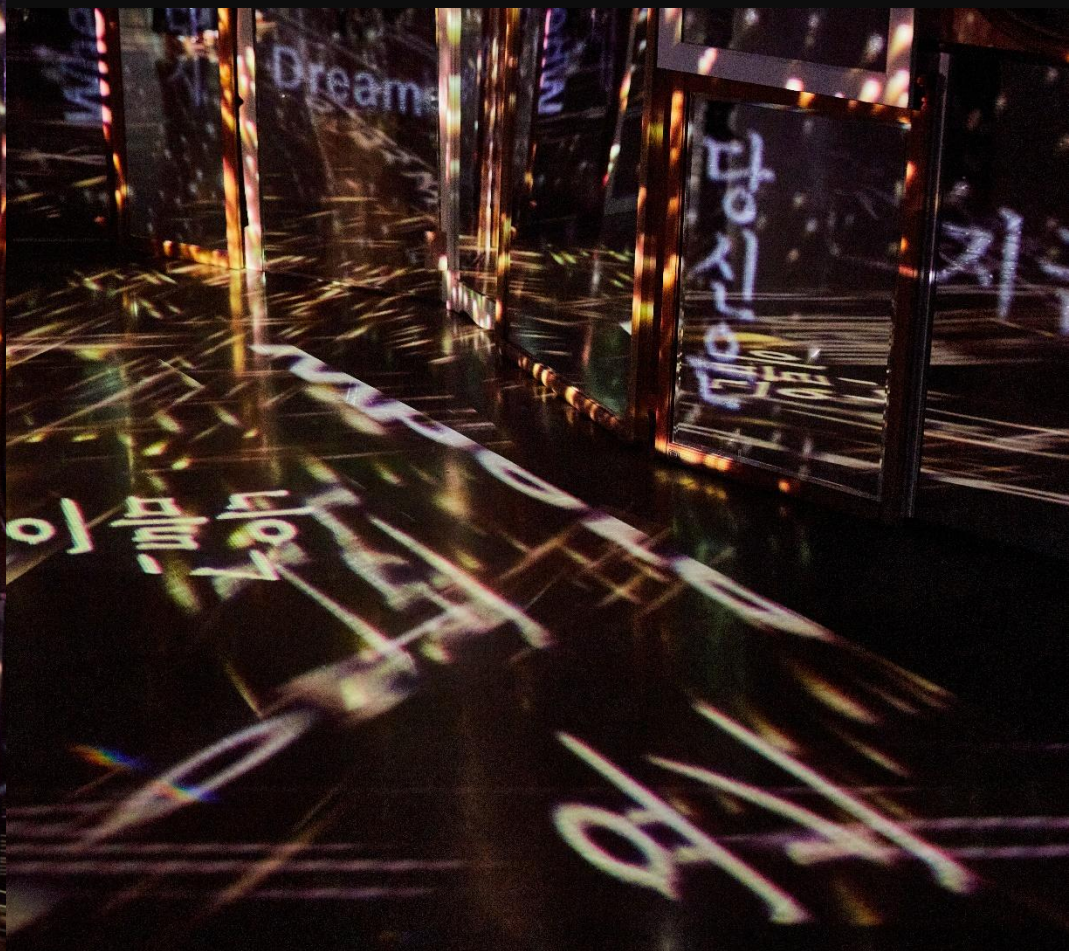
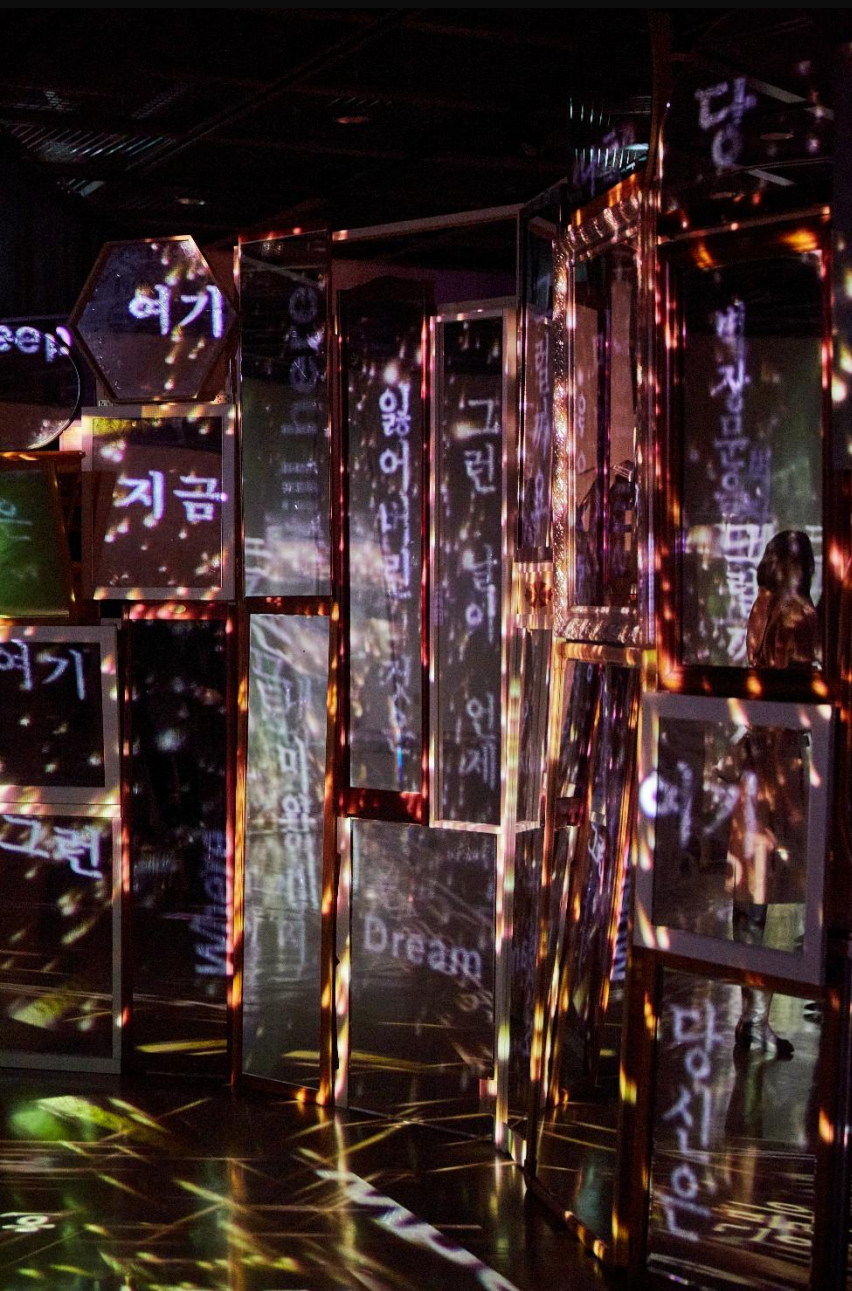
lived in seclusion for years, and was now preparing to move to try a new life; a foreign worker who said that in a global pandemic, unable to return home and knowing no one, he felt like a person who “exists but doesn’t exist.”

Each small story held the underside of the 시대. I gathered these stories to unfold a portrait of our time.

Blurred images of existence flicker as if signaling they are alive, reflecting each story across the entire space. Viewers do not recognize the stories that touch their bodies—much like the countless stories of others that brush past them. The moment they notice their own reflection in a passing mirror, they become aware of the reflected images that have reached them from somewhere. Yet the closer they approach, trying to look into the story, the more the image of existence in the mirror fades—until only their own self remains.







“I am still here. Still here.”

At first I thought he was a child.

The message wasn't written like an adult's sentence.

Not long after entering the apartment complex full of cars, I passed a man holding a mirror. I parked and approached him.

Unable to meet my eyes, he handed over the mirror. His face clearly showed he was from a hot southern country.

After loading the mirror into the car, I turned to leave—then stopped.

He asked me:

“Do you smoke?”

“Um... yes, I do.”

“Just one.”

A little apart, we exhaled smoke in different directions and exchanged a few words.

He was a 32-year-old father of two who came from Pakistan five years ago to earn money.

With little work due to COVID, no acquaintances, and no way to return home, he said he felt like someone who exists but doesn't.

He said he worked at a big factory in West Daegu, and next week he would go to work at a rural farm near Daegu.

I gave him a pack of cigarettes from my car as the price of the mirror.

I greeted his back as he climbed the dark stairs.

“Yes. I know you still there.”



“Endure and endure and en-en-en-endure...”

June 21, 2021

“Park in front of 00 Chicken and call.”

I could roughly guess what the situation might be,
so I went with a heavy heart—
but the owner was unexpectedly bright and energetic.

“My savings-group friends collected money when I opened
the shop

and bought me an expensive mirror.

If you’ll use it for something good, then that’s good.”

A truck soon arrived to take the kitchen equipment,
so I hurriedly moved my car,
then bought and handed over a few energy drinks.

“Oh, why did you buy this?

Drink with me before you go.”

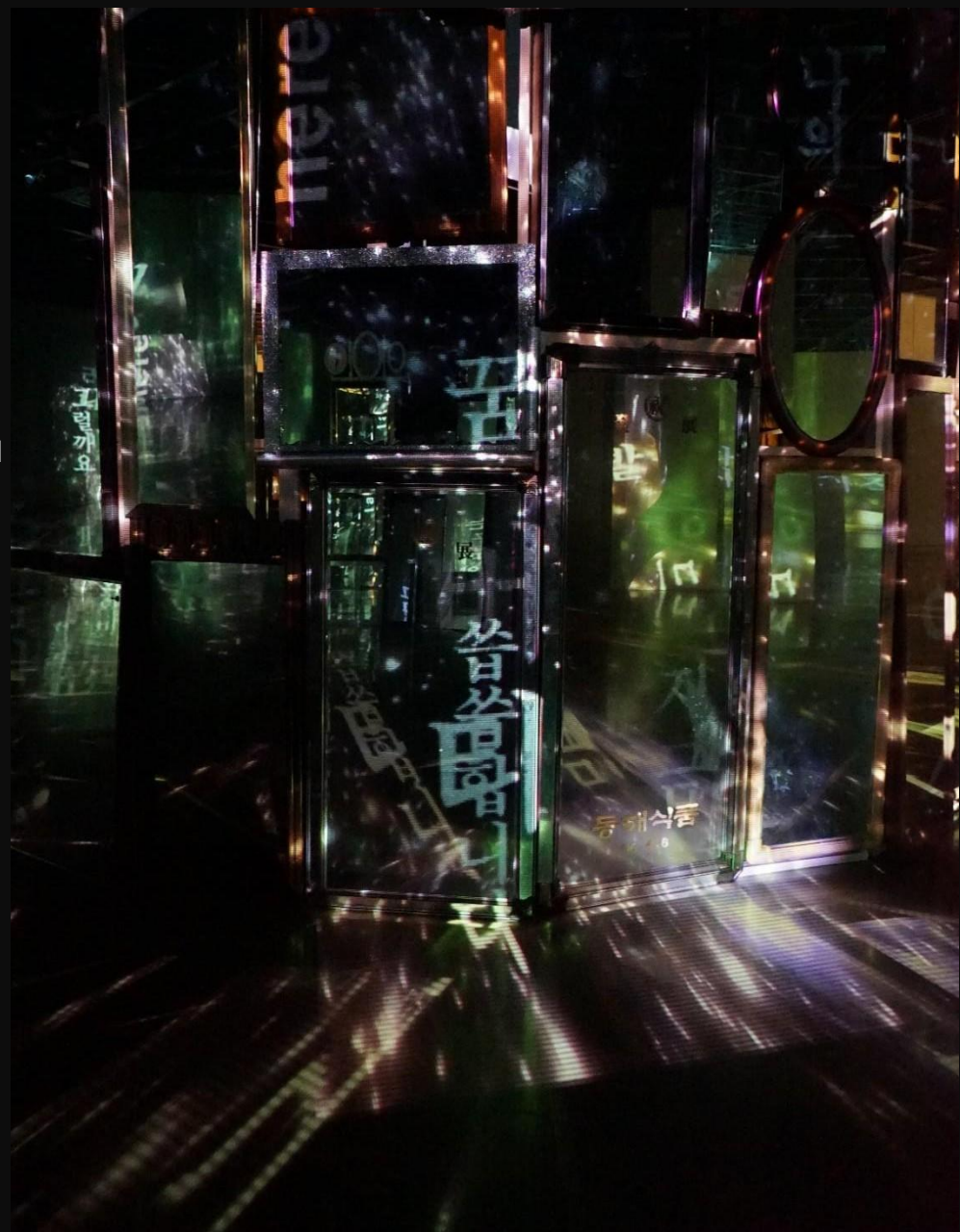
I downed it in one go,

and on my way out,

I couldn’t find any words to give.

Only:

“Thank you. I’ll use it well.”



“ Back into the world : ”
“ Opening the closet door ,

May 12, 2021

About ten minutes by car along an unpaved road,
I arrived at a villa in the mountains with paint almost peeled off the outer walls.
After several calls, a message arrived:

“Sorry, I just saw this while cleaning up the house. If you come up, it's fine.”

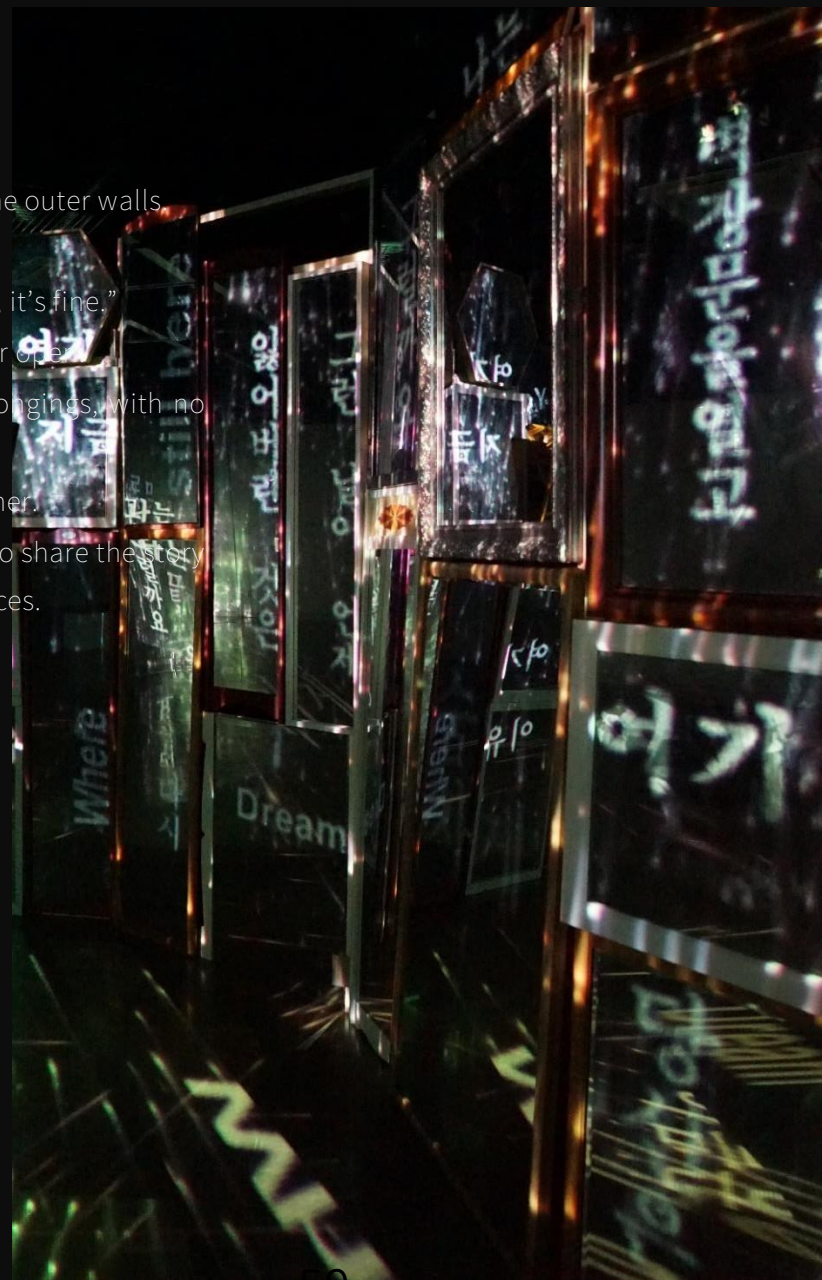
The rooftop room on the 5th floor—no elevator—had its front door open.
Through the half-open door, the inside looked packed with belongings, with no
place to step.

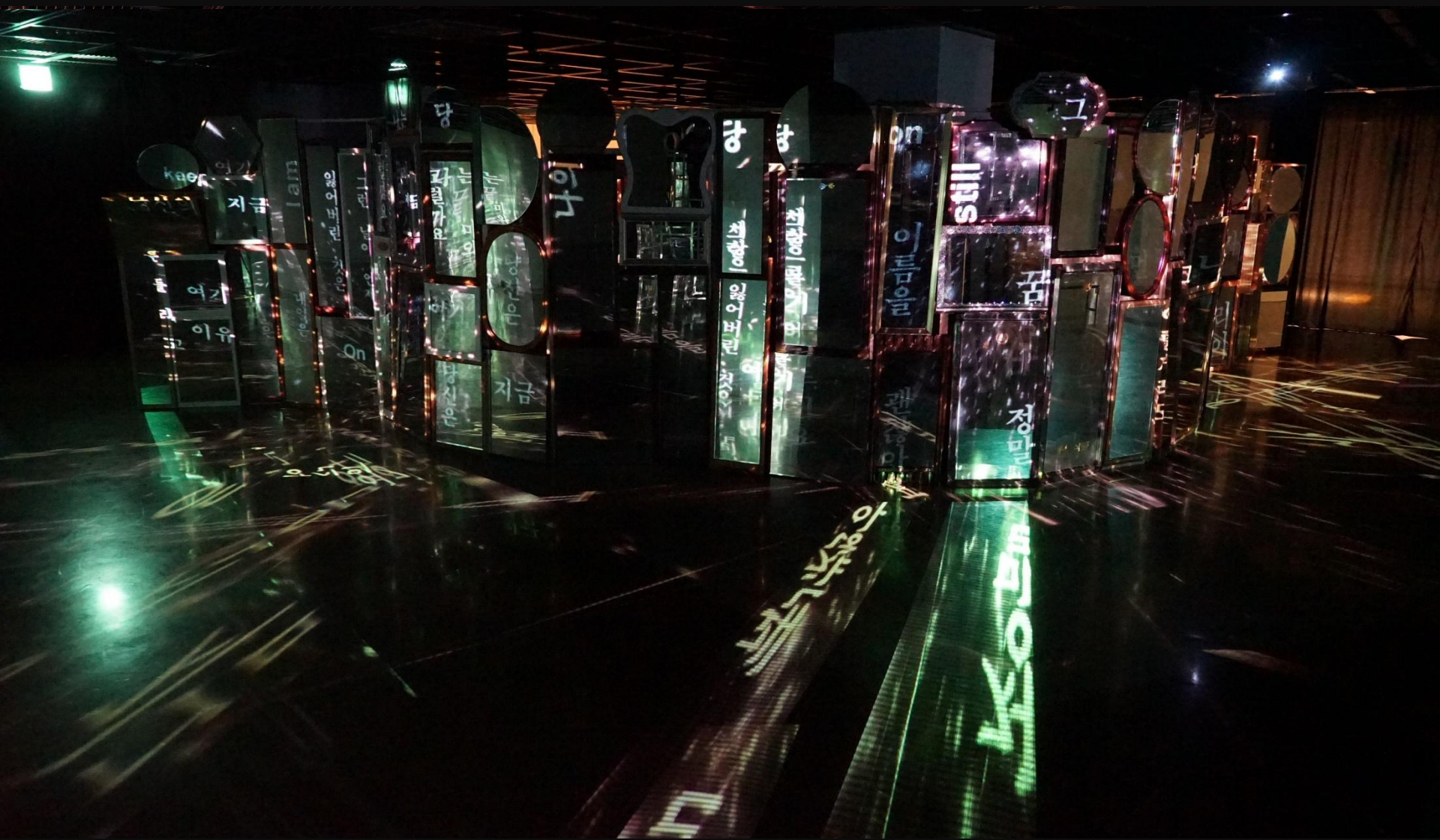
A few hours after I took the mirror down, a message arrived from her.

He seemed to have hesitated long before replying to my request to share the story
the mirror should hold. A long message arrived, without even spaces.

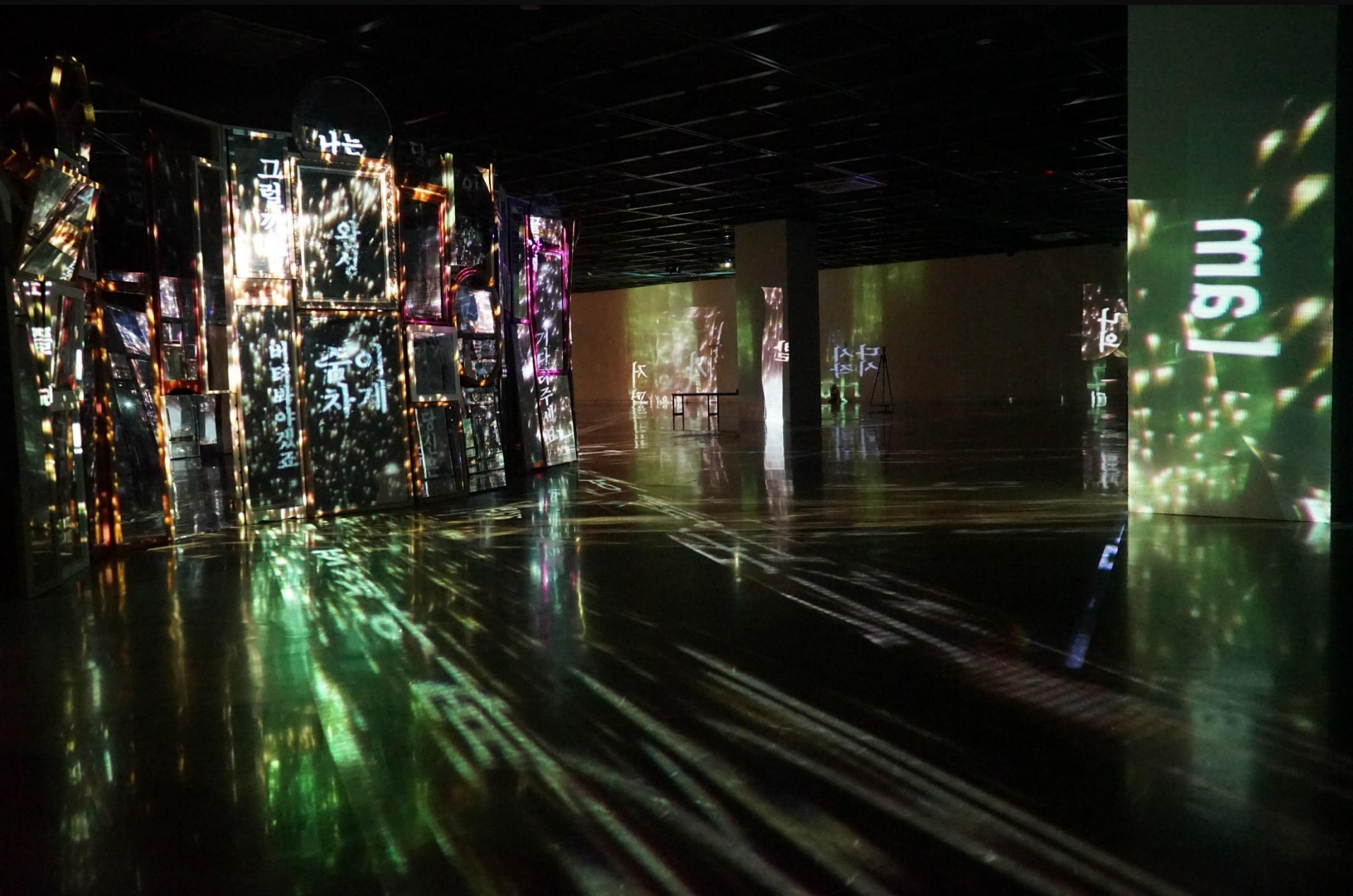
I was bullied at my first job and it
was so hard that for 2 years I almost
didn't go out and stayed home. I
thought I can't live like this, so I'm
cleaning up my life in Daegu and
going back to my hometown where
my parents are. I'll rest a bit and
then look for a new job. I'd rather
not share my name, and I'm 27.
Sorry the mirror is so dirty.”

The blinking sentence on his dusty mirror
shimmers like an illusion, hidden by dust.











Oblivion, Imprinted 2021 / Flooring materials collected from living space of elderly people, wire, aluminum panel, wood / Variable Dimension

[Click image to go project page](#)

“How is our life remembered?”

Breath is the most fundamental physical act of staying alive, yet that act of breathing often goes unnoticed and is forgotten. If society is an organism, then the individual living each day within it is its inhale and exhale—what enables it to function and grow.

Oblivion; Imprinted exists as an extension of the “Breath” project, which seeks to trace various trajectories of life in our time and translate them into visual language.

From April 2021, over 11 months based in Daegu, the project began by interviewing the histories of the middle-aged and older generations who shaped today’s Daegu. By imprinting each history onto flooring collected from their living spaces, it attempts to remember histories that will disappear in the near future, and to speak about the surrounding lives that become “forgotten.”

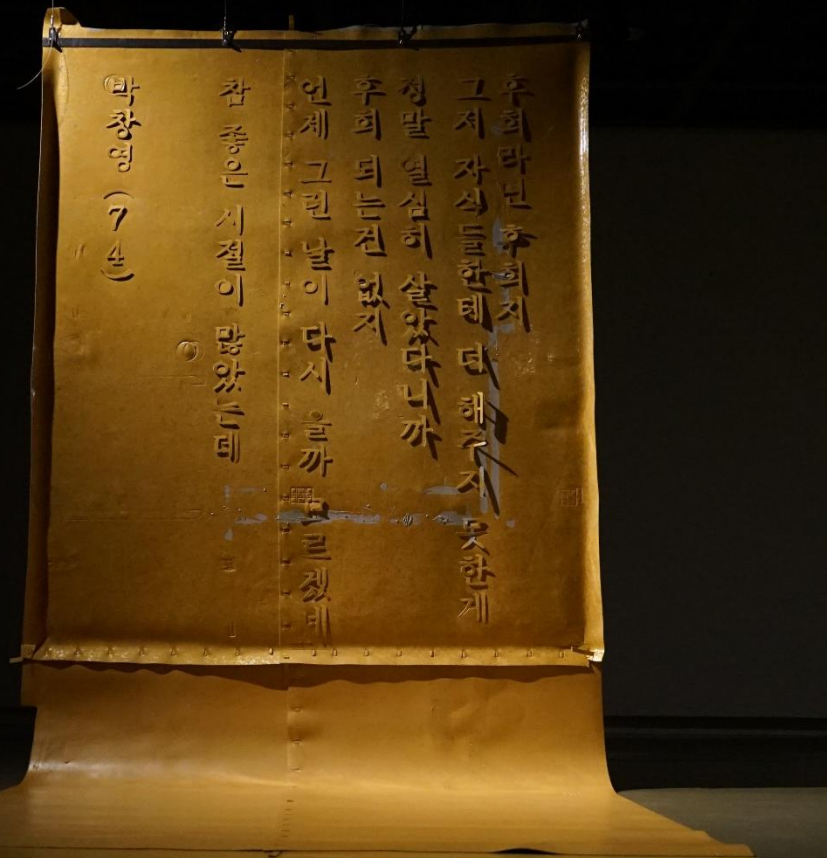
This work began as I passed an unnamed mother who spends a whole day sitting in a corner of an alley within a large rental-apartment complex in Busan—waiting for nothing—and someone’s father who spends most of his time alone on a park bench. By calmly revealing and remembering lives that certainly exist around us yet remain unseen, I want to ask a question about the meaning of “us” and of life, which has grown faint in our time.

By remembering the ordinary lives that brush past us every day—lives we may not recognize, or may have tried to look away from because they are not revealed—I want to speak again about the meaning of life.

This is also a process of seeking an answer to the question:

“How do I want my life to be remembered?”

“I” am an “I” within “us,” and the moment we forget “us,” the existence of “I” also grows faint.



PARK Chang-young

Age 74, Daegu

“Back then there were so many good days.
I don’t know if days like that will ever come again.
I don’t have regrets—I really lived as hard as I could.
If I regret anything, it’s that I couldn’t do more for my children.”

2021.10.03

In the early dawn, when the streetlights were going out,
I asked Chang-young—who had parked a taxi with its light on in front of a park restroom and was smoking—whether I could ride.

I stepped slightly aside and lit a cigarette too.
As the sparks he flicked off fell onto the damp ground of the dim morning, he stubbed out a cigarette barely smoked and got back into the taxi.

Starting with a question about where I was going so early, we exchanged a few words.

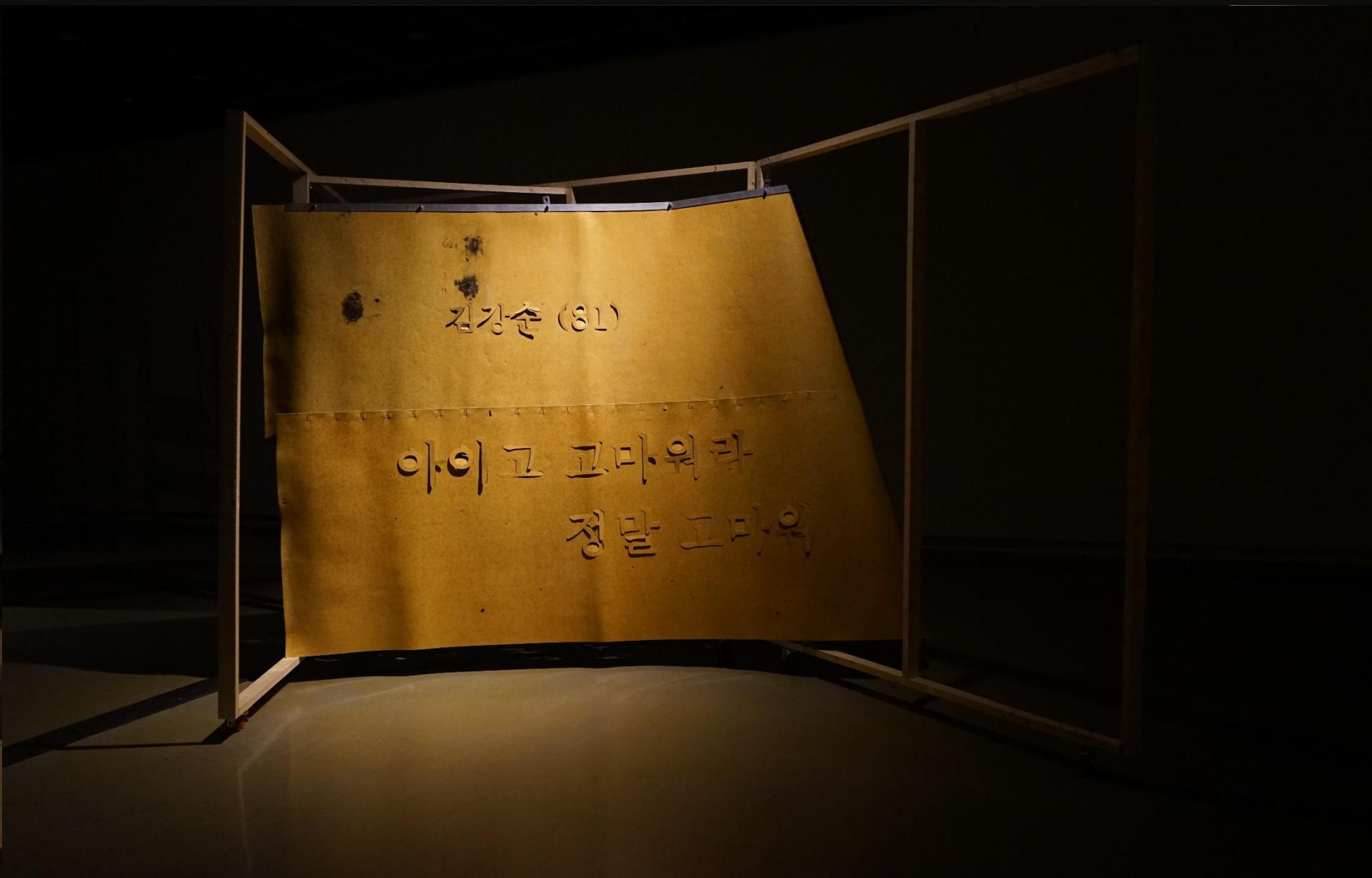
When I said I was taking a train to Seoul to install an artwork, he began with: if his second child—who had studied art—were still alive,

he would probably be about my age now.
And that was how I heard his story.

He still remembers those days:
the dawn air at the terminal where he arrived from Ulsan with a small bundle,
the day he crossed the gate of the house in Sangeok-dong that he bought by driving his taxi without a day off,
the morning of 2003 when he ran to meet his second child who never came back because of “some damn person,”
the excessive blinking of traffic lights,
and the numbers stamped densely in the savings passbook he opened, not as the last, but deciding to give it to his first child anyway.

Inside his car were small photos:
his second child as a child (whom he can no longer see),
a family photo of his first child whom he can’t easily reach,
and a photo from Seongsan Ilchulbong in Jeju—
the first trip he took with his wife, who left three years ago.

Daegu Subway Fire Disaster— February 18, 2003, 9:53 AM



KIM Kang-soon

Age 81

“Oh, thank you...

Thank you so much.”

2021.09.10

No matter how long I call, she doesn't answer.
Every Friday I bring side dishes in a black bag.
Standing at the always-open front door, even if I call loudly
at her back as she watches TV, she never hears me.

Even if I quietly step in and make a sound at the room door,
she doesn't know anyone has come until I tap her shoulder.

Even though we meet every week, she doesn't recognize me
well.

Still, she supports her uncomfortable leg with both arms to
stand up,
and repeats “thank you” over and over—so politely.

If the front door is closed, I leave the bag on the shoe
cabinet and call her on the landline, checking in.

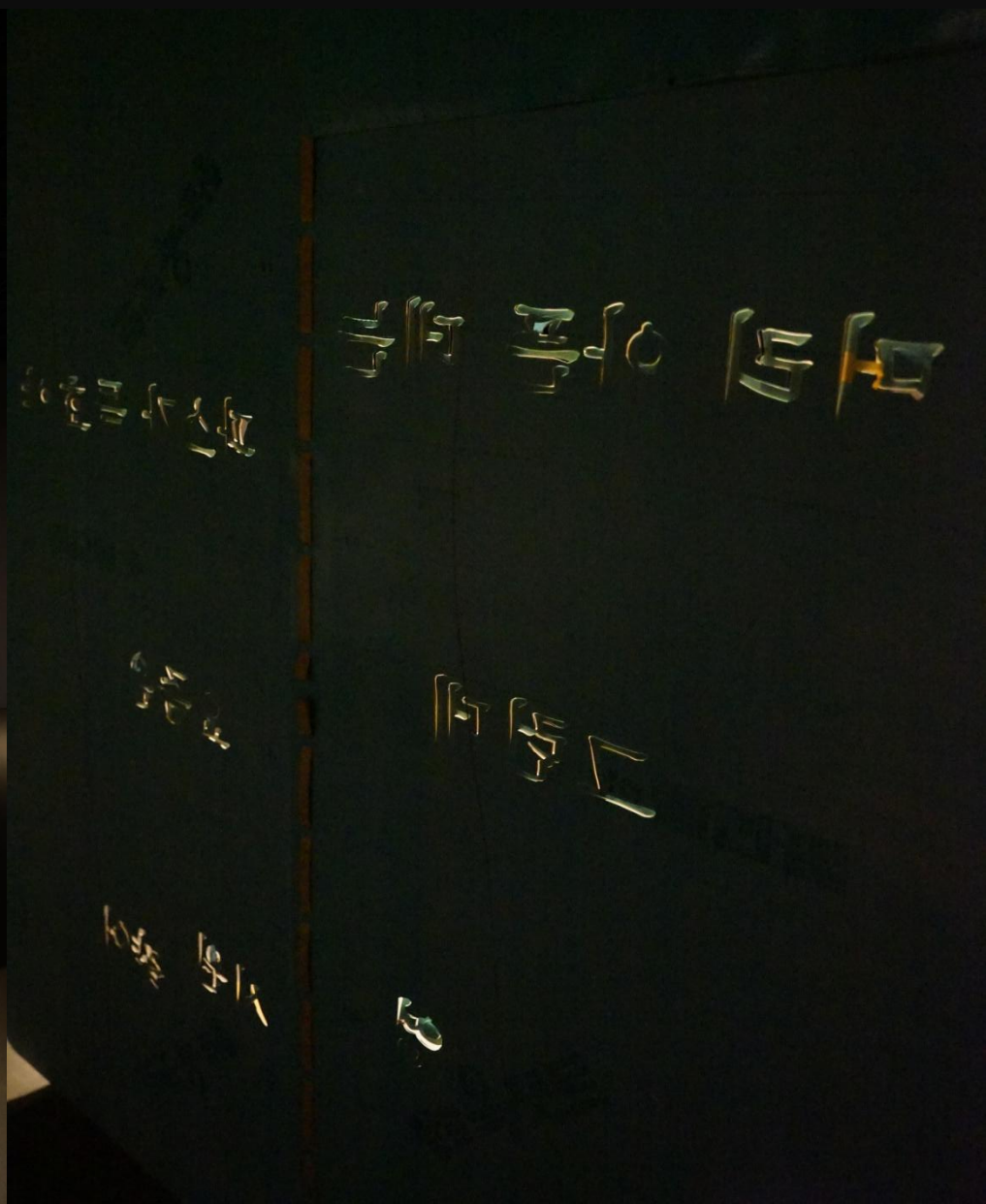
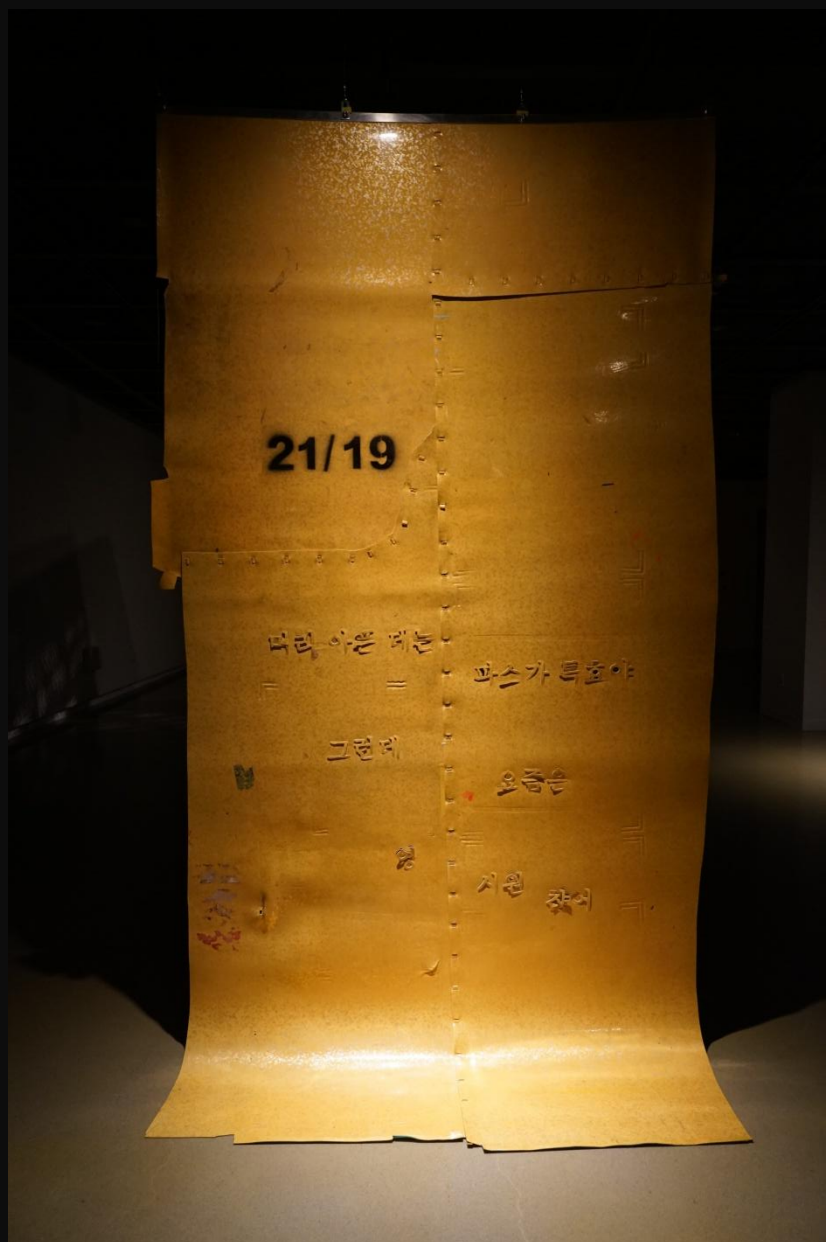
No matter how loudly I speak, she only repeats, “Who is
it?” and only then do I hang up, relieved.

On the third Friday of December,
her side-dish bag was missing.
They said the son she missed so much had returned after
years away.

Instead of the missed bag, I brought two bags and went to
her home again.

Now I don't call loudly from the entrance.
The door is still wide open.

21/19

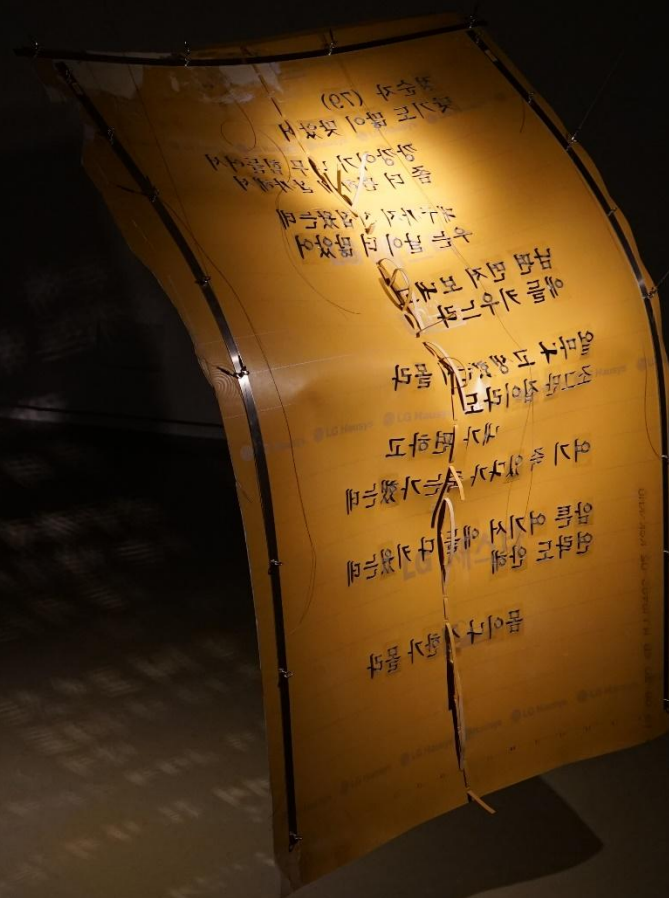


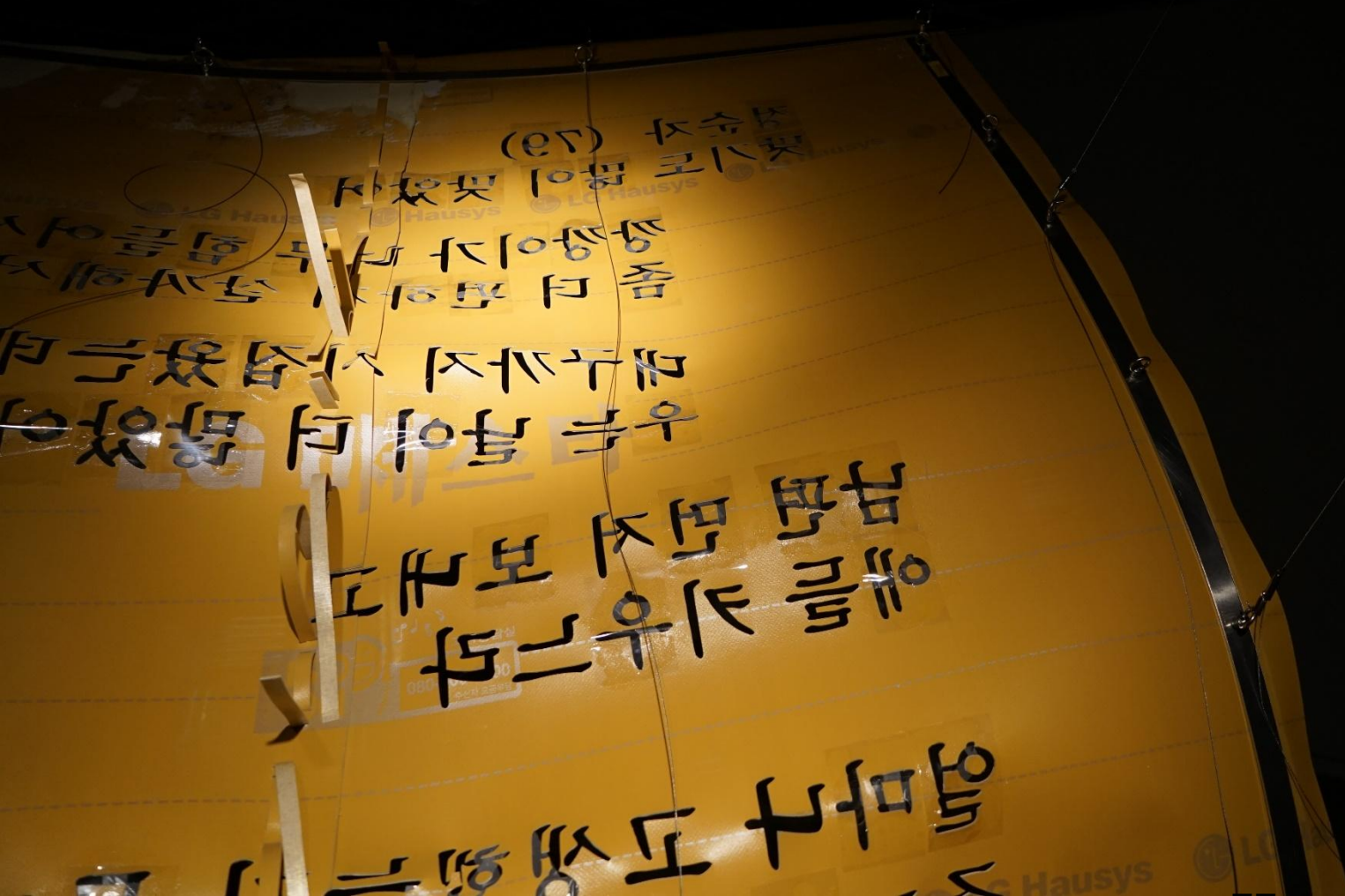
그걸 뭘 알고 싶어
정말 뭘 몰랐어

이름 석자는 알려줄게
이광택

이제 나 죽고 나서나
황이 권이 탁월지나







JUNG Soon-ja

Age 79

“I got hit a lot.

The ***kkang-kkang work was so hard,
so I married up to Daegu thinking life would be
easier, but I cried more than anything.
After my husband died, raising the kids,
you don’t know how much I suffered.
I thought even if it’s a small house,
I could be comfortable here
and just live here until I die,
but anyway, I raised all my kids here,
and they don’t even contact.
I don’t even know if they’re okay.”

2021.05.24

Walking along the low houses of Pyeongni-dong,
I met Soon-ja rolling up heavy flooring,
her body so bent she couldn’t straighten her back.

She used to do kkang-kkang work in Busan,
met her husband, and moved up to Daegu.
At 42 she bought a small house here in Pyeongri-dong.

She said she was clearing the house before redevelopment.
Even though it would soon be demolished, she would leave
it clean.

She lifted out the heavy flooring, cleaned the home she
loved and wanted to spend her last days in,
and said she would leave for “somewhere” in two weeks.

***Kkang-kkang-i ajumma

When a ship enters the dock for repairs, the first job is
removing rust. In the past, workers hung by ropes and
hammered off the rust; because of the “kkang-kkang”
sound of hammering, the work was called “kkang-kkang-i.”
It was hard labor, but tough, strong Busan women took on
this work, and they were called “kkang-kkang-i ajumma.”



Oblivion,



LEE Bok-seong

Age 76, Busan

“I can’t even remember when—
I was probably twenty-four.
I got off at Busanjin Station from
Daegu,
and I’ve lived here ever since.
I did every kind of work just to
survive,
and now I live in a motel room.
They say it’ll be redeveloped here
too,
but for old people like us,
no one rents to us anywhere else.
I don’t know where to go.
I’m seventy-six now—
you don’t need to know my name.”

2021.04.24

Across from Busan Station, along the narrow
alleys of Choryang,
I walked past the shaky “rooms available”
signs,
peering into the dark, narrow motel
entrances where sunlight rarely reaches even
on a warm spring day.
On the stairs, sitting on flattened cardboard,
I greeted Bok-seong.

Thinking “I’m going to get beaten to death
like this,”
she ran out leaving her two-year-old child
behind,
spent the night at the station, and took the
first train—
getting off at Busanjin Station at age 24 with
no plan.

Six years scooping fish guts all day from boats
unloading their catch,
then ten years washing dishes all day at a
sashimi restaurant,
then eight years running a street stall with the
money she saved.

In her fifties, she tried to open a small fish-cake
shop, but the man she lived with took the
money and left—
and she became penniless and alone again.
After wandering like crazy from place to place,
she says she ended up living in a motel room.
She told me not to ask her name,
so I engraved “Bok-seong,” taking the motel’s
name—a place one wants to stay yet must leave
again.

She is 76 this year.

Not knowing when redevelopment would force
her out, she said living in a motel room is
nothing to be proud of, and never told me her
real name.

When I returned as the cold of 2023 began,
the alley was piled with trash; the place was
blocked, doors couldn’t open.
Through old window frames and broken glass,
only a thin wind sound—like a whistle—leaked
out.

I hope Lee Bok-seong, now likely over eighty,
is staying somewhere—anywhere—
with no wind coming in,
and a warm floor beneath her.



Oblivion,

NAM Soon-young

Age 77

“My biggest worry is...
getting sick,
or living too long.”

2021.09.12

I often visited the quiet pier of
Daepyeong-dong in Yeongdo,
where you can see Jagalchi Market
across the water.

Every two visits or so, I saw Soon-
young—sitting with a small cart filled
with flattened cans, parked against
someone’s factory wall.

That day I bought her an ice cream at
a nearby shop and we talked.

She lives in a house very high up in
Sinseon-dong, Yeongdo.

Her eldest son lives in Ulsan, the
younger in Cheongdo, but she said she
doesn’t want to burden them,
so she collects and sells things, buying
at least side dishes to eat.

She said the neighborhood has so
many empty houses, and when the sun
sets, even the streetlights are dim and
scary.

Now she and the other neighborhood
grandmothers—like sisters—are
“guarding” that place.

After she thanked me for the ice cream,
she took the crumpled wrapper from
my hand,
stuffed it into her cart,
and disappeared slowly along the
shade under the factory eaves.

A few days later, I visited her house,
with the ocean of Yeongdo spread
clearly below.

Even as friends urged her to move in
with her sons and live comfortably,
she lied that she’s comfortable here,
and turned her eyes to photos of her
grandchildren on the wall.

She said she liked the color of the new
flooring.

She insisted on walking down the
narrow alley to send me off,
bowing again and again with thanks.

In 2023, when I returned,
Soon-young no longer lived there.
A neighborhood friend who recognized
me said:

she was diagnosed with dementia
and entered a nursing hospital near
Ulsan where her eldest son lives.

Soon-young, who had guarded that
place as people kept leaving,

has now
left too.



바명자
76
남한데
아쉬운 소리
안하고
혼자
이만큼
살았으면
됐지 그래

남한 데
아쉬운 소리
안하고

CRITIC

Compassion for Everything Alive in the World

Choi Wongyu's "Oblivion; Imprinted"

These floorings you are looking at were collected by Choi Wongyu from around the city since 2021, when he was in residence at Daegu Art Factory. Choi is the kind of person who approaches elderly people he sees while walking and starts a conversation—whether it is someone who spends the entire day gathering a single patch of sunlight in a park, someone sitting on the ground in an alley with no chair or bench, or someone selling bean sprouts and greens on the street.

Choi sits beside them without hesitation, helps sell their bean sprouts, and talks as if they were already close. In 2020, during his first residency at a large public rental-apartment complex in Busan, he began helping and listening to stories inside elderly residents' homes after following a person who handled old floorings coming out of moves or demolitions. That was when he thought he could "work" with floorings.

Choi keeps the stories he hears in his heart. When time passes and a moment comes when those stories begin to form themselves—like a living thing—he writes them down again in his own words. So the words written on the floorings you see are both the elders' and Choi Wongyu's.

Choi looks at those whom no one looks at, and speaks to those whom no one speaks to. But as someone who must write, I asked him: why do this work? There could be many reasons, but fundamentally, it is because they weigh on his mind. Why do they weigh on him? He doesn't know. If he must answer, he says he seems to be someone who cannot simply pass such people by. Why can't he? Perhaps because they don't feel like "others," but people not different from himself—perhaps because he thought of his grandmother and father who passed away without anyone recognizing them.

Is this feeling connected to his time in Ilsan, which he says was the hardest period? Before then, he merely "thought," but after Ilsan he began to "act" (small acts, like feeding stray cats).

Now I ask myself: why does Choi Wongyu make this work? Or was the question posed "properly" in the first place? Not as "the artist Choi Wongyu," but as viewers—how should you and I look at this exhibition?

Michel Foucault compiled administrative records—most only three or four lines long—about detainees who were confined in 18th-century France through the *lettre de cachet* system, which allowed citizens to be imprisoned at the (arbitrary) decision of local administrators, at the request of families, without special trial procedures (and most never returned). Foucault called this, without room for doubt, a harsh “chronicle of existence” in which the miserable (*les misérables*) appear.

Of course, I do not want to objectify these people’s lives with words like “miserable” or “harsh.” Such objectification is nothing but a “violence of definition,” cutting lives down to size for one’s own convenience. The administrative records of those confined by the *lettre de cachet* are written in “the language of the office”—or, as Annie Ernaux would put it, the language of violence.

Power defines. Those without power are “defined.”

Power speaks and defines. Those without power are always “defined” (by others’ words).

They are not people who lost their voice, but people who “never had” one in the first place. (To “recognize” the world’s misery is to be asked to recognize and act upon the structural contradictions of a society that functions only on the basis of such misery.)

Choi Wongyu brings these floorings, sometimes talks with elders, and replaces their floorings with new ones (sometimes even paying out of pocket beyond the assessed amount). What matters is that he converses. He does not monopolize the conversation, nor does he listen one-sidedly (he simply listens “a little more”). He does not regard them as “objects” that provide material for his work. He says he is always aware of that risk and careful about it.

The stories Choi writes down again on the floorings are, in truth, deeply sad and heartbreaking. The life of the elder who married from Busan into Daegu and was beaten and cried a lot, and the elder who died alone after “treating” cancer by merely putting a pain patch on the painful area (the number 21/19 engraved on the flooring marks “the 19th unclaimed person of 2021”)—without Choi’s work, these lives might not have left even a single line of trace on earth.

Across both the “flooring” works and the earlier “mirror” series, Choi’s work reveals our society’s ethical, political, and social themes with such delicate clarity that at times it is difficult to remain composed in front of it—yet it never falls into dogmatism or a strange moralism. Instead, it generously avoids those traps.

Collaborative work

Relative performance with [Oblivion;Imprinted]

Performer Lee Kahyun

Sound creator Lee Sookhyun



Click each image to watch the video

Performance video link

<https://youtu.be/BRqiq9qoxjo>



Breath-Lifescape III 2021

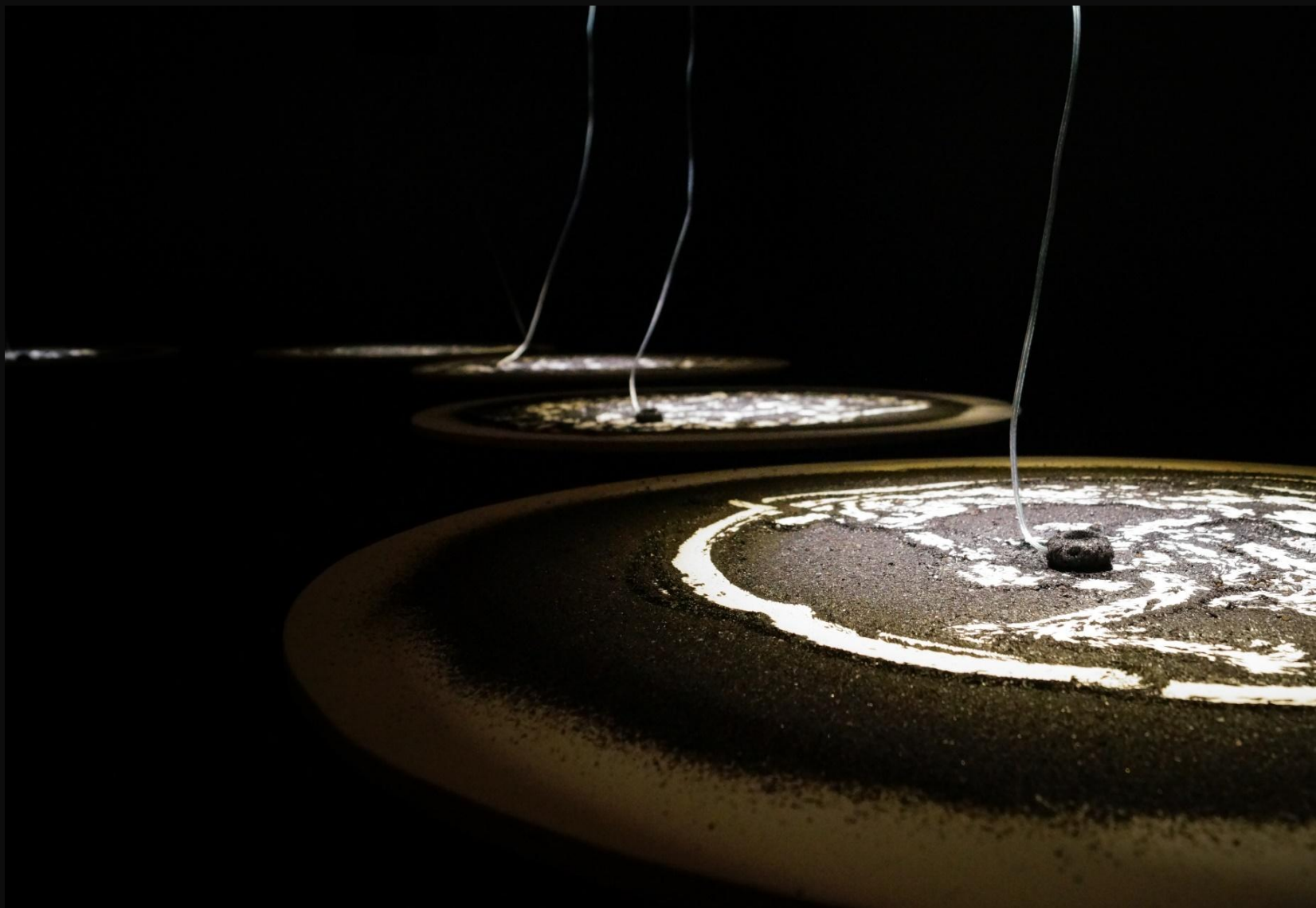
Iron powder collected from ship repair complex, neodium, motor, motion sensor, wood panel, steel pipe / Variable Dimension

[Click image to go project page](#)

The iron powder gathered from an industrial complex symbolizes life, and also the real-world limits that resist it.

The moving unit, vibrating and traveling without rest while holding iron powder to the limit of its magnetic force, resembles modern people living each day through their own motions.







Breath-The forest of oblivion 2020 / Iron and zinc powder collected from ship repair complex, urethane foam, gypsum, acrylic paint, soil collected from demolished factory site / Variable Dimension

[Click image to go project page](#)

I breathe.

On yesterday's
breath,
whose warmth has
not yet faded,
again
today's rough breath,
layer upon layer.

My breath,
piercing upward
through that cold,
thick ceiling.

At times,
wretched,
rough
it is my history.

Someday,
sitting on a soft mound,
the day I will exhale
deeply—
breath.

By collecting and filtering the waste that falls onto the floor through ceaseless labor in a metal-processing factory, and composing only the pure iron powder as the skin of three-dimensional forms, I sought to remember and reaffirm the value of lives (labor) that are forgotten—sometimes even dismissed as worthless by their own subjects.

As this form of breath rises, breaking through the thick ground, it gradually begins to glitter. It is the image of all of us who live today fiercely, and a dedication offered to their shining lives.







BREATH – The way back (2020 → 2021)

Public art project in Busan

I decided to travel with breath,
to return to where the story began
and to meet its subjects again.

On the way back,
I paused in places where similar lives unfold,
meeting people and speaking with them.

The breath that stays here for a moment
will begin its journey again.

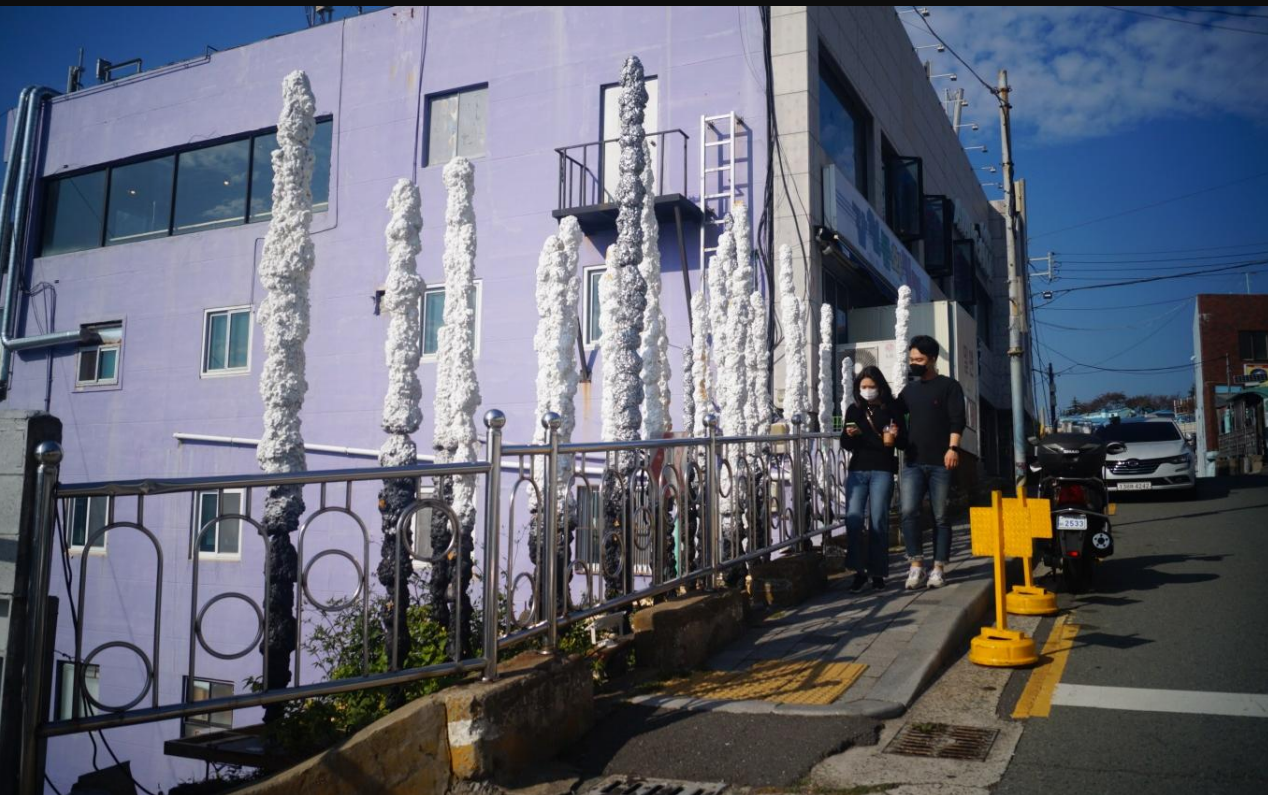
From August 2020, for three months, Breath – The Way Back was carried out as a public art project to meet the public in sites of everyday life, share the work's meaning, and provide a new artistic experience to citizens who have been excluded from art experiences. The project toured and was exhibited at the Cultural Park of the "Rainbow Industrial Complex," Gamcheon Village, and Jagalchi Market.

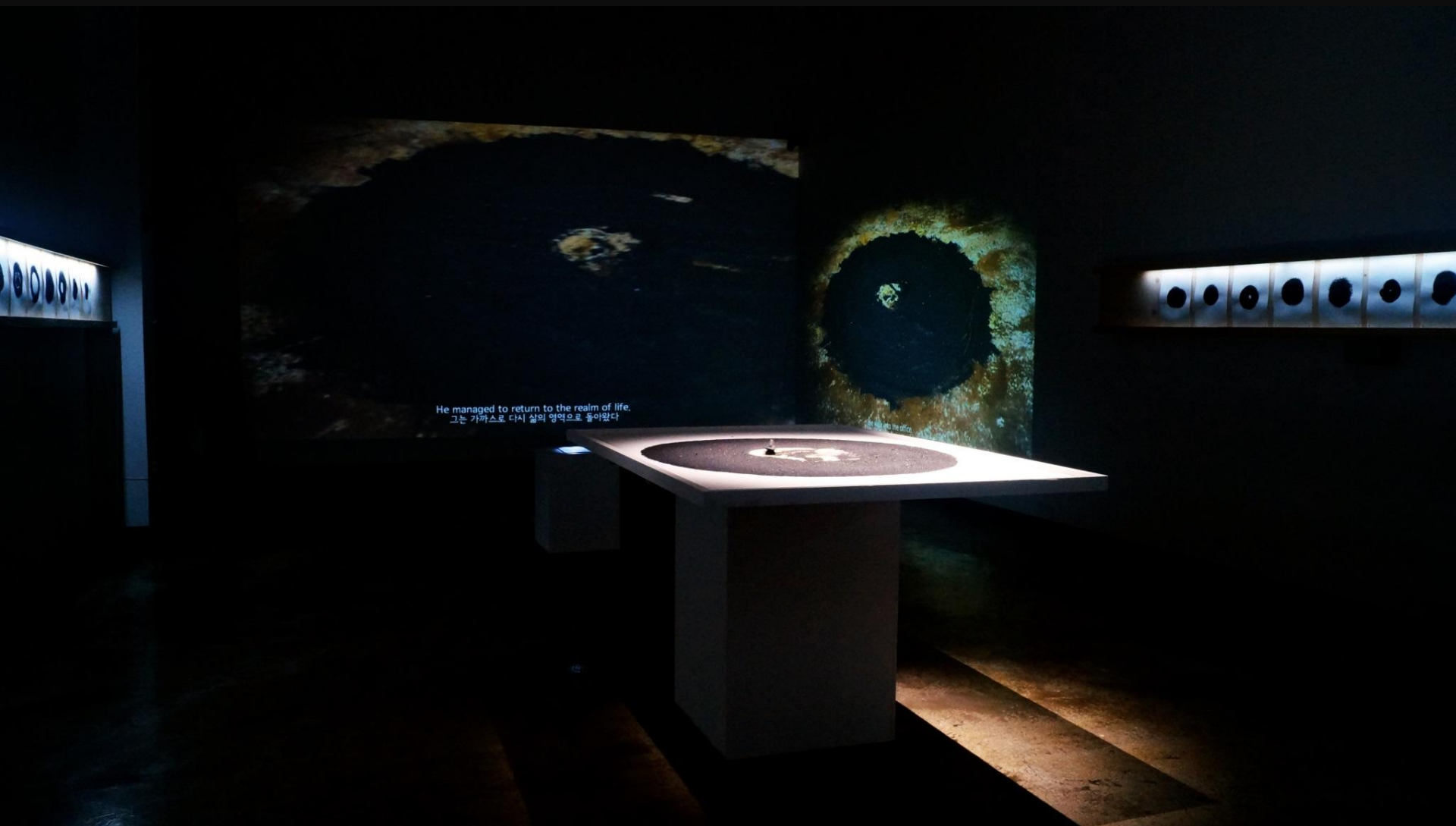


Breath-The way back 2020 / Iron and zinc powder collected from ship repair complex, urethane foam, gypsum, acrylic paint / Variable Dimension



아외 설치는 총 2회 진행 되었으며, 1회차(서부산 산업단지내 공원 / 설치기간-25일)와 2회차(서부산 감천문화마을 내 사유지 / 설치기간-60일) 로 공공장소에서 공개되었다.





Breath-Lifescape I 2020 / Iron powder collected from ship repair complex, wood panel, neodium, motor, single channel video / Variable Dimension

[Click image to go project page](#)

And so, life continue..

The artist gathers various forms of life—his own and those on the margins—and composes them into stories.

He then presents a driving system made of: the repetitive motion of magnets symbolizing the agents of those lives; the way fine iron powder is swept and pushed by that motion; and the irregular drawings formed in the powder through continuous movement.

The moving magnet installation is presented together with video that includes text written by the artist, composing those movements.

As the magnet moves, it repeats its motion while carrying iron powder clinging to it up to the limit of its magnetic force.

The iron powder scattered on the floor is pure iron powder filtered from industrial waste produced and discarded during labor.

It is a symbol of the will to live—or of ideals that dream of somewhere other than “here.” At the same time, it also represents the various regulations and constraints that exist inside and outside one’s radius of life, which obstruct the magnet’s movement and resist that will.

The magnet maintains a precariously close distance from the iron powder as each follows its own motion. It repeatedly circles within a small radius while sweeping around, or hovers along the edge of the powder, scratching through the neatly spread black circle and relentlessly pushing the powder outward.

Through these movements and the stories composed with them, the artist seeks to speak about life that persists in many different forms.

In what form are we, now,
moving endlessly toward something—
and toward what?



Just struggling to drag my heavy body back and forth with my helpless arms
그저 힘겹게 두 팔로 자신의 무거운 몸뚱아리를 이리 저리 끌며

Click Image to watch the 3 channel video

3 channel preview video link <https://youtu.be/h3VxO412jLQ>

VIDEO 1

“She just wanted to live”



The daughter-in-law, who had to scrub a building's stairways all day,
had no strength left to care for her husband's mother—
a woman whose son had left home long ago and never returned.

So my grandmother,
had to live shut inside the house for a long time.

With an aging body and without proper treatment,
she had to drag herself around the narrow apartment—
the entire world she could reach—
with two powerless arms.

Whenever I visited from time to time,
until the moment I closed the front door after our short meeting, she would insist on pulling herself all the way to the entrance, and watch my last back through the closing gap.

She said she ate every meal and took every supplement faithfully,
yet after years of living on the floor,
she returned to the family again—
locked inside a small urn.

What let her endure those lonely moments?
Scattering her ashes in the mountains of Busan,
I thought:
perhaps without even knowing it,
I too might be living trapped in a small world—
like my grandmother.

Just dragging my heavy body here and there with difficulty,
forgetting even the pain,
holding only a faint longing...

After so many years,
her face and the voice that called my name have grown dim,
but at some moment, suddenly,
the sound of her body sweeping across the floor stays clearly in my ear, then passes.

VIDEO 2

“He still lives in anxiety”



He decided to die.

Twice.

Because the reality that the extreme idealist suddenly
recognized,

and the loneliness of a life he had isolated himself into,
were too painful.

Staring at the studio's impossibly high ceiling—
blurred by breath exhaled into winter cold—
he drew various ideas of death in his mind,
then tried two of them, twice.

Once, he was discovered by an unknown resident
on an early dawn commute.

Another time, the weight of his own body saved him.

Stepping out from the crossroads of guilt and
helplessness,
he decided to try living
a little longer in anxiety.

To him, anxiety had become
another name for will—
the will that had held him up until now.

More than a year has passed.
Now he takes those times out
and talks with people—

about anxiety,

and about the will that will continue ahead.

VIDEO 3

“He lives on”



Today again, he opens his eyes at 6:30.
His body is still heavy from last night's company dinner,
but a body trained for more than ten years
pulls him out of bed anyway.

With earphones in—cut off from the world's noise—
staring only at the small world in his palm,
unaware of the dazzling blue sky,
he enters the office.

At his desk where even the season can't be felt,
he spends another suitably tiring day.

Among the countless people waiting for the shuttle
home,
again he looks only at the world in his palm,
unaware of the unusually beautiful sunset made by fine
dust,
and boards the bus.

Rubbing his stiff neck, he glances for a moment—
through the tightly packed crowd—
at a fragment of sunset leaking in,
and thinks briefly:
when was the last time he looked up at the sky?

And then again,
he fills his eyes with
the world in his hand.



Breath-Lifescape I 2021 / Iron powder collected from ship repair complex, linen, medium / 30X30

[Click image to go project page](#)



My right hand holding the brush repeats an up-and-down motion at the same spot, leaving traces on a canvas that slowly rotates.

Those traces record the movement on the endlessly turning surface, becoming a drawing.

This is an image drawn by an individual's history—placing dots again and again while repeating cycles within an indifferent, rotating society—

and at the same time, the result of the artist's labor to continually confirm the value of existence.

The act of dotting seems to circle in place, but before we know it, it creates an unexpected result.

Is the image created by my hand that keeps moving—

or by the motion of the disc that slowly rotates?

As we live day by day, are the countless wills to live we leave behind—and the present spaces where we stand because of those histories—truly ours alone?

Did we arrive here by will alone?

My will aims at the same place, yet as movement continues, its position trembles little by little, leaving a subtly skewed circular trace.

Relying on sight and touch, I only sustain the will of direction.

The drawing act—focused solely on the destination of the brush held in my hand at one point on the canvas—creates an unforeseen image.

Like “now,” slightly off-center—

and like some moment we cannot predict.

Video link









FLOW-The mind gap 2019 / columns and beams collected from the demolished house site, led, acrylic paint, wire / Variable Dimension

[Click image to go project page](#)

[Flow-The mind gap]
2019 teaser

How long has it been
since I chose to isolate myself here,

so long that I can't even tell
how time brushes past
no, I pass each day
dragging my feet,
pretending not to know.

At some point, without a purpose,
I walk a stone path after dark,
a path with no streetlights.

From the backyard of a warehouse
with broken windows,
I carefully pull back
a handcart abandoned with a bent wheel,
brush off years of soil and dust,
and head out again
onto the dark dirt road.

At a collapsed house site
where even the path is hidden by foxtail grass,
I gather columns and beams
stacked indifferently, lifting only as much as I can
still return with—
carefully coming and going
along the dirt road.

At a collapsed house site
where even the path is hidden by foxtail grass,
I gather columns and beams
stacked indifferently,
lifting only as much as I can
still return with—
carefully coming and going
along the dirt road.

For more than twenty days,
again and again.

I spend days only looking
at the piled wood in the yard,
then do something
without any intention
of becoming anything.

I fill the gaps,
layer upon layer,
and bury what was trapped—
my emotions, today,
and my past—together.

And before I know it,
it becomes
a vividly blue will.



