

MISA SHIN GALLERY

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Press Release
October 2017

Jae-Eun Choi

Paper Poem

Date: Friday October 20 - Saturday December 2, 2017

Opening Reception: Friday October 20, 18:00-20:00

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12:00-19:00 (Closed on Mon, Sun, Public holidays)

MISA SHIN GALLERY presents the Jae-eun Choi solo exhibition, 'Paper Poem' from Friday, October 20 until Saturday, December 2, 2017.

Jae-eun Choi was born in Seoul in 1953. During a visit to Japan in 1972, she became fascinated by *ikebana*, and decided to study under Hiroshi Teshigahara, the 3rd head of the Sogetsu school, learning how the art form transcends merely arranging flowers to embody concepts of space and a certain view of the universe.



Jae-eun Choi, *Paper Poem No.11*, 2012, aged paper, 83x87.5cm

Choi has been making artwork addressing questions of the life-cycle and time since the 1980s. The series of works that makes up this exhibition, entitled *Paper Poem*, was produced between 2010 to 2016 while Choi was based mostly in Germany. Seeing a number of old books discarded outside her Berlin apartment, she brought them into her studio, where she removed the blank pages like the flyleaves, endpapers and so on, and produced collages from them. The paper produced in the late 19th century and a large part of the 20th century was affected by exposure to light, which bleached its edges over time. This paper, produced from the late 19th century on, has had its edges bleached over time by exposure

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to light, and the delicate gradations of overlapping pages that come together inside the “frame” this bleaching creates are like layers of time stacked on top of one another. The compositions, which are reminiscent of constructivist collages, enhance these natural gradations, while also appearing much like the bird’s eye view of a city, with all its buildings alongside one another.

Within the theme of time that runs throughout the artwork Choi has been producing for three decades, we sense different types. In particular, arboreal time is key. This is placed in contrast with human time, and yet connected with it, through the eternal cycle of life. The paper used in the *Paper Poem* series is thus not material, but serves to indicate the way in which arboreal time is transformed into the time of human wisdom and memory through books.

This exhibition also includes a tree sculpture produced in conjunction with the *Paper Poem* works. Placed around the tree are balled up pieces of paper with poems written on, and viewers are allowed to pick those pieces of paper up and read the poems. When they finish reading them, they return them to the floor to be read by the next visitor. With all this touching, the texture of the paper will become softer, and by the time the exhibition closes, the poems will have evolved into different ones.

Paper Poem is Jae-eun Choi’s first solo exhibition at the MISA SHIN GALLERY.



Jae-eun Choi, *From the forests of Aśoka*
2017, bronze, gold coating, 18×15×43cm

Jae-eun Choi

Choi was born in Seoul in 1953. In 1976, she moved to Tokyo where she studied *ikebana* in the Sogetsu style. From the 1980s onward, she has been producing artwork around the themes of life cycles and time. She has participated in a number of international art exhibitions such as the 1991 São Paulo Biennial, the 46th Venice Biennale in 1995 where she represented Japan, and the 2016 Venice Biennale of Architecture. Solo exhibitions include *Lucy and Her Time* at the Samsung Gallery (Seoul, 2007), *Forests of Aśoka* at the Hara Museum (Tokyo, 2010) and *The house that continuously circulates* at the National Gallery (Prague, 2014.) She is currently working on a project in the DMZ between North and South Korea called *Dreaming of Earth*.

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Jae-eun Choi

Paper Poem

Jinsang Yoo (Curator, art critic)

If the true essence of a book is its text, then we could say that the most beautiful and vital text is the paper itself, which fades gradually with time. On occasion, the reader's line of sight slips from the words, and strays to the blank space floating around it. With old books, whose borders have been bleached by the sun, this is not simply blank space, but rather a concrete presence that provokes in us the realization that the book is in fact an entity, inhabiting the same space as us. Books contain many blank pages, absent of text. These surplus sheets, like the endpapers next to the covers, and the flyleaves which separate the cover from the central pages, don't have a practical use, but seem to us like aesthetic devices that enable the reader to adjust to the slower rhythm the book possesses.

This exhibition presents the works Jae-eun Choi produced during her years in Germany, following her solo exhibition *Forests of Aśoka* at the Hara Art Museum in 2010. Finding old books that had been discarded outside her apartment in Berlin, the artist brought them to her studio. She then removed the blank pages she found in the book, and began to arrange them together. The bleached and discolored pages of the books, which were around half a century old, had fantastic gradations of color and a sense of physicality, like the cross sections of soft fruits or petals. The depth and majesty of these papers, arranged on a white background, evoke an entirely different sensation of time. The constructivist-style of composition, where different sheets of paper come together in one picture, even recalls a city of old buildings viewed from above. While there are small gaps between the papers here, they come together as a single mass. It is as if this old, discarded paper brings into view the structure of a vast, wide-reaching form of time.

Throughout Choi's thirty-year career, time immemorial has been a perpetual theme. From her *World Underground* project and her solo exhibitions *Lucy and Her Time* and *Forests of Aśoka*, to her current *Dreaming of Earth* project in the DMZ lying between North and South Korea, she has approached the issue of the different times that belong to the world and the various creatures in it from a plethora of angles. Within that, arboreal time, while often contrasted with human time, is shown as an independent subject that manifests charity, love, perseverance and devotion. Forests and gardens, tree trunks and the ground in which they are rooted all respond to the eternal circle of life within which all is connected. The paper in

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Paper Poem is the guise that the trees adopt as a response to the time of human wisdom and memory.

The exhibition features other works created from trees also. The straight, vertical form of a tree recalls a standing human figure, and also like humans, trees manifest their existence in going against gravity. Taking the cross-section of an erect tree, Choi aims to show all the ways in which it is connected to humans and their civilization. Like a mirror, the tree summons up the forms of all those being linked with it. The trunk with its branches cut off and the blank paper which originates from that tree symbolize the charity and the self-sacrifice that trees have shown in the service of human civilization and time. The forests created by King Aśoka as a symbol of charity, the DMZ primeval forest in the middle of a territory full of the tragedy of war and the walking trail passing through it—what runs through these works of Choi's is the understanding that the only way to understand humanity's existence within the boundlessness of nature and universal time is through poetry. 'Paper Poem' presents a series of condensed, visual haiku of just these kinds of thoughts.